

KS1 and KS2- Assessment without Levels- Information for Parents.

From this September, 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 at the beginning of this Academic Year. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment will look very different to how it has done for the past 20 years. The aim of this guide is to hopefully give you some clear information about all the changes that are happening in Education across the country and what that means for the children in our school. 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, 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 characterized 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 organized 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 (apart from Year 2 and Year 6)

The Department for Education (DfE) has decided that the children who are currently in Years 2 and 6 will be the last pupils to be awarded a level in their end of Key Stage tests (Summer 2015). **Please note that this means that children in Year 2 and Year 6 during the academic year Sept 2014 to July 2015 will still be taught and assessed the levels/sublevels system of Assessment. Therefore, school tracking systems and conversations with Parents will be still around levels and sublevels.**

So why are levels disappearing?

The DfE want 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. Under the old levels system children who were exceeding might have moved into the next level. The DfE now want children who are the highest achievers 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 emerging at the end of the year may work towards the expectations from the year below.

Assessing Without Levels- the Ash Green Approach.

The DfE announced last year that there would no longer be National Curriculum levels, and that schools would have to set up their own way of assessing pupils. The Leadership team at Ash Green used the autumn term to research various different methods of assessment and we have now developed our own system for tracking progress and assessing progress.

So how will the process in school work? Reading, Writing and Maths will be assessed by teacher judgment and evidence of learning that the children are showing. This is an ongoing process. At the beginning of a new academic year, as children are being judged against the End of Year statements, they will be only beginning to develop their knowledge. By using professional knowledge and judgment 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. Only exceptional children will have a forecast from a higher or lower year group.

Teacher tracking of individual progress

Your child's teacher has an 'Assessment Matrix' for Reading, Writing and Maths for each individual child. This will follow your child through school and will inform Assessment, Planning and Teaching for the teacher. This is an ongoing document that is added to regularly when evidence of learning is seen.

Children's checklists

Children need to be able to understand where they are with their learning and what they need to do next. As Assessment matrices are a teacher tool, children have their own version of these for Maths and Writing. We call these 'checklists' and they are stuck into the front of children's books. For Reading, we use 'Learning Ladders', which children use when they have Guided Reading and other sessions.

Whole school tracking process

Teachers have tracking grids (paper and online), which will be used to track progress across the year. There is a sheet for Reading, another for Writing and another for Maths. Children's names are written in the correct 'box' or if they are 'developing' their skills, 'secure' in their skills, or fully 'achieved' all skills needed, relevant to the year group. From these tracking sheets, teachers and leaders can identify strengths and gaps in children's learning, for individuals, groups, classes, year groups, key stages and of course, whole school.

Talking to Parents about Attainment and Progress.

The biggest difference is how we will talk to you about how your child is progressing during the year. With the old National Curriculum levels, each year children were given a target for the end of the year, and during the year we would tell you what National Curriculum level your child was at. For Example: A child could finish Year 3 with a level 3a, and in Year 4 would have a target of a 4b for the end of the year. At Parent's Evenings throughout the year you may be told that they have moved to a 4c and then on to a 4b. We could use the levels system this way because there was no correlation between a level and a child's year group, and this can be seen in the way that in a Year 6 class there could be a range of levels, from level 2 to a 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 we will show you the Assessment Matrices for Reading, Writing and Maths and talk you through where the strengths and gaps are in your child's learning and how this compares to the expectation for the year group your child is in. As the system becomes more embedded, your child will be able to talk about their learning from the checklists and learning ladders.

We hope that you find this guide useful to help you understand why Assessment has changed and how Assessment has changed. Of course, if you have any questions, please ask the class teacher or one of the school leaders.

