

Assessment Without Levels

In the last eighteen months, the Government has made a huge change in the way that children in schools are to be assessed. This is to tie in with the New National Curriculum that started to be used by all schools in September 2014. This is a new way of thinking for schools. Having had assessment levels for the past 20 years, we now have a system without levels. The aim of this guide is to give you some clear information about what that means for the children at Leighswood. Before we even think about assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum has brought to subjects that are traditionally assessed.

Curriculum 2014

So, what are the changes to the curriculum? It would take far too long to cover the whole curriculum. However, as you know we have adopted the “Cornerstones” topic approach for teaching the Foundation subjects and children have been really inspired by this creative and engaging approach. In addition, there are an enormous number of changes to the key core subjects and some are highlighted below.

English - The new programme of study for English is knowledge-based; this means its focus is on knowing facts rather than developing skills and understanding. It is also characterised by an increased emphasis on the technical aspects of language and less emphasis on the creative aspects. English is set out year by year in Key Stage 1 and two-yearly in Key Stage 2. Appendices give specific content to be covered in the areas of spelling and vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. These are set out yearly and two-yearly across both key stages.

Mathematics - Most of the changes to the mathematics curriculum involve content being brought down to earlier years; eg some of what was previously taught in year 3 is now expected to be taught in Year 2. The main areas in the new programme of study for mathematics are called domains. These are number, measurement, geometry, statistics, ratio and proportion and algebra. Two of these, number and geometry, are further divided into subdomains. The way that the curriculum is organised varies across the primary age range – every year group has a unique combination of domains and subdomains. There is no longer a separate strand of objectives related to using and applying mathematics. Instead, there are problem-solving objectives within the other areas of study.

Assessment

We use the term “attainment” when referring to children’s ability as measured at a particular time; what they are able to do, understand and know. We use the term achievement when we talk about progress children have made. Schools are required to have an assessment system which monitors each child’s progress (achievements and attainments).

The tracking, monitoring and evaluation of a child’s attainment and progress takes place daily in lessons through: questioning, marking and talking to children about their learning. It takes place weekly, termly and annually through assessments and tests (see below) and informs curriculum planning enabling areas for development to be addressed.

The End of Curriculum Levels

So why are levels disappearing? The DfE wanted to avoid what has been termed ‘The level Race’ where children have moved through the old National Curriculum levels quickly to achieve higher attainment. The old National Curriculum was sub-divided into levels, but these were not linked to their national curriculum Year group. For example, a child in Year 4 could be a Level 3 or even a level 5. Children were achieving Level 5 and 6 at the end of Key Stage 2, but the DfE thought that a significant number were able to achieve a Level 5 or 6 in

a test—but were not secure at that level. The feeling from the DfE was that the old national curriculum and the levels system failed to adequately ensure that children had a breadth and depth of knowledge at each national curriculum level.

Assessing Without Levels

The DfE announced that there would no longer be National Curriculum levels and that schools would have to set up their own way of assessing pupils. Assessment, nationally, is in a period of transition and the arrangements published for the statutory assessment in Years 2 and 6 are still “interim” for 2016. We have spent a long time researching various different methods of assessing pupils in Years 1 to 6 and tracking systems. We have decided to use a system which is similar to assessment at the end of Foundation Stage. This takes the end of year expectations for each Year group and splits these into 3 categories as follows:

- Emerging—Yet to be secure in the end of year expectations.
- Expected—Secure in the end of year expectations.
- Exceeding—Secure in the end of year expectations and able to use and apply their knowledge and skills confidently.

Under the old levels system children who were exceeding might have moved into the next level. The DfE now want children who are in the exceeding bracket to add more depth and breadth to their knowledge, and to have more opportunities to develop their using and applying skills. Similarly, children who are unlikely to be emerging at the end of the year may work towards the expectations from the year below. So how will this look at the end of each Key Stage?

End of Key Stage 1

At the end of Year 2, teachers will make an assessment of the children’s ability to meet all the End of Year objectives; informed by their marks in externally set and internally marked tests. It is anticipated that the majority of children will reach the assessment point of Year 2 expected; ie being able to achieve all the end of year objectives in Maths, reading, writing, GPS (grammar, spelling and punctuation). A small number of children will reach Year 2 exceeding, and a small number will be Year 2 emerging, or possibly Year 1 exceeding/expected/emerging.

End of Key Stage 2

In order to be “secondary ready”, a child needs to meet the end of KS2 expectations. Year 6 take Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) in May each year in Reading, Maths and GPS (Grammar, spelling and punctuation). We believe that the children’s raw scores will be converted into a standardised score with 100 being the national standard. Similar to Year 2 there will be some children who may be Year 6 exceeding and some children who are Year 6 emerging. There may also be a small number of children who are still working at a lower level e.g. Year 4/5 exceeding/expected/emerging. There will be a teacher assessment in writing where children will be expected to achieve ALL the objectives in the interim arrangements.

Assessing Without Levels

How we give an end of year assessment is going to be similar to how we described assessing without levels on the previous page. In your child’s school report, we will use the terms:

- working below expected ie your child has been taught the end of year objectives and objectives from a year below but is not yet achieving the expectations for their Year group;
- working at expected ie achieving the end of year expectations for their Year group;

- working above expected; ie achieving the end of year objectives, applying skills with confidence and showing a deep understanding.

How we will assess children’s attainment and progress?

Teachers will teach from the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and assess children against each of the end of Year objectives for English and Maths.

Formative assessment

A range of methods will be used:

- Questioning, observation, marking and dialogue. Children’s ability to grasp their learning day to day informs future teaching, planning and interventions.
- “Mini tests” such as “Beat that” CLIC tests , Learn its and arithmetic tests in Maths steer the emphasis in our teaching and children’s learning of specific skills; and spelling tests in English.
- Scrutiny of children’s books by senior leadership team (SLT)

Summative assessment

- Each term we will assess children using tests in reading, GPS and Maths. These are designed to assess how the children are progressing towards their end of Year objectives using the scale above.
- In writing, we use recent pieces of writing to assess their current ability against the end of Year objectives. In the Autumn term, it is anticipated that the majority will be assessed at 1 and 1+; in the Spring term 1+ and 2; and in the Summer term 2 and 2+.
- Each term, we hold Standards meetings to discuss children’s attainment and progress by class teachers and members of the SLT. From these meetings, we identify priorities for our teaching to enable children to make progress (“Next steps”) and plan small group and individual teaching interventions and strategies for enabling progress in our day to day teaching.
- At the end of the year, we will record a teacher’s assessment against each of the end of year objectives for every child in reading, writing including grammar and spelling and maths.

1	Below: Has been taught but not grasped the (eoy) end of year objective
1+	Has been taught and is beginning to grasp the objective
2	At: Achieving the eoy objective
2+	Achieving the eoy objective with confidence
3	Secure: Achieving the eoy objective and applying skills confidently
3+	Achieving the eoy objective showing a deep understanding

Year Group	Statutory Testing	Internal Tests
Nursery	The children are continually assessed against the EYFS Early Learning Goals	Nursery Baseline
Reception	Reception baseline testing (upon entry to Reception) At the end of Reception, children are assessed against the EYFS Early Learning Goals.	In Nursery and Reception, children are continually assessed against ages and stages of development.

Year Group	Statutory Testing	Internal Tests
Year 1	Phonics Test	Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)
Year 2	Phonics Tests retake for those children who didn't pass in Year 1. KS1 SATs – Assessments in reading, writing, maths and GPS (grammar, punctuation and spelling)	Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)
Year 3		Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)
Year 4		Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)
Year 5		Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)
Year 6	KS2 SATs – Tests in reading, maths and GPS. Teacher assessment in writing.	Termly tests for reading, GPS and maths. (Termly writing assessments too)

What you will notice is different?

The main difference is there will no longer be any talk of “levels”. In the past, there was no correlation between a level and a child’s year group; eg in a Year 6 class there could be a range of levels from level 1 to level 6. However, the new National Curriculum sets out expectations for each year group and children will be assessed against those every year, so a child in Year 4 will always be judged in the first instance against the expectations for the end of Year 4. During the year, when we have conversations with you about your child’s progress you won’t be given an actual definitive position of where they are on this scale (ie 1,1+,2,2+,3,3+) **We will report on whether children are on track to attain at expected for their age or above or below.**

Children who are currently high attainers

For children who have securely met their end of year objectives, rather than moving on to the next year’s curriculum, these children will work on deepening their knowledge through the application of skills in different contexts – they will be deepening their learning. The depth and application of a child’s learning is an important marker of their achievement and progress.

Children who have Special educational Needs

Less able children have specific learning plans that will meet their needs. They will be expected to make progress in line with their peers, but they may not, because of their special needs, meet year group objectives. Our assessment and tracking systems, however, support, challenge and monitor their progress.