



What are the new changes to assessment?

The new national curriculum was introduced in schools in September 2014. Although many things within the curriculum have stayed the same, or very similar to, the previous national curriculum, the new framework is more challenging in some aspects; for example there is a stronger focus on grammar, spelling and arithmetic.

The framework doesn't tell teachers how to teach, but it does include the essential knowledge and skills every child should have. Schools and teachers can then plan teaching and learning opportunities to match children's needs and interests.

With this in mind there have also been changes to the way in which children are assessed in school. Previously, a child's attainment in the national curriculum was assessed against 'levels', with information about levels being reported to parents at the end of the key stages. This information was based on test results and teacher assessment in reading and mathematics, and teacher assessment in writing and science.

Many parents will have heard of pupils being assessed, at the end of the year or key stage, with teachers using phrases such as "working at a level 2", or "achieving a level 4". An average child was expected to achieve at least a level 2 by the end of Year 2 (aged 7), and at least a level 4 by the end of Y6 (aged 11).

However, from this academic year (2015-2016) all children in school will be taught using the new national curriculum framework.

This new curriculum is organised largely in **year group expectations**, with the phrase "level" not being used to assess children's attainment. Instead, teachers will be assessing whether a child achieves the **standard expected for their year group**.

Teachers already assess children throughout the year to help them in their planning for teaching activities and identify the "next steps" in learning. Assessment is often informal and may involve the teacher or perhaps a support assistant observing the child in a variety of situations, talking to them and questioning them to check out their understanding, and of course marking their work. This is sometimes called "assessment for learning" because it helps children to learn well.

These assessment methods will continue - but teachers will be thinking about the new national curriculum framework in their planning, teaching and assessments from now on.

When you get your child's report, or talk to your child's teacher perhaps at a parents meeting, the teacher may start to use phrases such as **"working in line with the year group expectations"**, or **"working at about typical development for their age"**.

Or they may tell you that your child is **working below the typical expectation for their age**; in this case they will probably give you some information about how they are helping your child catch up, or "close the gap" with other children of their age, and what you can do at home to help.

What about statutory assessments?

Summer 2015 was the last time that "levels" were used for reporting results for children at the end of the key stage. From summer 2016, formal test and teacher assessment results will be reported using descriptions which compare children's attainment to the "expected" attainment for the age of the child. More information about this is likely to be published by the government later this year.