

[News story: Research into national curriculum testing at key stage 2](#)

Ofqual has today (5 October 2017) published [an evaluation of the Standards and Testing Agency's \(STA\) approach to developing key stage 2 reading and maths tests](#), alongside a review of evidence relating to the accessibility of the 2016 key stage 2 reading test. 2016 was the first year of a new suite of tests, which assessed the new primary national curriculum.

The main report evaluates STA's approach to ensuring effective coverage of the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in the new English reading and maths curriculum. It finds that STA's approach is robust and compares favourably to approaches taken in similar tests internationally, while acknowledging that there are aspects of maths and reading that cannot straightforwardly be tested.

The subsidiary review summarises a wide body of evidence and data relating to the accessibility of the 2016 reading test, acknowledging concerns raised by teachers at the time. While standards were set appropriately in 2016, the review suggests that the test seemed to be more challenging than the sample materials provided and a significant minority of pupils did not finish the test. The 2017 reading test did not raise similar accessibility concerns, nevertheless, the review suggests areas that could benefit from further consideration by STA.

Dr Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, said:

We are reassured that STA's approach to sampling from the national curriculum is robust. We have identified specific questions that we will continue to discuss with the STA, to help them to enhance the validity of the reading and maths tests, over time, for all pupils.

In regulating national assessments, Ofqual's objectives are to promote standards and confidence in statutory early years assessments and national curriculum assessments such as those at key stage 1 and key stage 2. We focus on the validity of assessment, in particular, on technical aspects such as test development, standard setting or marking. We also monitor wider activity, such as delivery and risk, at a high-level and we provide advice to inform future approaches to assessment. Whilst we do not approve decisions made by the Standards and Testing Agency, our regulatory review can provide independent post-hoc assurance about assessment quality.

We do not have a role in deciding whether or not there should be particular statutory assessments, or in curriculum policy, accountability policy or internal school assessment.

More information on Ofqual's specific powers and duties in relation to national assessments can be found in our [Regulatory framework for national](#)

[assessments.](#)