

A framework for assessment in Early Years, KS1 and KS2

1. Introduction: Assessment Aligned with Curriculum and Pedagogy

In recent educational history, it has very often been the case that assessment has become broadly synonymous with data and reporting. In many cases, assessment has become the servant of number-crunching and spreadsheets, often in the pursuit of 'proving' pupils or groups of pupils are making progress. The real purpose of assessment – understanding and supporting pupils' learning and planning how to improve it – has, to varying degrees, been obscured. This framework sets out the principles and practice for a trust-wide approach to assessment which meets this core purpose.¹

As Sweller, Ayres and Kalyuga have said, **learning is defined as *knowing more and remembering more*** and as an alteration in long term memory - if nothing has been remembered, then nothing has been learned.² The primary purpose of assessment, therefore, is to understand the extent to which pupils *know more and remember more of the curriculum* they have experienced, and whether what they know is *flexible and secure in long-term memory*.

2. Aims and Objectives

This framework has several important objectives, the most important of which is that assessment must be fit for purpose, in all contexts and domains. This framework achieves this by ensuring:

- **A close link between assessment, curriculum, and teaching.** Assessment is primarily about how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. The outcomes of assessment should always influence decisions about teaching and the design of the curriculum
- **Assessments are valid, reliable, and used to help pupils to learn better.** Assessments should be designed to provide insight into pupils' learning – it should never be 'data-led'. However, assessment will be robust enough to provide valid and reliable information across different teachers and different cohorts or classes
- **Reporting and target setting are meaningful and valid.** Where assessment outcomes are reported, these measures will be valid, meaningful and easily understood. A valid assessment will always measure what it purports to measure – it will not be used to generalise or distort
- **Assessment methods must be efficient and not increase staff workload.** The outcomes from most formative assessments should not need to be recorded formally. There should not need to be more than three formal summative assessment points per year. Approaches to marking should be designed to ensure impact on learning and reduce the burden on staff
- **End of year assessments will be appropriately benchmarked.** This is to provide confidence to academy leaders and to the trust that standards are appropriate and to ensure comparability between academies and, where possible, with national expectations. Arrangements for benchmarking will be finalised in due course

¹ This framework was reviewed by Prof. Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment, and incorporates his feedback.

² Sweller, J., Ayres, P., Kalyuga, S. (2011).

3. Core Principles

- **The primary purpose of assessment is to provide valid and reliable information about whether pupils are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** Assessment should always provide information about whether pupils can remember, in long-term memory, what they have learned. A further purpose of assessment is to provide information about the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy and how these can be improved
- **Progress is defined as the extent to which a pupil or pupils have learned or are successfully learning the intended curriculum.** The curriculum is the progression model. It sets out what we want pupils to learn, and therefore their 'progress'. If pupils are successfully learning the curriculum, they must be making progress. Progress cannot be measured or 'proved'.³ Attempting to do so often sets up perverse incentives or practices such as teaching to the test
- **Assessment should exploit the benefits of assessment on learning and memory.** The approach to assessment should always seek to make use of the 'testing effect'⁴. Research has shown that regular assessment, if used in appropriate ways, strengthens long-term memory and recall

4. Summative and Formative Assessment

- **Summative assessments information should be gathered at least at three points during the year, which includes an end of year assessment.** Academies can, of course, also use summative approaches more frequently at other times (for example, at the ends of sequences or units of learning). Summative assessments should be designed to evaluate pupils' learning (of the curriculum) since the beginning of that unit, sequence or term/year, along with any content taught previously and considered essential to support current and future learning. Academies should note that there are often limitations in using summative assessments for diagnostic purposes⁵
- **At other times, regular formative assessment will be the main approach.** The main aim is diagnostic and remedial: to identify whether important learning has been securely mastered and fluency achieved. From lesson to lesson, this will only rarely take a 'formal' test-based format. There is no need to record or aggregate 'data' from such formative assessments, other than information the teacher feels necessary. Formative assessments will be 'low stakes' and are likely to take a wide variety of forms: from reviewing pupils' work and responses, interactive Q&A during teaching, to 'quick quizzes' and 'exit tickets', teachers will deploy a range of strategies to gauge pupils' fluency and mastery of key knowledge and understanding. The impact of formative assessment will be evident through pupils' improved understanding and mastering of the curriculum
- **The development of high-quality assessment approaches is essential.** For example, research has shown that a high volume of high-quality questions is a significant factor in effective assessment which supports improved learning. As Tim Oates notes, these questions are particularly effective in 'challenging, flushing out misconceptions, stimulating thought and so on. Teachers should design

³ Attempting to measure learning is inherently flawed (it is too complex) and very often reductive (applying a single numeric metric narrows our view of what has/has not actually been learned).

⁴ http://psych.wustl.edu/memory/Agarwal/Agarwal_Bain_Chamberlain_2012_EDPR.pdf

⁵ For example, summative assessment is often highly composite, so unless very skilfully interpreted and assessed, can lead to generic remedial action.

learning sequences – engaging with content – but at the same time think of high-quality questions and the answers which would indicate the depth of understanding which is being aimed for’

- **Academies should draw on robust methodology that meets these core principles.** Academies should draw on effective practice both externally and across the trust. Collaboration between academies in the trust will be especially valuable in developing robust assessment methodologies and ensuring trust-wide consistency. Externally, there is good body evidence which supports the use of ‘comparative judgement’ methodology, as propounded by Daisy Christodoulou⁶

5. Tracking and Reporting

- **National reporting measures, such as SATs scaled scores, should never be used to track pupils’ attainment or progress.** However, in Key Stage 2, it is legitimate to make judicious use of external sources (NFER tests) or SATs test questions as part of assessments (both formative and summative) and to support teaching.⁷ This is because familiarity with test instruments is known to be a significant factor in pupils’ performance in external tests and examinations⁸.
- **Academies should report on the extent to which pupils have successfully learned the intended curriculum.** To do this, each academy should make an assessment at three points in each academic year, in each subject (except where this would not be appropriate - for example where subjects are taught on a termly carousel, or where the overall teaching time is small. In these cases, a single end-of-year summative assessment would be sufficient). Each assessment point should be synoptic (that is, assessing pupils’ learning since the start of the year or key stage), and academies are free to design the most suitable assessment tools for this purpose. Information from these assessments will be collected at a trust-level at each of the three points (see Appendix A)
- **Pupils’ learning should be assessed and reported using the four-point scale set out below.** Academies should submit at the end of each term, and report to parents⁹ and other appropriate stakeholders, for each subject, the proportion of pupils who are:
 - *Successfully learning all or nearly all of the curriculum, demonstrating a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills expected (1)*
 - *Successfully learning most of the curriculum, demonstrating a good understanding of the knowledge and skills expected, although there may be some gaps (2)*
 - *Successfully learning some of the curriculum, demonstrating a satisfactory understanding of the knowledge and skills expected, although there may be a number of gaps (3)*
 - *Not successfully learning the curriculum, with important gaps in the skills and knowledge expected (4)*

⁶ <https://researched.org.uk/comparative-judgement-the-next-big-revolution-in-assessment/>

⁷ As long as the questions (instruments) used assess against the taught curriculum.

⁸ https://www2.gwu.edu/~fellows/GTAP/Online%20Makeup/T-L%20Presentation%20Readings/Using%20Practice%20Tests_2004-Winter_p109.pdf

⁹ To strengthen the effectiveness of reporting to parents, academies should ensure that high-level curriculum plans (or equivalent) are available on the academy website so that parents can understand the content covered over the term.

In order to do this, teachers should assess every pupil in each subject (see Appendix A) using the above four-point scale. This assessment should draw primarily upon the teacher's knowledge of each pupil, using a range of formative and summative assessment approaches¹⁰ (Further clarity around the 4 point scale to follow)

6. Assessment in Early Years Settings

From September 2021, schools will adopt the new Early Years Foundation Framework. Within this, schools are expected to follow the principles of EYFS profile assessments outlined in the EYFS Handbook 2021:

- assessment is based primarily on the practitioner's knowledge of the child – knowledge is gained predominantly from observation and interaction in a range of daily activities and events
- responsible pedagogy must be in place so that the provision enables each child to demonstrate their learning and development fully
- embedded learning is identified by assessing what a child can do consistently and independently in a range of everyday situations
- an effective assessment presents a holistic view of a child's learning and development
- accurate assessments take account of contributions from a range of perspectives including the child, their parents and other relevant adults

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)

- **The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)** is a short assessment, to be taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception. The statutory guidance for the administration of the RBA can be found in the EYFS Framework Document 2021, Annex B. To supplement the statutory baseline assessment schools are required to complete an internal baseline assessment to inform curriculum design which will be validated by the School Improvement Team during the Advent term visits.
- **Assessment and reporting in relation to the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) and guidance in development matters.** Early years practitioners should continue with existing practice in gathering sufficient key knowledge and information to make robust and reliable judgements about children's

¹⁰ In early years, children's attainment should be recorded using the EYFS profile and, for reading, using the appropriate phonics teaching and assessment scheme.

attainment in relation to the 17 ELGs. These judgements will typically assess whether or not children are meeting expected levels of development. The proportion of children at each of the standards should be reported as usual to the Local authority, with a copy being shared with the Trust.

- **Academies should also assess children’s learning of core knowledge in the 7 areas of learning and development set out in the early years’ curriculum.** These summative assessments will be made using the four-point scale set out in section 5, above¹¹ and will be made at two points in the year (typically at the end of Lent 1 and Pentecost 2). This will only apply to children in Reception.¹² Prior to each assessment point, practitioners should make a best-fit judgement about how well pupils have learned this core knowledge using the four-point scale above.
- **Assessment of core knowledge must not increase the burden of assessment on EY practitioners.** In gathering ‘evidence’ about children’s learning of the core knowledge, practitioners should use a mix of informal and summative assessment methods during the course of on-going teaching, sufficient to understand how well children are able to show, explain and apply the core knowledge. It is expected that assessing children’s grasp of the core knowledge will also contribute evidence for other ELGs. However, there should not be direct link between the core knowledge assessed score (1-4) and any ELG assessment (expected or emerging), or vice-versa¹³
- **This approach will be kept under review to ensure it is fit for purpose.** An important aim of the assessment of core knowledge is to understand the effectiveness of the EY curriculum, and how it can be improved. It is also to understand how well children develop an understanding of the most important knowledge that contributes to their development, as well as preparing them for learning in Year 1. As such, we will continually review this approach to ensure it meets these aims, without adding to the burden of assessment for EY practitioners.
- **The assessment of children’s core knowledge in EY, as set out above, will not be used for comparative or accountability purposes.** As EY curricula between academies are likely to differ markedly, and the approach to assessment is largely informal and not guided by criteria, comparisons between academies and with the ELG judgments are not valid. Academies should only use assessment information to reflect and evaluate children’s learning of the core knowledge in their EY curriculum, and to inform improvements to teaching and/or the curriculum.

7. Phonics

- **Assessment of early reading and phonics should be regular and help to keep pupils on track.** Academies should ensure their approach to the assessment of phonics and early reading is accurate, reliable and effective in helping all pupils to keep up, in line with at least 90% of children meeting the Year 1 phonics screening check. Academies are not required to use the four-point scale set out above for reporting on pupils’ learning of phonics but will continue to use their systems for

¹¹ EY practitioners should note that this scale runs in the opposite direction to the two-point scale used for the ELGs. While it is recognised that this is not ideal, this is important to ensure consistency in assessment of the curriculum with other year groups in each academy.

¹² Assessment arrangements for children in Nursery provision remain unchanged.

¹³ For example, ‘if a particular ELG or set of ELGs is judged X, then the core knowledge judgement can only be Y’. This should be avoided, and the ELG assessment decoupled from the core knowledge assessment.

formative assessment. Instead, academies should report on the proportion of children in Year 1 (and, where appropriate, Y2) who are on track to pass the phonics screening check.

8. Targets

- **Individual pupil targets should never be used in early years or in key stages 1 or 2.** There is considerable evidence of the negative impact of target setting on pupils' achievement and expectations of themselves, as well as teachers' expectations. Targets at a pupil level often lack validity and reliability and are sometimes derived from the inappropriate use of baseline measures¹⁴
- **Academies should still set end of key-stage cohort targets for attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.** Such targets are much less affected by statistical unreliability and other sources of uncertainty. These targets remain a useful tool for academy self-evaluation, improvement planning and accountability. Note that cohort targets should also be set for the proportions of pupils meeting the Y1 and Y2 phonics screening check¹⁵

9. Benchmarking

- **Academy leaders will continue to use FFT estimates to benchmark their performance against similar schools nationally.**
- **There should be a single end-of-year assessment for Reading, SPAG and Maths.** The end-of-year assessment should cover the curriculum content taught over the academic year. The trust will make arrangements for the relevant papers to ensure consistency and comparability across the Primary Academies. Academies are free to devise assessments (where appropriate for all other subjects), or to draw on assessments from other sources. A key purpose of this assessment is to check the 'reasonableness' and consistency of in-year teacher assessments (using the four-point scale above). Internal moderation of the end-of-year assessments should be undertaken using an appropriate sampling method. Reporting of end-of-year assessments should still use the four-point scale above (or the standardised score for Reading, SPAG and Maths)

10. Accountability and Workload

- **Accountability will be through existing trust review structures.** These will consider whether curriculum intentions are appropriate and if assessments of pupils' learning are suitable and valid. They will scrutinise the academy's own evaluations of how successfully pupils are learning the intended curriculum in each subject (or a sample of subjects). Assessments will not be used in isolation to reach judgements about pupils' progress or attainment
- **Assessment approaches should be implemented in ways which reduce staff workload.** For example, assessments made using the four-point scale noted above should not be translated to other measures, such as SATs scores, which would require the design and use of appropriate criteria. Similarly, assessment in key stages 1 and 2 should draw primarily on information from

¹⁴ <https://bennewmark.wordpress.com/2017/09/10/why-target-grades-miss-the-mark/>

¹⁵ In primary schools, cohort subject targets need only be set in reading, writing, mathematics (KS1 and KS2), for EYFS and for the Y1 and Y2 phonics screening check.

informal, formative and summative assessments. There is no need for staff to routinely record information from informal assessments

- **Approaches to marking should be impact evidence based.** Academies should review their approaches to marking to ensure they are not increasing staff workload. For example, pupils' routine work should not normally be marked. Instead, academies should identify a suitable number of assessment tasks which will be teacher-assessed. The purpose of teacher marking is to help the teacher understand gaps in learning for individual pupils or groups of pupils. Feedback to address these gaps should be provided as promptly as possible. It is not always necessary for such feedback to be written, or a record to be kept that feedback has been provided – evidence of improvement in pupils' learning or quality of work will usually be sufficient. For most purposes, responsive teaching, including through whole-class, or individual, verbal feedback is normally the most effective strategy¹⁶

Appendix A: Summary of Timeframe and Reporting

Assessment information will be gathered and reported to the trust as shown in the table below:

Subject(s)	Key stage(s)	Frequency	Format for reporting (all stakeholders)
Reading, SPAG, Maths	KS1 and 2	End of Advent and Lent terms	Proportions of pupils in each subject at 1, 2 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5
Reading, SPAG, Maths	KS1 and 2	End of the year	Standardised score collection
RE, writing and science	KS1 and 2	End of Advent and Lent terms and end-of-year	Proportions of pupils in each subject at 1, 2 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5
History, geography, art, D&T, music, PE, computing, PSCE	KS1 and 2	End of Advent and Lent terms and end-of-year depending on whether the subject has been covered in the term	Proportions of pupils in each subject at 1, 2 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5
MFL	KS2	End of Advent and Lent terms and end-of-year	Proportions of pupils at 1, 2 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5

¹⁶ For example, <https://twitter.com/MrBoothY6/status/1218898947651047426>

Phonics	KS1	End of Advent and Lent terms and end-of-year	Proportions of pupils on track to pass the phonics screening check
7 areas of learning and development	EYFS	End of Lent 1 and end-of-year	Proportions of pupils at 1, 2 3 or 4 on four-point scale in section 5
17 ELGs	EYFS	End of the year	Proportions of pupils achieving a good level of development (GLD) in each ELG

Notes:

1. The table above sets out the expectations on academies to report assessment information to the trust. Academies may gather assessment information as they wish, as long as their approaches are justified in terms of impact on learning and do not drive excessive staff workload, or distort the curriculum or teaching
2. Reporting to parents should take place in line with academies usual reporting timeframes
3. There is no expectation that pupils undertake assessments in 'formal' conditions, or that teachers make use of test or examination-style papers. The exception to this is the judicious use of past national test papers in English and mathematics in Years 5 and/or 6
4. Academies will be expected to have procedures in place to identify and support pupils that are not on track to achieve their FFT estimates, this will form part of the existing review structures.