



Measuring progress in primary schools

This update follows the publication of the 'Primary assessment in England: government consultation response' in September 2017.

Reception baseline assessment

In its response to the consultation, the Government announced that it would introduce a new statutory assessment in autumn 2020. This will be administered by schools soon after children enter reception, and will be used as the baseline for measuring the progress primary schools make. This will enable the department, for the first time, to create 'end-to end' school-level progress measures for primary schools, showing the progress made from reception until the end of key stage 2 (KS2). These measures will be first published for all-through primaries in the summer of 2027 when those children who entered reception in autumn 2020, will have reached the end of KS2.

On 11 April 2018, the Department for Education confirmed that, following a procurement process, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has been chosen as the preferred supplier to design and deliver the new reception baseline assessment (RBA), including the trial and pilot phases and the first two years of statutory delivery.

The Government's response to the 2017 primary assessment consultation also stated that we will make the existing key stage 1 (KS1) assessments (both the national curriculum tests and teacher assessments) non-statutory once the reception baseline is fully established. The earliest point at which this can happen is the 2022 to 2023 academic year onwards when the first cohort of pupils who have taken part in the pilot of the new baseline assessment will have reached the end of KS1.

Accountability arrangements for infant, first, middle and junior schools

A related question asked in the consultation was around the most appropriate accountability arrangements for infant, first, middle and junior schools when the reception baseline is established and KS1 assessments are made non-statutory. Despite this being several years away, we want to provide clarity on the long-term accountability arrangements for all school types to ensure schools know which assessments they will be expected to deliver and how they will be held to account in future.

The consultation set out two options:

- Option 1 was to have reception to KS1 progress measures for infant and first schools and KS1 to KS2 progress measures for junior and middle schools. This would require maintaining statutory KS1 teacher assessments for pupils in infant and first schools.
- Option 2 was to hold all types of school to account through the new reception to KS2 measures (so to have the same measures for everyone), encouraging greater collaboration between infant, first, middle and junior schools.

As set out in the government response, there was no clear consensus on this issue through the consultation and so we have taken more time to consider the best approach.

Since September 2017, we have held detailed discussions with a range of sector representatives (NAHT and ASCL, the Junior School Collaboration (JUSCO), the Middle Schools Forum, and groups of infant, first, middle and junior school head teachers) to explore whether there are ways that either of the above options could be made to work.

While views were mixed about the best answer, many were in agreement that it would be unfair to make KS1 assessments non-statutory for some schools but not others. Some reported fears about the potential impact this could have on admissions and teacher recruitment in infant and first schools. Sector representatives were also clear that option 2 would be unfair, as reception to KS2 measures for everyone would mean that some schools would be held to account on the basis of data which covered a substantial period of time where they were not responsible for the pupils' education.

We have listened closely to the sector's concerns and have concluded that we cannot proceed with either of the options presented in the government's consultation. However, the subsequent arrangements have been agreed following consideration of the feedback.

First and infant schools

We can confirm that we will make KS1 assessments non-statutory for first and infant schools, at the same time they are made non-statutory for all-through primaries. However, all schools with a reception year, including infant and first schools, will have a statutory responsibility to administer the new reception baseline assessment when it is introduced.

In terms of the measures published, there will not be any change from the status quo for first and infant schools which do not have progress measures published now. They will continue to be responsible for demonstrating the progress their pupils have made to Ofsted and those with an interest in school performance.

Middle and junior schools

After KS1 assessments have become non-statutory, middle and junior schools will be in a similar position to infant and first schools, in which they will have responsibility for evidencing progress based on their own assessment information. KS2 attainment information will continue to be available for middle and junior schools.

We will work with sector representatives and Ofsted before providing further guidance about the types of information that schools could make available to inspectors, ahead of current progress measures being removed.

Until the measures based on the new reception baseline are available for all-through primary schools, we will continue to publish progress measures for middle and junior schools. We will continue to work with Ofsted and representatives from middle and junior schools to ensure that, in the shorter term, those with an interest in school performance are aware of the context of these schools when using this progress data.