

Follifoot CE Primary School

Assessment 'Life after National Curriculum Levels'

A Guide for Parents

Introduction

As part of ensuring effective partnerships with parents we endeavour to provide parents and carers with valuable information about their child/children's progress. In order to do this it is important parents and carers have an understanding of what their children learn and how their achievement and progress is measured. This guide provides outline information about the changes to assessment as a result of the introduction of the new National Curriculum (September 2014) as well as the removal of National Curriculum Levels.

This guide in is no way designed to replace effective dialogue between parents and teachers. It is hoped that this will provide an overview that will aid more productive dialogue during meetings with parents.

Context

Since 1988 all primary schools have delivered the National Curriculum and assessed children's attainment based on National Curriculum Levels. Children were assessed using tasks and tests. Scores from these tasks and tests were converted into a National Curriculum level. Levels ranged from 1c through to 5a.

1c	1b	1a	2c	2b	2a	3c	3b	3a	4c	4b	4a	5c	5b	5a
														
Children would typically work in this range of levels during Key Stage One – Years One and Two. They would be expected to achieve Level 2b at the end of Key Stage 1.					Children would typically work in this range of levels during Key Stage Two (Years 3,4,5 & 6). All children nationally were expected to achieve L4 at the end of Year 6. More recently Level 4b has been defined as the expected level for the end of Year 6 and children achieving this have been considered 'secondary ready'.									

Benchmarks at key points were designed for parents to understand how their child's attainment compared with children nationally. For example at the end of Key Stage One (end of Year 2) children were expected to have achieved Level 2b. By the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) children were expected to have achieved a Level 4 (more recently this has been defined as Level 4b). Standardised tasks tests and mark schemes were designed to try to achieve consistency.

Following the introduction of a new National Curriculum framework from September 2014, the government decided to remove level descriptors. The government's policy of removing level descriptors from the National Curriculum is set out in terms of freeing schools from an imposed measure of pupil progress. The Department for Education has said that levels are not very good with respect to helping parents to understand how far their child is improving. In their place, from September 2014, "it will be for schools to decide how they assess pupils' progress".

Our school system for assessing the new curriculum is based upon the following principles:

- Effective feedback based on accurate assessment by all adults in conjunction with pupils is central to our learning principles. Clear pupil friendly systems ensure feedback is acted upon to improve learning.
- Formative and summative assessment is used to improve teaching and learning, curriculum provision and raise achievement.
- Assessment is based upon the work children produce over time in a range of contexts. Test scores are rarely used as a means of assessment.
- Assessment judgements are carefully moderated with colleagues and other professionals from within and beyond the school (through the teaching school alliance and Local Authority networks).

- Assessment evaluates how well pupils are doing against year group expectations. This helps identify pupils who might be falling behind and ensures there is challenge for all groups of learners.
- School leaders, including governors, are able to use assessment summaries as a tool to monitor progress and attainment to ensure the school is helping pupils achieve well.
- Parents are provided with a clear and accurate sense of their child's achievement and progress as well as areas where they can support their child's learning.
- The school can provide data for external teams to show how children are performing.

Early Years (EY)

Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through seven areas of learning and development. They will be assessed on an ongoing basis as to their progress in these areas.

At the end of the year adults will decide if they are 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' in these areas.

Children who are 'expected' in all the prime areas and also in Literacy and Maths will be considered to have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). The proportion of children achieving a GLD at the school is one of the measures schools would use to self-evaluate and compare themselves with schools nationally.

Children should mostly develop the 3 prime areas first. These are:

- Communication and language;
- Physical development; and
- Personal, social and emotional development.

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning. As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in 4 specific areas.

These are:

- Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Understanding the world; and
- Expressive arts and design.

Children in Year 1- Phonics Screening

Children in Year 1 will be assessed on their ability to use and apply synthetic phonics. In June they will undertake a 'screening'. This 'screening' involves working one to one with the class teacher to read a list of forty words, some of which are 'nonsense' words. They will receive a score. If their score meets or exceeds the nationally set threshold (previously 32/40) they will be considered to have met the expected standard. Parents will be informed if children have met the expected standard or not. If a child has not met the expected standard parents will be informed as to what additional support the child will receive. Children who do not meet the required standard would be 'screened' again at the end of Year Two.

Children in Years 1- 6

The old and new curriculum has different content including totally new expectations such as the teaching of computer science (programming). Many of the objectives in the old curriculum have shifted to lower year groups in the new, more rigorous curriculum. It is not possible to have an exact correlation between a level that was the outcome of the old National Curriculum assessment and the requirements of the new National Curriculum; this means a shift in thinking and in the way we assess children's outcomes. This may mean for some children who were previously judged as working at age related expectations have some 'gaps to close'. Class teachers will be able to provide examples of your child's next steps and suggest ways in which you can support their learning at home.

We have welcomed the changes in the National Curriculum and have taken it as an exciting opportunity to review our assessment and reporting systems to create a more holistic approach that makes sense to parents. We were very clear that whatever assessment tool we used, it needed to be robust and track pupils' progress across the school and not just at the end of a Key Stage.

The new National Curriculum has set out clear expectations for what children should achieve by the end of each year group and key stage and, for English, Maths and Science, has provided guidance as to when in each phase this content should be covered.

These expectations have been developed into a set of statements for each subject and each year group. These statements are used by teachers to help define and guide next steps in learning. Through their next steps pupils will be aware of specific statements they are working on to improve their learning. The statements for a particular area e.g. Maths are grouped together for the year group and known as a 'Band'. Alongside this guide parents can access a 'band information book'. This lists all the relevant statements for reading, writing and maths for that band.

To track pupil attainment and progress we use a system of steps. This performs the function of tracking and communicating progression and attainment in a simple format.

This is based on a carefully considered logical approach to assessment. The terminology has been selected for consistency and clarity and is as follows:

beginning (b), beginning + (b+), working within (ww), working within + (ww+), secure (s and) secure + (s+).

The sections may be thought of in these terms-

Assessment Step For each year group 1 - 6	Numerical descriptor % of statements achieved*	Narrative descriptor		
		Start of academic year	Mid-year	End of year
Beginning (B)	0% – 23%	Pupil learning is mainly focused on the criteria for the year group band. There may be minimal elements of the previous band still to gain complete confidence in.	Pupil learning is solely focused in the year group band with all previous band elements achieved. However they might not be as confident and fluent with learning. There are gaps to close.	Pupil learning is solely focused in the year group band with all previous band elements achieved. However they have achieved less than half the year group statements. Typically they have found new learning from this year group challenging to acquire and have needed significant differentiation. There are gaps to close in order for them to be working in line with their year group.
Beginning plus (B+)	23% - 43%	Pupil learning is solely focused in the year group band with all previous band elements achieved.		
Working within (WW)	44%-66%	Pupil learning is fully focused on the criteria for the year group band and they have acquired a high proportion of the learning even though they have not been taught it directly.	Pupil learning is fully focused on the criteria for the year group band. Typically they are acquiring new learning confidently without the need for any significant differentiation or additional support.	Pupil learning is fully focused on the criteria for the year group band. Typically they are acquiring most new learning confidently without the need for any significant differentiation or additional support. They do yet have the confidence and fluency in enough aspects of the band required to be considered secure.
Working within plus (WW+)	65%-79%		Pupils are working at a deeper level and applying more widely elements of the year group band	
Secure (S)	80%-95%	Children acquire new learning quickly. Their age appropriate basic skills are applied fluently and confidently. They quickly move to consolidating, and deepening their understanding. They can apply learning in a variety of contexts.	Confidence and fluency in all of the criteria for the band has been achieved. Pupils have understood and mastered the learning.	
Secure plus (S+)	96%-100%		Confidence in all of the criteria for the band. The child has mastered learning with greater depth and understanding. They confidently apply and explain their understanding.	

*Numerical descriptors can only be applied after at least one full term teaching.

The number in front of any of the letters (B, B+, WW, WW+, S, S+) indicates the year group expectations. This number will typically correlate with the chronological year group of the pupil. If it is below it indicates the pupil in working in the expectations of the year group below.

Only in very extreme cases would the number be higher as our curriculum promotes depth of understanding within year group expectations not acceleration onto the next year group. With particularly extremely able children this might be the case.

We are now assessing children against the new framework, one for which they may have not been taught the previous years' objectives and content, so we are in a time of transition between old and new sets of data. During this transition time children and teachers have completed baseline assessments to find out their starting points for the new National Curriculum.

For children to be working at age related expectation, they would need to reach the secure (s) step at the end of the appropriate year.

The New Curriculum allows teachers to introduce content earlier or later than set out in the programme of study. Where appropriate children will have opportunities to apply their understanding in a range of challenging real life contexts, and to demonstrate their mastery of a particular skill at a deep and thorough level before moving on. We would expect children who are secure (s) in the band of statements they are working on to have these experiences, and therefore be working at the secure + (s+) step before being assessed against the following year band statements.

It is our aim and expectation that at the end of the academic year children will be secure + in the statements appropriate for their year group. End of year reports will clearly state if this is the case or not. Where children are not secure in particular key areas information regarding next steps and the support in place will be provided.

Measuring Progress

Each step e.g. beginning to beginning + represents 1 point of progress. Children would be expected to make 6 points of progress in each academic year.

Making Assessment Judgements

Children can be considered to have achieved a statement when teachers can assess they have understood it within a taught and an applied context and they can signpost to evidence through a range of sources; pupils written work, teacher observations, annotated planning, photos, assessment tasks/tests etc.

Attainment

Attainment is measured by assessing the progress the children are making and have made with securing their understanding of year group expectations written in the form of statements.

Attainment expectations

Starting expectation for all children is as follows for the statements relating to their chronological year group.

End of.....term	Step
Autumn	Beginning (B) or B+ of relevant year group expectations
Spring	Working within (WW) or WW+ of relevant year group expectations
Summer	Secure + (S+) of relevant year group expectations

Band Information Book

Parents can access these directly through their child's class teacher. These outline all the appropriate statements for the year group. They are a guide as to where a child should be at the end of the academic year and provide an overview. They are not a tick list or a means of comparing children with each other.

They are provided on request if parents feel the overview would be useful to them. They are not provided with the intention of parents assessing their own children.