

Press release: Helping children learn through a proportionate primary assessment system

Plans have been announced by Education Secretary Justine Greening for a primary assessment system which focuses on pupil progress, mastering literacy and numeracy, and scrapping unnecessary workload for teachers.

The plans to create a stable, long-term approach that ensures children are taught the essential knowledge and skills they need to succeed at secondary school and in later life were published today following a 12-week consultation with the teaching profession and other stakeholders. This is delivering on the commitments the government made at the election.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

A good primary education lays the foundations for success at secondary school and beyond. This year's key stage 2 results showed our curriculum reforms are starting to raise standards and it is vital we have an assessment system that supports that.

These changes will free up teachers to educate and inspire young children while holding schools to account in a proportionate and effective way.

The government confirmed that it will:

- Introduce a new teacher-mediated assessment in the reception year from 2020 to provide a baseline measure to better track pupils' progress during primary school. The check, which will be developed in conjunction with the teaching profession, will ensure schools are given credit for all the work they do throughout a child's time at primary school;
- Improve the early years foundation stage profile – a check on a child's school readiness at the end of their early years education. This includes reviewing supporting guidance, to reduce burdens for teachers;
- Make key stage 1 tests and assessments non-statutory from 2023 and remove the requirement for schools to submit teacher assessment data to the government for reading and maths at the end of key stage 2, as these subjects are already assessed through statutory tests, from 2018-19;
- Introduce a multiplication tables check to aid children's fluency in mathematics from 2019-20;
- Improve teacher assessment of English writing by giving teachers greater scope to use their professional judgement when assessing pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 from the current academic year (2017-18).

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT said:

Today the government have confirmed that, from this year, teachers will once again be able to apply professional judgement when assessing pupils' writing. Teachers and school leaders have argued strongly that sufficient flexibility to properly recognise pupils' achievements was needed. This move is a welcome step in the right direction.

The decision to make SATs for seven year olds non-statutory in favour of a new reception baseline assessment may well be met with trepidation by some, but it is absolutely the right thing to do. Under current accountability arrangements, the hard work and success of schools during those critical first years is largely ignored. If designed properly, these new assessments can provide useful information for schools to help inform teaching and learning whilst avoiding unnecessary burdens on teachers or anxiety for young children.

We intend to work with government to ensure that this is exactly where we end up. Taken together, these measures are a big step in the right direction.

The government has also set out how it will better support children who are not yet working at the standard of the national curriculum tests.

The changes, which follow a consultation on the findings of the independent Rochford Review, will ensure there are appropriate assessment arrangements in place and there will be a pilot of a new approach to assessing the attainment of children with the most complex special educational needs.

Introducing these measures will help schools support these children to progress on to mainstream forms of assessment during primary school, if and when they are ready, ensuring no child is left behind.