

Assessment Without Levels

Changes to Assessment

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 that started to be used by all schools at the beginning of this Academic Year. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment will look very different to how it has been for the past 20 years. The aim of this guide is to give you some clear information about what these changes mean for children at Pakeman. Before we even think about assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum has brought to subjects that are traditionally assessed.

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 is 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. These are set out yearly across both key stages.

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 content being brought down to earlier years.

The End of Curriculum Levels

The Department for Education (DfE) has decided that the children in Years 2 and 6 in 2015 will be the last pupils to be awarded a level in their end of Key Stage tests (Summer 2015).

So why are levels disappearing?

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 it was evident that a significant number of pupils were able to achieve a Level 5 or 6 in a test—but were not secure at that level. The old national curriculum and the levels system was not allowing pupils to build 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 different methods of assessing pupils, and have decided to keep the Assertive Mentoring system and Target Tracker which have already been in place at Pakeman for several years.

WHAT IS ASSERTIVE MENTORING?

Mentoring is more normally associated with secondary schools. In primary schools it is less well-developed. Where mentoring occurs it tends to be conducted by teaching assistants or support services and is perceived as being primarily pastoral in nature. It is aimed at improving behaviour or supporting personal development, with little consideration of academic attainment, achievement or attitude. In brief, mentoring is often a low level, low status activity; involving few children and fewer staff for limited periods and with limited results.

Assertive Mentoring is very different. It involves all children and all staff, all of the time. It is high status, driven by

the leadership team and is the central activity to drive forward school improvement and pupil achievement.

Assertive Mentoring is a process rather than an activity. It is a collective term for the key processes of the school's work:

Its key components are:

- School Self Evaluation
- Data analysis
- School improvement planning
- Target Setting: long, medium and short term
- Pupil Tracking
- Intervention and support systems
- Performance Management systems

Its key outcomes are:

- True Assessment for Learning
- A personalised curriculum
- Raised standards for all

It facilitates:

- Continual and consistent assessment
- Effective feedback to pupils and parents
- Pupil and peer-assessment
- Marking and feedback
- Home-school partnerships

Collection of Systems:

Assertive Mentoring provides the vehicle for ensuring that these often separate entities are brought together and wrapped around the child. The child remains central to the whole process throughout.

"The Assertive Mentoring system brings together many outstanding school systems together in one place, It can form the basis of a focused, child centred collaborative approach based on a dialogue about the child's present and future learning needs. The system is outstanding and should have a significant impact upon the motivation and progress of pupils."

(G. Downey SIP 2008)

Crucially, for Assertive Mentoring this information is shared with the child in an **understandable and consistent** format. It gives all stakeholders; teachers, managers, parents and pupils a framework which makes sense of these often unrelated activities and provides a focus on the individual child achieving their potential.

How progress will be assessed (Assessment without Levels)

The **Assertive Mentoring** approach will be used to assess attainment and progress in mathematics, writing (including Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation), reading and science. Staff have been given training and there is dedicated time throughout the year to moderate assessments in order to standardise judgements and ensure consistency across the school.

How does Assertive Mentoring work?

- Levels have been replaced with Stages. Stage 1 is Y1; Stage 2 is Y2 etc. Each stage is broken down into steps.
- There are 6 steps per stage:

STEPS	WHAT STEPS MEAN?
Beginning (b)	This means that a child is moving into working towards the objectives for the stage, e.g. 1b would be beginning to meet the objectives for year 1.
Beginning + (b+)	They move on to beginning + as they begin to meet more objectives.
Working with Confidence (w)	This means the child working more confidently within the age related stage, e.g. 3W would mean that the pupil had met approximately 75% of the objectives for year 3.
Working with Confidence+ (w+)	They move on to working with confidence + as they begin to meet more objectives.
Skilled (s)	This means that the child has secured all the Year 1 age related expectations.
Skilled+ (s+)	They move on to skills+ once they have mastered the objectives for the stage and are then ready to move on to the next stage

If a pupil moves through the stages securely meeting their age related expectations each year then they will have made **good progress**. Lower and higher attaining pupils may be working on stages above or below their age.

Below, is an **Attainment Ladder** to show how we will track pupils as they progress through the stages and steps.

	Year Group	Age Related Expectations
		Stage 7 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 7	Stage 7 - Skilled
		Stage 7 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 7 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 7 - Beginning +
		Stage 7 - Beginning
		Stage 6 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 6	Stage 6 - Skilled
		Stage 6 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 6 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 6 - Beginning +
		Stage 6 - Beginning
		Stage 5 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 5	Stage 5 - Skilled
		Stage 5 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 5 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 5 - Beginning +
		Stage 5 - Beginning
		Stage 4 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 4	Stage 4 - Skilled
		Stage 4 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 4 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 4 - Beginning +
		Stage 4 - Beginning
		Stage 3 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 3	Stage 3 - Skilled
		Stage 3 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 3 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 3 - Beginning +
		Stage 3 - Beginning
		Stage 2 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 2	Stage 2 - Skilled
		Stage 2 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 2 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 2 - Beginning +
		Stage 2 - Beginning
		Stage 1 - Skilled+
	End of Yr 1	Stage 1 - Skilled
		Stage 1 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 1 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 1 - Beginning +
		Stage 1 - Beginning
		Stage 0 - Skilled+
	End of Reception	Stage 0 - Skilled
		Stage 0 - Working with Confidence+
		Stage 0 - Working with Confidence
		Stage 0 - Beginning +
		Stage 0 - Beginning

Target setting / Expected Progress

To meet age related expectations, children should reach the skilled (+) step by the end of the appropriate year.

To move from skilled (+) in one year band to the next is 6 steps over 6 half terms. Therefore this equates to 1 step of progress each half term. This represents EXPECTED progress.

Many children will make more than expected progress (More than 6 steps). At Pakeman, 7/8+ steps will be classed as GOOD progress. 9+ steps will be classed as outstanding.

This is an example of how targets might be set for a child with a year one entry level assessment as working just below band 1 at the end of the EYFS requirements (40-60s+), in order for them to reach the secondary ready standard, 6 skilled (6s) at the end of Year 6.

Year 1 Autumn 1 assessment	End of Year 1 target	End of Year 2 target	End of Year 3 target	End of Year 4 target	End of Year 5 target	End of Year 6 target
40-60s	1s	2s	3s	4s	5s	6s

Attitude and behaviour

We measure and record children's attitudes to school life, and set targets for improvement if they are needed. Many aspects of our routine come under this heading, for example wearing of correct uniform, effort, behaviour in and out of the classroom and attendance and punctuality.

Mentoring files and one-to-one meetings

Each child has a very important Assertive Mentoring file which stays with them throughout their time at Pakeman. The mentoring file includes all the information the staff, children and parents need to be aware of in relation to academic achievement, attitude and behaviour.

Mentoring files are the focus of one-to-one meetings. Parents are invited to review folders during parent evenings. And to discuss how well he or she is doing at school and to set targets for the term ahead.

Tracking Attainment and Progress

We have been successfully using an online assessment and tracking tool called Target Tracker for many years. When the changes to assessment were announced, Target Tracker developed their system to allow a smooth transition between assessing with levels and assessing without. By continuing with Target Tracker, we are confident our assessment process will allow us to track the progress of our pupils accurately and efficiently in line with the requirements of the DfE.

We use the information we have gathered through the use of the assessment records, daily marking and response work, group and guided work and, of course, any tests we use to input data into Target Tracker. We then use it to manipulate the data in order to target pupils more effectively, thereby raising standards.

External moderation

To ensure rigour, we are part of a network of schools (Futurezone) working to develop a system for assessing without levels to actively and comprehensively raise standards for our children. These schools meet regularly. We share ideas and evaluate each other's work to ensure accuracy, shared means of communication and consistency.