The new national curriculum and ‘Life after Levels’

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What are levels?

- The chief measurement used in the existing NC
- Each level has a sub-level (e.g., 3A, 3B, 3C)
- Each level describes achievement expected
- Level 1 – achievement expected of 5 year olds. Level 8 – most able pupils at 14
- Expectation is one level every two years
- Expectation is that majority of pupils get Level 4 by end year 6
What’s ‘wrong’ with levels?

• “We believe this system is complicated and difficult to understand, especially for parents. It also encourages teachers to focus on a pupil’s current level, rather than consider more broadly what the pupil can actually do. Prescribing a single detailed approach to assessment does not fit with the curriculum freedoms we are giving schools.”

• With the introduction of the new National Curriculum, it’s time to rethink

• Levels have become ‘too abstract’ and ‘too broad’

• Parents don’t understand them (NB Consultation underway about schools publishing on their websites pupil progress data for parents)
So what will replace levels?

- Nothing!
- “The current system of national curriculum levels and level descriptions will be removed and not replaced.”
- “From September 2014, the new national curriculum will make no mention of levels.”

But:
- “Teachers will continue to track progress and provide regular information to parents. How they do so will be for them to decide. We will not prescribe a single system for ongoing assessment and reporting.”
- “Schools will be free to design their approaches to assessment, to support pupil attainment and progression.”
So what will inspectors be looking for from September 2014?

‘Note for inspectors: use of assessment information during inspections in 2014/15’

Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, on 1 July has written to all schools, highlighting the changes to inspection following the removal of national curriculum levels. Inspectors will:

• spend more time looking at a range of pupils’ work in order to consider what progress they are making in different areas of the curriculum
• talk to leaders about the school’s use of formative and summative assessment and how this improves teaching and raises achievement
• evaluate how well pupils are doing against age-related expectations, as set out by the school and the National Curriculum (where this applies)
• consider how the school uses assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning or who need additional support to reach their full potential, including the most able
• evaluate the way the school reports to parents on pupils’ progress and attainment. Inspectors will assess whether reports help parents to understand how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected.
Primary Assessment & Accountability Consultation

• The DfE announced in July 2013 it would be undertaking a review of the primary assessment system. GLA was invited to give evidence. The DfE published its response on 27th March 2014.

• The response includes:

  - An announcement that a baseline check will be introduced in Reception (4/5) to assess literacy and numeracy; optional from September 2015, and statutory from September 2016

  - A focus on whether pupils will be ‘secondary ready’ at 11

  - Details of new floor standards, and the scaled score to replace levels (100 at the end of KS2)
NAHT Commission on Primary Assessment

• Established to support schools in determining new assessment arrangements in relation to the new curriculum and pupils’ learning.
• GLA was invited to give oral evidence to the commission
• Published its report and 21 recommendations in February 2014.
• Key recommendations/points include:

- **All those responsible for children’s learning should undertake rigorous training in formative, diagnostic and summative assessment.**
- **Pupils should be assessed against objective and agreed criteria** rather than ranked against each other.
- **Schools need to be clear that any use of levels in relation to the new curriculum can only be a temporary arrangement.**
- Should be articulated clearly how inspectors will take account of assessment practice in making judgments and ensure both guidance and training for inspectors is consistent.
Secondary Assessment & Accountability Consultation

• Reported in October 2013

• ‘On each school’s website, we will make sure there is a ‘snapshot’ of their performance in a standard format, so parents can quickly understand a school’s effectiveness.’ Consultation has just begun.

• ‘Parents should receive regular information about their own child’s progress. This will help parents to hold schools to account for the teaching of their children, and help them choose the right school for their child. We will show information about both progress and attainment in school.’

• **Progress across a suite of 8 subjects.** **Attainment across 8 subjects.** The percentage of pupils achieving a C grade or better in English and maths.

• Floor standards: the minimum requirement will be set on the Progress 8 measure.
What will be the key features of the new system?

- Schools will be expected to have a curriculum and assessment framework that meets the following core principles:
  - ongoing, **teacher-led** assessment is crucial to effective teaching;
  - **schools should have the freedom** to decide how to teach their curriculum and how to track pupils’ progress;
  - both **summative teacher assessment and external testing** are important;
  - accountability must be fair and transparent;
  - **measures of both progress and attainment** are important for understanding school performance; and,
  - a broad range of information about the school’s performance should be available to **parents** and the wider public.
Reception Baseline

• A reception baseline will be used as the starting point from which to measure a school’s progress.
• These assessments will be used as predictors of attainment, whilst reflecting the ages and abilities of reception children.
• Criteria for the baseline has been established, and teachers will be able to choose from a range of assessment approaches ‘approved’ by the DfE.
• From September 2016, the EYFS Profile will no longer be compulsory.
• Also under consideration is how the results from the reception baseline will be communicated to parents and the inspection regime.
New Floor Standards

• From 2016, a new floor standard will hold schools to account both on pupils’ progress and achievement.
• The baseline assessment will be used to assess pupils’ progress from reception to age 11.
• An attainment standard will be devised, based on primary schools equipping pupils for secondary school by the end of key stage 2.

• A primary school will be above the floor if:
  - pupils make sufficient progress in all of reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 from their starting point in the reception baseline; or,
  - 85% or more of pupils meet the new expected standard at the end of key stage 2 (similar to a level 4b under the current system).

* A scaled score will be introduced and 100 will be the expected standard
How has this gone down with schools?

A survey by BESA (the British Educational Suppliers Association) published recently found:

• 38% are extremely concerned about the removal of levels in the short term. 32% are extremely concerned about it in the long term.

• A third of both primary and secondary schools are planning to stop using levels before September 2014; 16% after September, 30% during 2015 and 20% in 2016.

• 33% believe levels aren’t fit for purpose for parents – but almost half say they are fit for purpose for teachers.

• When teachers are asked what type of guidance and support they are seeking, the key requirement is national benchmarking.
Views of the DfE

Does the curriculum provide the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress?

Does the teaching enable pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability?

Is there a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and is information from such assessment utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress?

Does the school provide regular reporting to parents about the progress the pupil is making?

Ofsted won’t want to spend the majority of its time during an inspection, trying to work out how effective is the school’s assessment regime.
So what will inspectors be looking for from September 2014?

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Useful links

- www.gl-assessment.co.uk/levels
- https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview
What should you be looking for?

The most important question to ask is:

Will this assessment provide good quality information that can be acted upon to improve teaching and learning, and used to inform parents, governors, and the community of children’s achievements and school effectiveness?

- Commercial suppliers
- School’s own assessment
- Other schools’ assessments (Assessment Innovation Fund)

National benchmarking is key!
Fit for purpose?

- What information do you need? What information do parents need?
- How will this information be used?
- What type of assessment will give this information?
- Which one is most sustainable in your particular circumstances?
- Evidence as to what skills, abilities, knowledge pupils have brought with them – baseline
- Evidence to allow you to obtain an indication of potential performance at a later date – target-setting
- Evidence to allow you to diagnose strengths and weaknesses – individual diagnosis and planning
- Evidence as to what pupils are achieving during the course of a year – monitoring
- Evidence as to what pupils have achieved at the end of a set period – evaluating
- Evidence of differences between baseline measures and final outcome measures – value-added analysis
- Accurate reporting which is easy to understand
Types of assessment

Criterion referenced
Measures what a pupil can do against a specific set of objectives or skills. The objectives/skills need to be clearly stated and need to be ordered hierarchically. In practice, criterion-referenced assessments are largely restricted to basic or elementary skills.

Norm referenced (or standardised assessment) / Summative
This is a method of assessment whereby a pupil’s performance is compared with that of their age-related peers. Information obtained from norm-referenced assessment is particularly useful for comparing the performance of pupils with the national average.
What makes a good test?

Objective

• Independent of opinions and values of whoever conducts the testing

Standardised

• Test administered to a representative sample of a defined population in order to calculate norms. By using the norms as reference points, it is possible to compare people’s scores against the known standards of performance of a specified group of people.
What makes a good test?

Reliable
• How dependable are the results?
• If I retest the pupil, will s/he get a similar score?

Valid
• The extent to which an assessment measures what it says it measures
What makes a good test?

**Discriminating**

- A good test should be discriminating; it should enable fine judgements to be made between different levels of performance in whatever is being tested.

**Managable**

- Easy to use
Limitations of tests

- It must be a good test, with the prerequisite reliability and validity, otherwise the results won’t be of much use.
- A test score is not a tablet of stone, it is a snapshot in time. To a large extent the clarity of the snapshot depends on the quality of the film, the skill of the photographer, the cooperation of the subject.
- Looking at a test score in isolation will only reveal one piece of the jigsaw. Combining a test score with other known information about a pupil is likely to reveal more of the whole picture.
- Testing for testing’s sake is a sure-fire way to end up with a load of data seeking a purpose!
Our model of assessment
Who is GL Assessment?

• Originally founded by the NFER, we are the UK’s largest independent provider of tests and assessments for schools. We work with over two thirds of UK primary and secondary schools.

• Our literacy, numeracy and ability tests have been used by schools for over 30 years. We also provide diagnostic and screening tests for children with special educational needs.

• Over 7 million tests have been taken on our online assessment system, Testwise. Tests are taken online and our reports are delivered to teachers moments afterwards.

• We have moved towards creating reports that include more narrative and visual explanations, as well as reports for specific audiences (such as parent reports, pupil reports and senior leader reports).
Key points of our assessment systems

• Tracks pupil progress against expectations
• Diagnoses areas of weakness
• Supports teacher planning
• Enables teachers to report to parents
• Provides information for transition
Normative, summative, formative data

- Comparison of the performance of the group against a nationally referenced year group performance.
  - Broken down for performance in key areas of performance referenced to curriculum areas and the processes common to area of study, to indicate relative strengths and weakness in the group’s answers.

- Use of formative (diagnostic) and summative assessments will allow us to:
  - accurately measure the starting point for intervention;
  - tailor intervention;
  - and measure the effectiveness of any intervention.

- Normative data, SAS may be compared from one year to another to give an indication of average and exceptional performance, again referenced against a national sample.
Progress in English and Progress in Maths

- National distribution referenced - Standardised Age Scores For each year group/age (*normative data*)
- Diagnostic curriculum and process information (*formative data*)
- Year on Year or pre/post intervention progress tracking against national distribution
- New editions of Progress in English and Progress in Maths for primary will be published in 2015 based on the new National Curriculum
Questions