Assessment without levels – getting to grips with the National Curriculum changes

FAQs - National Curriculum changes

What are the key changes?
The Government’s response to the Primary Assessment and Accountability consultation was announced in March 2014. The following outlines some of the key changes; however you can read the full response here.

Levels
- National Curriculum levels will be removed from Sept 2014
- Schools can choose their own method to monitor progress throughout the key stages
- The end of Key Stage tests will still use Levels in 2014 and 2015, meaning there is some leniency towards schools who don’t have an alternative system in place for Sept 2014
- The DfE’s Assessment Innovation Fund will provide a number of ‘good practice’ alternatives to using levels, date for release of these is to be confirmed

The National Tests
- From Sept 2016 the end of Key Stage tests will provide students with a scaled score [see scaled score below] rather than a level
- Each pupil will be required to attain a scaled score of 100 or more in the tests
- KS1 tests will remain statutory
- DfE will be providing performance descriptors to inform teacher assessment, from autumn 2014

Reception baseline test
- A new baseline assessment will be introduced from Sept 2015, this will not be compulsory
- This will be administered in schools in the first term of Reception
- Schools will be told of the range of approved commercial providers to select between

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
- Non-compulsory from Sept 2016

End of Key Stage 1 tests from Sept 2016
- A phonics check near the end of Year 1
- Teachers assessments in mathematics and reading will be externally-set and internally-marked
- Also an externally-set test in grammar, punctuation and spelling to inform teacher assessment of writing
- Results on a scaled score

End of Key Stage 2 tests from Sept 2016
- Externally-set and marked tests in mathematics, reading, and grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Teacher assessments in mathematics, reading, writing and science
- A sample of pupils will continue to sit tests in science to give a picture of national performance.
Floor standard
- From 2016 the new floor standard will be either
  - pupils make sufficient progress at KS2 from their starting point in reception baseline (see Progress measures below) or
  - 85% or more pupils meet the new expected attainment standard (see below) at the end of KS2 (similar to level 4b of the current system)

Progress measures
- Schools will be measured on progress from the reception baseline test to end of KS2. However the first students to go through this system will take their KS2 tests in 2022.
- Between 2016 (when the first new KS2 tests are taken) and 2019 pupils will have their progress measured against the old KS1 Levels. The DfE will set the precise extent of progress required once the KS2 tests have been sat in 2016 for the first time.
- In 2020 and 2021 the progress will be measured between the new KS1 and new KS2 tests

Attainment standard
- The new standard will be to attain a scaled score of 100 or more in the reading and mathematics tests, as well as being assessed by the teacher of reaching the same standard in writing.

Low attaining pupils
- P-scales will remain

Performance descriptors for teacher assessment
- **Key Stage 1**
  - For mathematics, reading, writing and speaking and listening, teachers will assess pupils as meeting one of several performance descriptors.
  - For science, there will be a single performance descriptor of the new expected standard.
  - All will be linked to the content of the new curriculum and drafted by an expert group.
- **Key stage 2**
  - For writing, teachers will assess pupils as meeting one of several performance descriptors.
  - For science, reading, and mathematics, there will be a single performance descriptor of the new expected standard.

What is a scaled score?
Many schools are already using standardised tests in their tracking and monitoring of pupils, so will be familiar with the concept of age-standardised scores and the normal distribution curve. These provide the underpinning of standardised tests that Hodder Education provide. With the new KS1 and KS2 tests requiring pupils to reach a score of 100, our tests will help you monitor the progress of your pupils against the same scale in advance of the end of Key Stage tests.

Measurements of ability in reading, writing, mathematics etc., conform to a pattern known as ‘normal distribution’, which assumes that the majority of people tend to be clustered within an average range, with far fewer at the extremes, see the diagram below.
The central point of the distribution is the mean and is the average score for the group whom the test was standardised on. To measure the variation the standard deviation is calculated, this is the average amount by which scores differ from the mean, regardless of direction. The curve is then split into four vertical parts, each one standard deviation wide. The graph shows the whole 100% of those taking the test. Those between -1 and +1 standard deviations of the mean represent 68% of the population i.e. 34% either side of the mean. Performance of pupils who sit within this band is within an age-appropriate range.

How do I use standardised tests to benchmark and monitor progress?
Standardised tests are ideal for allowing teachers to benchmark their pupils against other pupils nationwide. Each question in each test has been sat by thousands of pupils during the standardisation process to ensure when your pupils take the test you compare their results and see how they are performing against others of the same age.

Many standardised tests provide multiple tests to allow pupils to take tests on a regular basis to monitor progress. Some assessment schemes provide termly tests to provide incremental progress reports. Others provide parallel forms, each form has been matched to ensure like-for-like test results, meaning you can offer one test/form to benchmark, and then re-test at regular points to monitor progress.