

Assessment Without Levels

In September 2014, the Government made a huge change in the way that children in schools are to be assessed. This was to tie in with the New National Curriculum that started to be used by all schools at the beginning of September 2014. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment looks very different to how it has done for the past 20 years. The aim of this guide is to give you some information about what that means for the children here at Broomhaugh. Before we even think about assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum 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, particularly in any great depth. But the main changes to the key core subjects 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 across both key stages.

Mathematics - 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. Most of the changes to the mathematics curriculum involve content being brought down to earlier years.

The End of Curriculum Levels

Why have levels disappeared? The DfE want to get rid of 'The level Race' where children have moved through the old National Curriculum levels quickly to achieve higher attainment. 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.

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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.

At Broomhaugh we are part of the Hexham School Partnership and together we have agreed performance descriptors and criteria shared below.

The terms 'entering' 'developing' 'secure' and 'mastering' are to be used to assess pupils as they work on the expectations for their learning within their year group.

	Entering	Developing	Secure (Age Related Expectations)	Mastering
Definition	basic awareness	correctly using and applying	confidently using and applying	naturally using and applying
Cognitive challenge	Low level cognitive demand. Involves following instructions	Higher level of cognitive demand. Involves mental processing beyond recall. Requires some degree of decision making	Cognitive demands are complex and abstract. Involves problems with multi-steps and more than 1 possible answer	Complex and abstract with independent and original learning.
Indicative teaching style	Modelling explaining	Reminding guiding	Coaching Probing questioning	Listening and encourage independent learning
Types of success criteria	Steps to success	Remember to include	Child generated	uses initiative and self-manages
Nature of progress	Acquiring refining	Applying practising	Deepening extending	can independently adapt to any situation
Support	High	medium	low	self support
Typically pupils will	Name, describe, follow instructions or methods, complete tasks, recall information, ask basic questions, use, match, report, measure, list, illustrate, label, recognise, tell, repeat, arrange, define, memorise.	Apply skills to solve problems Explain methods, classify, infer, categorise, identify patterns, organise, modify, predict, interpret, summarise, make observations, estimate, compare.	Solve non-routine, appraise, explain concepts, hypothesise, investigate cite evidence, design, create, prove	Display consummate comprehension and understanding Display expertise and proficiency in original application and use. Demonstrate finesse, prowess and deftness showing evaluation and self reflection skills in a wide variety of contexts.

Formative assessment

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. They are calling this phase of learning Mastery and Depth. Only exceptional children will move into working towards the end of year expectations from the year above. Similarly, children who are unlikely to be entering at the end of the year may work towards the expectations from the year below.

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After investigating many different Assessment & Tracking systems, we have decided to use a system called the Pupil Education Tracker (PET). There are PET sheets showing curriculum objectives for each year group which will be shared with parents at Curriculum Information Meetings.

The 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.

In each Autumn term, by October/November the teachers will have had an opportunity to assess how the children are working. At the start of each year group, most children will be entering as they are being judged against the End of Year statements. By using their professional knowledge and judgement teachers will know what the children can already do and what they think the children can achieve. They will then give a forecast as to where they think a child will be by the end of the Year. So, for example, children in Year 3 could be given a forecast of 3 secure. Children working well above age related expectations will be set the target of achieving the Mastery strand of their year group.

During the year, when we have conversations with you about your child's progress there is no longer numerical levels or a scale to relate their progress to. Instead you will be told whether your child is on track to meet their end of year target. It may well be that they are above or below where they need to be, in which case their end of year target may be reviewed.

The most clear indication of your child's progress and attainment can be seen through their books so at parents evening books will be shared with you to help you understand their progress and show you how we help children reach their targets.

We will always challenge all pupils and set targets and work to help them reach their optimum standard, as well as giving all children support, encouragement and confidence to perform at their very best.