

# Response ID ANON-6FQ1-TFW4-3

Submitted to **Primary assessment in England**

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## Ministerial Foreword

### Introduction

#### 1 What is your name?

**Name:**

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#### 3 What is your organisation?

**Organisation:**

LKMco

#### 4 Which of these categories best describes your role?

**Categories:**

Academic/Researcher

#### 5 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

**Reason for confidentiality:**

### Current system: statutory assessment in key stages 1 and 2

#### Preparing children to succeed at school

**6 The EYFSP measures a child's development against the ELGs set out in the EYFS statutory framework. Should the profile be improved to better assess a child's knowledge, skill, understanding and level of development at the end of the early years? If so, please describe which elements could be added, removed or modified.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We feel the rounded scope supported by the EYFS Framework as it currently stands is beneficial for young children, and shouldn't fundamentally change.

The prime areas of learning within the EYFS curriculum are vitally important and should continue to be recognised as such.

We welcome the emphasis within the prime areas of learning on communication and language development because, as Voice 21 and LKMco's 2016 report on oracy finds, opportunities for young children to develop speaking and listening in the Early Years supports future success at school, especially among pupils from less affluent backgrounds.

Physical development forms the basis of a healthy lifestyle, and underpins the development of fine motor skills, supporting writing skills.

Personal, social and emotional development is so important because, as the EPPSE study notes, in Early Years settings that view educational and social development as complementary, children make better all round progress, and these effects are sustained into Key Stage 1. In other words, a rounded view of development in the Early Years that supports PSED makes the Early Years provision itself more effective, but also has greater impact further down the line.

It is therefore important young children continue to have the support they need to develop in all these areas if they are to enjoy fulfilled lives. Any baseline assessment that could potentially draw focus away from these areas should be treated with extreme caution.

We would be wary of increased focus reading in the Early Years, over and above what is currently in the framework (ELG09, plus the related goals). As Crehan explores in 'Cleverlands', an analysis of high performing education jurisdictions, kindergartens in Finland lay the foundations for reading through developing children's cognitive and linguistic abilities but do not get children to read until they are ready to do so, generally at around age 7. Children who are ready to do so are encouraged to read widely with support from teachers, but reading prematurely can be unproductive at best, and actively unhelpful at worst if it puts children off or damages their confidence.

If the government wants to support Early Years practitioners develop the building blocks for reading, it might, a), produce non-statutory guidance exploring

research and quality practice associated with positive outcomes in reading for young children, b), fund directly (through providing) or indirectly (through increasing school budgets) training for Early Years practitioners, or, c), let the College of Teaching explore ways of supporting this.

Voice and LKMco's oracy research is available here: <https://cdn.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Oracy-Report-Final.pdf>

The EPPSE report to which we refer is here: [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18189/16/EPPE\\_TechnicalPaper\\_12\\_2004.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18189/16/EPPE_TechnicalPaper_12_2004.pdf)

## **7 The EYFSP currently provides an assessment as to whether a child is 'emerging, expecting or exceeding' the level of development in each ELG. Is this categorisation the right approach? Is it the right approach for children with SEND?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Yes. This is the right approach.

These categorisations provide a broad picture of a child's development. This means two children can reach an 'expected' level of development, although one may be far more secure than the other (as we would expect, with children entering the EYFS from a wide range of backgrounds, and at very different stages in the personal development).

This approach recognises children may develop at different rates, but does not seek to unduly (or punitively) categorise them. However, it does nonetheless provide practitioners both in the Early Years and beyond with a shared language for discussing children's development. It seems appropriate that, where a child is not developing at the 'expected' rate, they are recognised as 'emerging' and given appropriate support.

We feel these terms are appropriate for children with forms of special educational need or disability (SEND). These children have a very broad range of needs and may well be 'expecting' or 'exceeding' a level of development in many of the ELGs. However, it seems right and proper to recognise where a child's development is slower, so that appropriate support can be provided.

Though it is not shared in official data, EYFS teachers do have more fine grained methods for tracking the progress of their pupils, such as through the DfE's non-statutory guidance 'Early years outcomes'.

## **Early years foundation stage profile: workload**

### **8 What steps could we take to reduce the workload and time burden on those involved in administering the EYFSP?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Rightly there is significant emphasis in the Early Years on practitioners' professional judgement. However, across the board (not just in the Early Years) assessment is highlighted as a particular weakness in initial teacher training (see the Carter Review of ITT), and access to ongoing continuing professional development can also be limited. The government should provide more funding, either by directly funding training opportunities for teachers, or by increasing schools' budgets so that they can afford to pay for training. This will help ensure Early Years practitioners have access to high quality training, helping them learn more about assessment.

The Chartered College of Teaching has a role to play here, too, in identifying, celebrating and sharing examples of quality assessment in the Early Years.

Technology has potential to help alleviate the workload that can be associated with providing feedback. For example, while conducting research for our 'Testing the Waters' Interim Report we worked with Early Years practitioners who use video to provide children and parents with feedback on their learning, which can be accessed remotely online via QR codes. The practitioners feel such apps are easy to use and timesaving. However, they said not all settings are aware of such technology, and may lack the funding required to make meaningful use of it.

Finally, the government needs to do more to dispel the myth that teachers must gather huge amounts of evidence to support their ELG judgements. While children's writing must be exemplified, teachers' observations and photos will suffice for other areas of the EYFSP. While conducting research for Pearson and LKMco's 'Testing the Waters Interim Report', published in May 2017, we heard from Early Years practitioners who feel pressured to provide large amounts of evidence in order to 'prove' children's development. They feel some of this evidence is unnecessary or superficial, and produce it for accountability purposes, rather than to support assessment that advances learning.

LKMco and Pearson's 'Testing the Water' report is available, here:

<https://cdn.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Testing-the-Water-Report-FINAL-INTERIM.pdf>

## **Early years foundation stage profile: moderation**

### **9 How could we improve the consistency and effectiveness of the EYFSP moderation process whilst reducing burdens?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

While undertaking research for LKMco and Pearson's 'Testing the Water' consultation, we heard from Early Years practitioners who expressed concern about the consistency of Local Authority moderation procedures.

They said they felt strongly that moderation should take place both within and between schools, and crucially that it should ensure settings share work with others outside their immediate group of schools. For example, academies should not work only with other academies in their MAT.

One way to enhance moderation could be to more closely quality assure LA moderation, extending beyond the qualitative measures currently used by the STA. Statistical analysis might help reveal authorities in which moderation is more or less reliable.

## **The best starting point for measuring progress in primary school**

**10 Any form of progress measure requires a starting point. Do you agree that it is best to move to a baseline assessment in reception to cover the time a child is in primary school (reception to key stage 2)? If you agree, then please tell us what you think the key characteristics of a baseline assessment in reception should be. If you do not agree, then please explain why.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Ultimately we would support a move away from the form of high stakes school-level accountability currently relied upon by the government, for example, to a system based on national sampling that shifts the emphasis from 'do or die' at the individual school level to a more constructive debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses throughout the system (such as specific ways in which particular areas of the curriculum are taught). We acknowledge, though, that such a shift would need to take place over a period of time, and that interim steps would need to be in place.

With that in mind, and with major caveats, we feel a baseline in the Early Years seems a logical means by which to evaluate children's progress through primary. We feel the NAHT's 'Redressing the Balance' report sets out a sensible set of considerations with regards to this, namely:

- "This should take the form of a single, nationally agreed assessment to avoid a repetition of the problems experienced in 2015/16."
- "Great care would need to be taken when designing such an assessment, with significant input from Early Years experts."
- "It is important that the results of this assessment should not be used to set targets for individual pupils or as a predictor of their future progress."
- "Instead, the data from this baseline should be used solely as part of a cohort level measure of progress at school, local and national level."
- "the initial assessment or 'start point' should be as early as possible in a child's time in school, in order to take full account of the progress they make throughout their primary schooling."

If the Early Years baseline is intended to provide a progress measure relating to children's English and maths at KS2, it makes sense that the baseline would assess proficiency in these areas. The government needs to be very clear whether proficiency in English and maths can be most fairly and reliably assessed in young children through, a), a baseline assessment targeting the specific areas of literacy and numeracy, or, b), a more rounded baseline that acknowledges the significant influence personal, social and emotional development plays in children's future academic success. In any event, such an assessment must be designed in close collaboration with Early Years practitioners and other assessment experts, including assessment organisations.

A baseline would need to be constructed in such a way that young children are assessed in a safe and developmentally appropriate environment. Our 'Testing the Water' report reveals the damaging effects statutory assessment can have on pupils' mental health, and the Department must be extremely cautious not to cause young children undue stress. There may be a role for technology here. For example, an Early Years practitioner could sit with a child while he or she completes a short assessment on an iPad.

However, the baseline must strike the right compromise between developmentally appropriate forms of assessment, and securing fair and reliable data. While we believe teacher assessment is absolutely central to the learning process, we do not feel teachers should undertake assessments intended to produce data that will then be used to hold them or their settings/schools to account. Securing reliable and fair teacher assessment judgements for the purposes of holding schools to account is currently time consuming and expensive. Furthermore, we explore in our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report some of the evidence suggesting that teacher assessments can be unreliable, when producing data for accountability purposes (or purposes perceived to be linked to accountability). We would therefore be wary of an Early Years baseline assessment that relies on forms of teacher assessment.

The government and Ofsted have a critical role to play in setting such a baseline (and all other statutory assessments) in context. Our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report shows how statutory assessments can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum and of pedagogy, and the government must ensure an Early Years baseline assessment does not distract practitioners from their core role in supporting children's development.

The government would also need to ensure that teachers, parents and other stakeholders including school governors understand how the baseline relates to other assessments taking place during the Early Years. It may cause confusion among parents if their children take a baseline assessment (the result of which they would not be told) and receive information about their child's development under the ELGs at the end of the EYFSP.

**11 If we were to introduce a reception baseline, at what point in the reception year do you think it should be administered? In particular, we are interested in the impact on schools, pupils and teaching of administering the assessment at different times.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We agree with the NAHT's suggestion that a 'window', perhaps in the second half of the Autumn Term, could be the 'best fit' time to conduct a baseline.

This will enable young children both to settle in to the setting, and give practitioners the space they need to conduct assessments in a fashion appropriate for their children. This would also then help better account for the progress young children make throughout the remainder of their time in the Early Years setting.

However, this could introduce challenges associated with fairness, and care would be needed to ensure practitioners who had administered the assessment couldn't share its content with those who had not.

**12 Our view is that it would be difficult to change key stage 1 assessment in order that it could be used as the baseline for progress in the long term. If you disagree, what could be done to improve the key stage 1 assessments so that they would be sufficiently detailed, and trusted as a fair and robust baseline?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We do not believe KS1 is the right time to conduct a baseline assessment, and the current way in which statutory assessment is conducted at KS1 would not be the appropriate way to generate baseline data in the longer term.

Our view is that teacher assessment for the purposes of producing accountability data is currently expensive and time consuming to get right. Our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report explores evidence that teacher assessment for the purposes of accountability can produce unreliable data.

Furthermore, teacher assessment for accountability can add to teachers' workload, and distract from the core process of undertaking assessment for learning.

This would suggest that an externally set and marked test would be a more efficient and potentially fairer way to conduct a baseline at KS1.

However, as our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report shows, external tests can narrow the curriculum and cause undue stress, both for teachers, pupils, and their parents. We agree with the NAHT's recommendation in its 'Redressing the Balance' report that statutory testing should be removed at KS1 in order to free schools up to deliver broad and balanced curricula.

We also dislike the current categorisations used to judge pupils' achievements at KS1. The phrases 'working towards', 'working at' and 'exceeding' the expected standard feel overly simplistic, and while conducting research for our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report we heard teachers speak passionately about the damaging effect such labels can have on children. They also fail to recognise the progress some children have made during schooling.

Finally, such labels fail to provide the granular data that would be necessary for effectively tracking progress. A raw score would be a fairer and more helpful way to report attainment.

## **The best starting point for measuring progress in primary school: interim years**

**13 If we were to introduce a new reception baseline measure, do you agree that we should continue to use key stage 1 teacher assessment data as the baseline for measuring progress in the interim years before a new measure was in place? If you disagree, what do you think we should use as the baseline instead?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

This KS1 measure is far from perfect. However, for schools' sakes – after a period of rapid and extensive reform to primary assessment – it would likely bring further disruption to change accountability measures again.

We therefore feel that it would make sense to continue to use KS1 teacher assessment data during any interim period. However, the Department should explore ways to ameliorate existing negative aspects of these assessments, including:

- The narrowing of the KS1 curriculum;
- Undue stress and pressure for pupils, their parents, and teachers;
- The negative consequences of 'labelling' children at this early stage;
- Better recognising the achievements of children with comparatively lower starting points and/or needs that mean they are unlikely to make 'expected' progress.

To address these issues, the Department must ensure it is helping schools put the assessments in context (ie they form part of the, not the whole, picture of a school's performance). Ofsted should evaluate the breadth and quality of curricula when inspecting provision in years 1 and 2.

## **The role of key stage 1 statutory assessments**

**14 If a baseline assessment is introduced in reception, in the longer term, would you favour removing the statutory requirement for all-through primary schools to administer assessments at the end of key stage 1?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Yes.

This will reduce unnecessary stress on young children, and help encourage schools teach a broad and balanced curriculum.

## **Monitoring national standards at key stage 1**

### **Measuring progress in different types of school**

**15 If we were to introduce a reception baseline to enable the creation of reception to key stage 2 progress measures for all-through primaries, what would be the most effective accountability arrangements for infant, middle and junior schools' progress measures?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We feel that, on balance, removing statutory assessment at KS1 in all schools (including infant, junior and middle schools) would support greater coherence across the system than having different schools administer different sets of statutory assessments. This would be complicated and confusing for schools, parents and pupils.

We acknowledge this presents challenges, and could for example mean two pupils make different rates of progress at the same junior school, in part because they were educated at different infant schools.

However, the challenge is not insurmountable. For instance, the government could explore options for sampling pupils' achievements in different areas of the curriculum across the country at the end of KS1, giving schools a benchmark with which to compare their own children's achievements.

We support the optimism in the NAHT's 'Redressing the Balance' report that removing statutory assessment would encourage greater communication and information sharing between schools.

Concurrently, schools would continue to collect relevant evidence in various forms to help justify judgements about pupils' rates of progress and development. Collaboration with other schools and feedback from Ofsted would help quality assure schools' judgements.

## **A proportionate assessment system**

**16 Do you think that the department should remove the statutory obligation to carry out teacher assessment in English reading and mathematics at key stage 2, when only test data is used in performance measures?**

Yes

**Please write your response in this box.:**

What is the point of teachers completing assessments and submitting these data if they are not counted in formal accountability measures?

This is not to understate the value or importance of teacher assessment. We feel removing the obligation to submit teacher assessment data at KS2 would free teachers up to conduct assessment that supports teaching and learning.

### **Key stage 1 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test**

**17 Do you agree that the key stage 1 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test should remain non-statutory beyond the 2016 to 2017 academic year, with test papers available for teachers to use as they see fit?**

Yes

**Please write your response in this box.:**

As we explain, above, we feel KS1 tests should be removed altogether. If this does not happen, they should at least remain non-statutory.

### **Multiplication tables check**

**18 At what point in key stage 2 do you think the multiplication tables check should be administered? Please explain the basis for your views.**

Not Answered

**Please write your response in this box.:**

The multiplication check should not be introduced.

We should create as much space as possible to give schools the freedom to teach a broad and balanced curriculum.

Pupils' ability to perform multiplication will be assessed both directly and indirectly as part of statutory KS2 assessments. We consequently do not believe there is a need for a separate multiplications check.

**19 How can we ensure that the multiplication tables check is implemented in a way that balances burdens on schools with benefit to pupils?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

It shouldn't be implemented for the reasons outlined, above.

### **Reducing burdens within the primary assessment system**

**20 Are there additional ways, in the context of the proposed statutory assessments, that the administration of statutory assessments in primary schools could be improved to reduce burdens?**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Our research for our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report revealed the extent to which current assessment arrangements cause unnecessary levels of stress for teachers, pupils, and parents. This stems from the perceived high-stakes nature of these assessments, and the consequent pressure pupils feel to perform well in them (and the pressure teachers feel to ensure their pupils perform well). The research also revealed the extent to which such 'high stakes' tests can narrow the curriculum, with schools focusing disproportionately on test content at the expense of a richer curriculum.

In the long term we believe a move to a system of national sampling would provide information schools and groups of schools can use to evaluate their performance, while reducing the 'do or die' nature associated with the current accountability framework. This would represent a wholesale move away from school-level accountability in its current form. However, individual schools and groups of schools would have the information to hold themselves and others to account, and Ofsted would help validate these judgements.

In the shorter term, we believe the government and Ofsted should do more to reassure schools that data from these assessments only forms part of the picture of their performance. One way to achieve this could be to take a school's average performance over at least three years, reducing the 'do or die' nature of KS2 tests. The Education Endowment Foundation suggests five years of data gives a more robust measure for small primaries.

The Education Endowment Foundation 'Families of Schools' Database is available, here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/families-of-schools-database/>

Furthermore, the removal of the requirement to submit teacher assessment data would free teachers up to focus more on conducting assessment that supports learning.

## Improving end-of-key stage statutory teacher assessment

**21 Do you agree that the statutory assessment of writing should afford teachers greater flexibility in determining a pupil's overall standard of attainment than is currently the case? Please give reasons for your answer.**

Not Answered

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We do not believe teacher assessment in its current forms should contribute to schools' performance data.

## Supporting and strengthening the assessment of English writing

**22 Please give details of any robust alternative approaches to the assessment of English writing, which the Department for Education should explore.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Comparative judgement.

## Alternative approaches to moderation

**23 Please give details of any effective models of moderation or standardisation of teacher assessment that the Department for Education should explore.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

We are sceptical that teacher assessment in its current forms should form part of statutory assessment, when the data from these assessments will be used to hold schools to account for their performance.

## Equalities

**24 Do you think that any of our proposals could have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific students, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics' (including disability, gender, race and religion or belief)? Please provide evidence to support your response.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Removing teacher assessment from statutory assessment intended to produce accountability would likely produce more reliable judgements for pupils with forms of SEND or from minority ethnic backgrounds, as it removes teachers' unconscious bias from the equation. Daisy Christodoulou has written about this, here: <https://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com/2015/10/11/tests-are-inhuman-and-that-is-what-so-good-about-them/>  
<https://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com/2015/11/01/why-is-teacher-assessment-biased/>

**25 How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity? Please provide evidence to support your response.**

**Please write your response in this box.:**

Our research for our 'Testing the Water' Interim Report found that many teachers, and particularly those working with children with forms of SEND in both mainstream and special settings, have profound concerns that statutory tests as they currently stand unfairly disadvantage these pupils.

There are several reasons for this. One concern is that the tests rely on high levels of reading and writing ability, and children with high non-verbal and cognitive function but limited language will struggle to access the tests.

Another is that the tests demand a certain level of cultural capital, referring to 'middle class' ideas and objects, unfairly disadvantaging children who may not share these frames of reference.

Another concern is around accessibility arrangements. A number of teachers told us that children with forms of SEND who normally use technology to aid their learning are sometimes prohibited from using this same technology during statutory assessments.

The government and the STA should ensure its assessments – so far as is possible – produce valid results, ie that tell us what children can do (rather than simply indirectly showing us what they can't do). It must also ensure its access arrangements give schools the reassurance they need to support children appropriately during tests.