



## **Assessment Without Levels**

From September 2014, the Government made a huge change in the way that children in schools are assessed. This ties in with the New National Curriculum that was also introduced and to be used by all schools at the start of this Academic Year. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment looks very different to how it has been done for the past 20 years. The aim of this guide is to 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 Seal CE Primary School.

## **Changes to the Curriculum 2014**

So, what are the changes to the curriculum? It would take far too long to cover the whole curriculum, particularly in any great depth but the main changes to the key core subjects are highlighted below.

**English** - The new programme of study for English is knowledge-based; this means its focus is on knowing facts rather than developing skills and understanding. It is also characterised by an increased emphasis on the technical aspects of language and less emphasis on the creative aspects. English objectives are set out year by year in Key Stage 1 and two-yearly in Key Stage 2. Appendices give specific content to be covered in the areas of spelling and vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

**Mathematics** - The main areas in the new programme of study for mathematics are called domains. These are number, measurement, geometry, statistics, ratio and proportion and algebra. Two of these, number and geometry, are further divided into subdomains. The way that the curriculum is organised varies across the primary age range – every year group has a unique combination of domains and subdomains. There is no longer a separate strand of objectives related to using and applying mathematics. Instead, there are problem-solving objectives within the other areas of study. Most of the changes to the mathematics curriculum involve higher expectations and content being taught in earlier year groups.

## **The End of Curriculum Levels**

The Department for Education (DfE) has decided that the children who are currently in Years 2 and 6 will be the last pupils to be awarded a level in their end of Key Stage tests. So why are levels disappearing?

The DfE want to avoid what has been termed 'The Levels Race' where children have moved through the old National Curriculum levels too quickly to achieve higher attainment. The old National Curriculum was subdivided 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 a significant number were not secure at that level. 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.

## **Assessing Without Levels**

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, as well as a system developed by Kent Local Authority. Almost all of the systems 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 this into 3 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 of 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 exceptional children 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. So how will this look at the end of each Key Stage?

### **Key Stage 1**

It is anticipated that the majority of children will reach the assessment point of Year 2 expected, a smaller number of children will reach Year 2 exceeding, and a small number will be Year 2 emerging, or possibly Year 1 exceeding/expected/emerging.

### **Key Stage 2**

Lots of you may have heard of the expression 'Secondary Ready' as the standard children must achieve by the end of Year 6. The DfE have slightly distanced themselves from this phrase and are talking about children reaching the assessment point of 'Year 6 Expected'. Similar to Year 2 there will be some children who may be 'Year 6 Exceeding' and some children who are 'Year 6 Emerging'. There may also be a small number of children who are still working at a lower level e.g. Year 4/5 Exceeding/Expected/Emerging.

### **Assessing Without Levels**

After investigating many different Assessment & Tracking systems, we have decided to use 'Rising Stars' as a method in which to test the children, and the Local Authority (LA) system for Teacher Assessment and tracking attainment and progress.

How we give an end of year assessment is going to be almost identical to how I described assessing without levels on the previous page, but some of the language is slightly different. Currently, with the Early Years Tracker the terms Low, Secure and High are used, so it makes sense to carry that language through. Essentially, Low = Emerging, Secure = Expected and High = Exceeding.

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 Parents Evenings throughout the year you may be told that they have moved to a 4c and then on to a 4b.

We can no longer use the levels system in this way because there is no correlation between a old level and a child's year group expectation in the new National Curriculum. 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, every child will be emerging/low 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 3 emerging low, 3 emerging high, 3 expected low, 3 expected high, 3 exceeding low or 3 exceeding high. Only very exceptional children will have a forecast from a higher or lower year group. As far as we are aware Year 6 exceeding high 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 won't be given an actual definitive position of where they are on this scale. Instead you will be told whether your child is on track to meet their end of year target, below or above. If a child is above or below where they need to be, their end of year target may be adjusted.

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

For more information about changes to individual year groups, please visit our website: [www.sealprimary.com](http://www.sealprimary.com)