



Department
for Education

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 11 October 2013
Your comments must reach us by that date

**Primary assessment and accountability
under the new national curriculum**

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: www.education.gov.uk/consultation/

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name: Jane Payler	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Organisation (if applicable): TACTYC, the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators	
Address: Faculty of Education, Health and Social Care, University of Winchester West Hill Winchester SO22 4NR	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please mark the box below that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school head teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary school head teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary school teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Other education professional	<input type="checkbox"/> Local authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent / carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Union / professional association
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify:

TACTYC is a membership based organisation. Our activities include:

- **'advocacy and lobbying'** - providing a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners through responding to early years policy initiatives and contributing to the debate on the education and training of the UK early years workforce;
- **'informing'** – developing the knowledge-base of all those concerned with early years education and care by disseminating research findings through, for example, our international [Early Years Journal](#), annual conference, website and occasional publications;
- **'supporting'** – encouraging informed and constructive discussion and debate and supporting practitioner reflection, the use of evidence-based practice and practitioner-research through, for example, our [newsletter](#) and website (www.tactyc.org.uk).

TACTYC currently has around 500+ members and this response has been prepared in consultation between TACTYC Executive and the wider membership via the TACTYC website.

Teacher assessment and reporting to parents

1 Will these principles underpin an effective curriculum and assessment system?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Question 1: Will these principles underpin an effective curriculum and assessment system?

These principles are core principles linked to formative, on-going assessment which teachers should be using in the classroom regardless of the age of the pupils.

The proposed assessment arrangements certainly do not meet the stated principles, and will not be of use to school, parents or children. The proposed system would not

- enable anyone to pinpoint aspects where children are falling behind, nor
- provide clear information for parents on their child's strength, weaknesses or progress; rather the proposed report to parents (consultation document 4.13) only benchmarks children in a very unhelpful way against others nationally.

Within summative assessment, it is essential to include information about progress. Children start from different baselines, and the amount of progress achieved should be considered of equal importance rather than relying solely on attainment relative to national expectations. In order to enable improved support for vulnerable children, progress and attainment information should be shared alongside factors that may have affected progress

In the early years, formative assessment by well qualified staff who know children well is vital in guiding teaching and curriculum development; external testing is not appropriate in the early years as it limits the necessary breadth of learning, and encourages teaching to the test. The expected standards at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, together with the definition of a good level of development, are resulting in many children being labelled as failures at the start of their school career. Tests cannot capture the most important aspects of the Prime Areas of Learning and Development nor the Characteristics of Effective Learning for young children, and risk damaging the self-confidence and self-esteem that are important aspects of being a successful learner. Parents and children make important contributions to the reliability of assessment in the early years, and should be part of the assessment process.

2 a) What other good examples of assessment practice we can share more widely?

Comments:

Research has consistently demonstrated that the most important assessment is formative – the on-going assessment for learning which is used to inform teaching and provide children with constructive feedback, helping them to see their own next steps. This is entirely different from a 'pass or fail' judgement. (Assessment Reform Group, *Assessment in schools: Fit for purpose? A Commentary by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme 2009*, Institute of Education; Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998) *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment*, Kings College, London, Dept of Education and Professional Studies; Clarke, S, 2001, *Unlocking Formative Assessment*, Hodder Education; Wiliam, D., *Assessment for Learning: why, what and how*, 2009, Institute of Education).

Many maintained nursery schools have devised rigorous curriculum and assessment practices, including systematic progress reviews which involve parents and children. This should be shared widely with reception teachers and with those working in the private, voluntary and independent sectors.

Many special needs coordinators also have systematic approaches which could offer good examples to mainstream staff.

2 b) Is there additional support we can provide for schools?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Comments:

Ensuring that teachers with specialist early years qualifications (Early Years Teacher) have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and are thus eligible to work in schools would be very helpful in YR and Key Stage 1, where pupils would benefit from their expert knowledge of observational assessment and of the pedagogy that is most effective in helping children to make progress in the early years.

Assessment ensuring the vital recognition of children's innate abilities, as demonstrated in their play, must be included in any assessment relating to EYFS and KS1.

National curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science

3 Does a scaled score, decile ranking and value-added measure provide useful information from national curriculum tests?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

We strongly reject ranking of this kind because it takes a limited and limiting view of achievement, leading to the perception that narrow test scores matter more than the kind of holistic development that is crucial in the early years and is the best foundation for later academic learning. It ignores the huge influence of home experience, and could be seen as a judgement on parenting. Parents want information about their individual child's progress from his or her starting point and are likely to be upset or confused by spurious and inconsistent comparative measures. It is naïve to suppose that the results of these tests will remain confidential.

The examples quoted in 4.13 in the consultation document show categorically how useless such information is to parent, child or teacher. What teachers need is detail which says how well children are doing, not whether they passed or failed.

A parent and child receiving Tom's report will see that Tom has been marked out as a complete failure, which is a recipe for disaffection from school and future failure to achieve Tom's potential as a learner. It places blame squarely on the child and family. For children whose decile ranking is higher, this system of reporting encourages an orientation toward competitive performance rather than toward mastery by meeting personal challenges; research indicates that a mastery orientation leads to better attainment and performance than simply attempting to out-rank others.

Ranking children at an early age can be damaging to a child's self-esteem and if this is reported in decile terms it is likely to have a negative impact on learning dispositions and engagement. It is important that a child's progress is reported sympathetically alongside consideration of what may be occurring that could explain a lack of progress such as changes in home circumstances or teaching staff, or poor performance/health on the day of assessment.

It is not helpful to compare children with others who are up to a year older and have greater maturity and more life experience. It will further disadvantage and damage the confidence of summer born children, many boys whose average rate of development is slower than girls, children with EAL, and others who already suffer from being wrongly labelled as 'less able' and from being given inappropriate remedial work. This is a

particular issue in the early years, but it continues to affect children throughout their schooling.

Baselines to measure progress

4 Should we continue to measure progress from the end of key stage 1, using internally-marked national curriculum tests?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Measuring progress from the end of Key Stage 1 allows an examination of the success of provision across the four years within Key Stage 2, which provides more meaningful information than considering progress across two – or even three, as in the misguided proposal to establish a baseline within the EYFS -- different stages of education.

It is true that pressure to demonstrate value added may bring perverse incentives to downgrade earlier attainment, and therefore the idea of an objective 'test' could be considered an attractive option compared to internally marked tests. It should be borne in mind, however, that English children are the most tested in the world and suffer the attendant stress of being judged which is a contributing factor in the low levels of well-being shown by children in the UK in international comparisons. Assessments of attainment for children at such a young age should be conducted in an informal atmosphere, by familiar and trusted adults, in order to minimise the harmful effects on stress levels, self-belief and confidence in themselves as learners which can have far-reaching consequences to future learning.

5 If end of key stage 1 national curriculum test results are used as the baseline to measure progress, should school-level results be published?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Assuming that key stage 2 results will be published, it is logical to also publish the key stage 1 results. This could ameliorate the tendency to downgrade attainment at the earlier stage in order to boost progress measures for key stage 2.

However, we would refer to our reply to Q4, and reiterate that the testing regime in England is distorting the curriculum throughout the primary phase, with negative results on pupils' dispositions for learning. We consider that teacher assessment across a broad curriculum is a more useful approach throughout the primary years.

6 Should we introduce a baseline check at the start of reception?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We strongly oppose the proposal to introduce at the beginning of the reception year a baseline check on curricular areas covered by the national curriculum tests (English, maths and science). This proposal is fundamentally misguided and risks distorting the experiences and learning of young children.

- Assessment arrangements in the EYFS should not be determined in a primary assessment proposal. The reception year, beginning for almost all children at the age of four, sits firmly within the EYFS and assessment needs to be governed by established early years principles and pedagogy.
- The first priority when children enter YR is to help each child become a settled and confident member of the class. Teachers are rightly concerned with forming relationships, socialisation and establishing trust, focusing on the Prime Areas of Learning and Development. Checking children at this time would undermine the settling in process, and cause unnecessary stress for children, worry for their parents, and unacceptable pressure for their teachers.
- Many children at the start of the reception year, particularly the youngest and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), will not be able to show the full extent of their capabilities to a teacher with whom they have not yet formed a trusting relationship.
- The statutory school age is the term following a child's 5th birthday (earlier than in most other countries), yet in England children begin their reception year up to a full year before that point. The EYFS is intended to ensure that children receive an appropriate experience, pedagogy and curriculum, and this must be guarded against downward pressure from that which is appropriate for older children.
- The EYFS Profile at the end of the reception year is intended to reflect the inclusive EYFS framework. Teachers already track their pupils' progress termly in relation to the EYFS, differentiating their teaching and approaches to ensure that their children succeed to the best of their abilities and levels of development.
- Instituting a narrow skills test at age 4 would put pressure on practitioners to 'teach to the test' at even earlier ages, as well as raise expectations among parents that these are the essential markers of their child's progress and for attainment. In consequence, children would be increasingly subjected to inappropriate and unnecessary formal teaching that would detract from the rich exploratory, playful, creative, and intellectual experiences which we know from research benefit children in the early years. This will in turn impact on children's attitude and willingness to

learn and parents' confidence in the educational system.

"A test or examination should focus on what matters in the curriculum, rather than simply what is easy to measure. If the test is not measuring what matters in the curriculum, important untested aspects are likely to be downplayed in teaching. One of the reasons given for scrapping key stage 2 tests in science in England from 2010 was that teachers were neglecting crucial hands-on science skills because they were not examined in the written tests. (ARG 2011)"

There is no evidence that testing children at age 4 in narrow academic skills and knowledge more appropriate for older children is predictive of later attainment. On the contrary, there is considerable evidence that the development in the early years of children's well-being and attributes as learners such as curiosity, motivation, perseverance and independent thinking are far more important and reliable predictors of later academic achievement. Early gains in narrow skills involved in literacy and maths can be achieved through early training, but these advantages are lost within a few years; this is likely to be attributed to a focus on teaching these skills to the exclusion of wider understanding of the social and cultural knowledge of literacy and mathematics, explored in meaningful contexts such as pretend play (e.g. Worthington and van Oers, forthcoming). Children whose early years experience has instead supported emotional well-being, cognitive development and self-regulation may score less well on early academic tests, but show achievement benefits in the longer term.

(Schweinhart, L. J., & Weikart, D. P. (1997). *Lasting differences: The HighScope Preschool Curriculum Comparison study through age 23* (Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 12). Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press. See <http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=837>; Suggate et al 2012 ; CfBt (2010). *Effective early childhood education programmes: a best-evidence synthesis*)

A baseline test at the beginning of the reception year when children are adjusting to the inevitable changes in this major transition, is bound to show depressed results, particularly for children with no previous experience of being in a class or school (i.e. the child who has been placed with a childminder, informal pre-school or day nursery with a small group of other children).

- Within curriculum areas, it is not valid to attempt to extrapolate progress expectations in a linear fashion from the early years to the end of key stage 2. For example, reading involves comprehension and knowledge of language -- not just decoding – and so depends on a broad base of comprehension of language, vocabulary, and rich experience such as that covered in the EYFS areas and Communication and Language, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design. Oral language, built through imaginative play and discussion of ideas and experience, underpins later reading and writing ability. A simple test of letter or word recognition is in no way predictive of later attainment in English which is better supported by playful enjoyment of language through conversation, sharing stories and imaginative play. Similarly, later maths attainment rests on a basis of understanding properties of shape and space built in block play, using symbols such as graphics used in role play, problem-solving in practical activities, and so on; this cannot be captured by matching numerals to a set of objects on a computer screen. Children also need to develop their cultural knowledge of mathematics and the social and cultural uses of mathematical signs and texts (as they should do with writing), and opportunities for this learning is best developed through pretend play rather than formal activities.
- The EYFS Profile is an inclusive assessment – made on the basis of not only

teacher assessment but also gathering information from and involving parents and carers. This has had an enormous impact on one of the most significant aspects of raising outcomes for children – schools and parents working together to support the children’s development and learning. There is no way a baseline check in the early days of schooling can be undertaken with accurate information from parents.

- EYFS assessment principles involve consideration of the whole child across a range of contexts and over time, in order to build an accurate and useful picture of a child’s abilities, interests and ways of learning. The EYFS Profile gives such a rounded picture of a child’s attainment, and also includes vital information about the child as a self-regulated learner. The proposal to test a young child in an unfamiliar situation at a transition point in their education will not provide reliable results, is contrary to EYFS assessment principles, and is unfair to children and their parents and early years practitioners.
- One option that could be considered would be to complete the early years foundation stage profile in the term in which children reach statutory school age, so that autumn born children would be assessed in the January and spring born children in the summer term of the reception year. Summer born children would not be assessed until the autumn term when they enter Year 1, which would mean that Year 1 teachers would be familiar with the profile, and thus better informed about the pupils that enter their class from the reception year and able to manage the transition into Key Stage 1 more effectively. It would also result in more equitable and accurate judgements at a coherent stage of primary education.

7 Should we allow schools to choose from a range of commercially-available assessments?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Before the previous EYFS Profile was implemented, the baseline assessment process allowed for local authorities and schools to use any agreed assessment and there were scores of schemes in use, ranging from computer-based tests to teacher assessment. This resulted in chaos of assessments of uneven quality and no equivalence of information. This was abandoned in favour of a uniform, reliable and valid assessment. There is no reason to go back to the previous unhelpful situation.

Commercially available assessments are typically checklists of skills and knowledge, which do not take account of the different ways and rates at which children learn and develop, nor of the ability of children to build conceptual understanding and apply their knowledge. An easily administered test is likely to consider skills that can easily be quantified – but which do not count as significant factors in the picture of a child’s learning and development. As described above, computer-based assessments would be both unreliable since children are not likely to demonstrate all their skills and abilities in this context and invalid because they will not be testing important areas of learning

and development. This could lead to schools identifying assessments that they are easily able to manipulate and is unlikely to give comparable, transparent data that can be moderated across schools or localities. It could also lead to increasing confusion for parents unless each of these assessments is explained fully.

8 Should we make the baseline check optional?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

Currently, the EYFS Profile is statutory and this should remain the case. While it is not intended for providing information that would enable targets to be set for individual children, it can be used to indicate the attainment of cohorts of children. Currently the Good Level of Development has been defined in a completely unhelpful way since it includes unrealistic literacy and maths Early Learning Goals which, as described above, are not useful indicators of later attainment. Using the prime areas, however, would put the focus on underpinning learning and development and would allow cohort analysis to consider progress at later stages.

Schools already make a summative assessment in the first term of school, to provide information for their planning. In most cases, this is based on the EYFS, with reference to Development Matters. Schools already have the power to use a 'baseline check' if they choose to do so at any point. Schools have developed tracking systems to understand children's progress, whether from earlier points in the EYFS for those schools with nursery provision or from the start of the reception year.

Accountability

9 Do you have any comments about these proposals for the Department's floor standards?

Comments:

Floor standards are not appropriate for young children who are at a time in their lives when development is rapid and fluctuating. One of the underpinning principles of the EYFS is that of the unique child; individuals should not be compared with others at this stage, nor should arbitrary targets be set for them to reach. What matters is that each one is making progress that is developmentally appropriate for that child.

10 If we take a baseline from the start of reception, should end of key stage 1 national curriculum tests become non-statutory for all-through primary schools?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

The baseline should not be undertaken at the start of the reception year, as discussed above. Schools should be continually seeking to understand the progress of children and how their progress relates to their educational and home experiences, and both formative and summative assessments are integral to this process. As long as there is any national requirement and reporting of progress information, a summative assessment at the end of key stage 1 is an important marker along this route and should not be optional.

It takes some children many weeks to settle into Reception, and a baseline conducted at the beginning of Reception would not allow for a full picture of the child's abilities and attainment. In addition, such very early assessment runs the risk of labelling particularly vulnerable children, such as summer-born boys, as failing from the beginning of formal schooling. They are not failing; they are merely at a different stage in their development.

11 Should we include an average point score measure in floor standards?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

12 Are there any other measures we should prioritise in performance tables?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Recognising the attainment and progress of all pupils

13 What data could be published to hold schools (including special schools) accountable for the attainment and progress of the lowest-attaining pupils?

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply.	X
E-mail address for acknowledgement:	nancystewart.stewart@gmail.com

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 11 October 2013

Send by post to
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