

Assessment Without Levels – A Guide 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, which was brought in on September 1st 2014.

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 here at Wyton on the Hill Primary School.

Why the change?

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 although a significant number were able to achieve a Level 5 or 6 in a test, they were not secure at that level because they did not really have a deep understanding or 'mastery' of what they were being tested on.

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.

What will replace the old levels in this country?

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.

We have spent a long time researching various different methods of assessing pupils, and we have had demonstrations of various commercial software tracking systems. We have also worked closely with other schools in our local area to inform our judgement about what form assessment without levels should take in our school.

Almost all of the systems we researched used the same format, which was similar to the system used in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. This was to take the end of year expectations for each year group and to split attainment into three categories as follows:

- Emerging— Yet to be secure in the end of year expectations.
- Expected—Secure in the majority of the end of year expectations.
- Exceeding—Secure in almost all or all the end of year expectations and is able to use and apply their knowledge and skills confidently.

Under the old levels system children who were exceeding might have moved into the next level. The DfE now want children who are in the exceeding bracket 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 children with exceptional academic abilities 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.

What will replace the old levels at Wyton on the Hill?

At Wyton on the Hill, all our assessments are made against clearly defined assessment criteria which can be found on our school website <http://wytonprimaryschool.org.uk/Curriculum.htm>. **After investigating many different Assessment & Tracking systems, we have decided** the following structure to record pupils' attainment in each subject at the ends of each school year, using a bespoke data package.

- Working below – working to secure assessment criteria from one or two year groups below.
- Emerging— Working towards the end of year expectations, will still require support to secure a significant proportion of these expectations.
- Developing—Secure in a significant proportion of the end of year expectations, but will still require support to secure those expectations not achieved.
- Securing - Secure in the vast majority of the end of year expectations (emerging or developing in a few areas). This is the age-related expectation.
- Mastering – all age-related criteria complete and extending understanding of age-related Skills, knowledge and concepts in a variety of different contexts and challenges

What will change about the way my child's achievement is reported?

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.

So how will the process in school work?

In each Autumn term, by October/November the teachers will have had an opportunity to assess how the children are working. At the start of each year group, it is expected that every child will be emerging as they are being judged against the End of Year statements.

By using their professional knowledge and judgement 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.

So, for example, children in Year 3 could be given a forecast of 3E, 3D, 3S OR 3M.

Only very exceptional children will have a forecast from a higher or lower year group. As far as we are aware Year 6 'Mastering' is likely to be the highest grading for the end of Key Stage 2.

During the year, when we have conversations with you about your child's progress, you will be kept informed about their progress against the assessment criteria for their year group. You will also be told whether your child is on track to meet their end of year target.

The system we have adopted will be subject to continuous review and moderation with the systems chosen by other local and national schools in order to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

We hope that you find this guide useful to help you understand why assessment has changed and how assessment has changed.