National Curriculum 2014

A practical guide to Assessment after Levels

Whitepaper No.1
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreword</strong></td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Hobby, General Secretary, NAHT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Context</strong></td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of changes and key developments</strong></td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DfE principles – effective assessment systems</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What will Ofsted expect</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies for developing an assessment framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NAHT – Design Principles</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Michael Tidd, Head of Year, Vale School, Worthing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sue Shoveller, Deputy Head of South Farnham School &amp; Director of Teaching School</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sheila Walmsley and Ben Owens, Blacklow Brow Primary School</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Llyn Codling, Executive Head, Portswood Primary and St. Mary’s Primary Schools</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DfE assessment Innovation Fund</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best practice case studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hillyfield Primary Academy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• West Exe Technology College</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• South Farnham School</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Aspirations Academy Trust</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>An international perspective</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kung Karl School, Sweden</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential References</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The government’s announcement that it would no longer use levels for assessment was a shock to the system. Perhaps because it came on top of so many other changes. But, honestly, do we not believe that teachers and schools can design a better approach to assessment than government?

After the surprise faded, many schools sensed this opportunity and have asked themselves challenging questions about what assessment is for and how it can be used to improve teaching. It has helped that Ofsted have signalled that they expect the autumn term to be a work in progress.

It seems to us that assessment should begin with the curriculum and produce outcomes that help teachers direct their teaching. It should embed ambitious expectations for every pupil and take a growth mind-set. It should really help parents understand where their child is and how they can help. It should be rigorous and honest.

However, we also believe that there should be a common language between schools, to aid mobility and transition and to help us learn from each other. The NAHT’s commission on assessment, which reported in February 2014, set out to establish such common principles. Just because we live in an era of autonomy and devolution, does not mean we cannot choose to collaborate where appropriate.

*Russell Hobby*  
*General Secretary, NAHT*
Introduction

This document is the first in a series of whitepapers entitled, National Curriculum 2014 – A practical guide to Assessment after Levels. Ofsted have stated that their expectation from schools is that the Autumn term 2014 will be a work in progress. With that in mind, this series will provide schools with a step by step guide, together with the most important information they need to enable them to start working with their new assessment framework by January 2015.

The purpose of this first whitepaper is to address the very first steps required to initiate change, which is to gather information and evidence. It is our intention that it will help you;

• Understand the current context
• Develop knowledge from various available resources
• Identify possible models for moving forward
• Identify people who may be able to help
• Understand where you are starting from and where you want to be
• Be prepared with all you need to know for the start of the new school year

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Current context

My colleagues and I have in recent months visited a number of schools and attended several conferences aimed at resolving the puzzle of what to do now levels are set to be removed.

Our observation is that the feeling among schools is bitter sweet.

Whilst levels were never perfect, they did provide a common language, and many feel that this is important to the system as a whole.

The removal of levels is a significant change but the majority agree that it does present a great opportunity for the profession to further develop a meaningful curriculum and an assessment model that schools can own. This is largely welcomed, however the pace at which change is expected is at best daunting with some left feeling it is impossible.

Some schools have the appetite to develop a new framework for assessment either on their own or in partnership with others. However, although the intention is there, for numerous reasons they haven’t really started yet.

Whilst there is a lot of information available, there has been comment from schools that centrally provided information has been vague.

Information around the subject of life after levels is emerging across a variety of sources including conferences, blogs, forums and websites such as TES and many schools are finding this confusing.

This whitepaper therefore brings together the most relevant and current advice and best practice from schools that are leading the way in developing assessment frameworks for their schools.

Sophie Bishop,
Managing Director and Schools Development Consultant, InfoMentor (UK)

Summary of changes

In June 2013, the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, announced that National Curriculum levels for reporting attainment and progress will not be used in the new curriculum that will come into force for maintained schools in September 2014.

National Curriculum levels cease for Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 at the end of 2013/14 and for Years 2 and 6 at the end of the academic year 2014/15. Schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative and summative assessment, in order to support pupil attainment and progression.

The NAHT launched a commission to consider the removal of levels, which published a report on its findings in February 2014. Within this report, the principles of assessment were defined and can be read in full on their website.

http://www.naht.org.uk
The Department for Education released its Assessment Principles in April 2014 and gave the following update in June 2014:

The new programmes of study set out what should be taught by the end of each key stage. We will give schools the freedom to develop a curriculum which is relevant to their pupils and enables them to meet these expectations.

Schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative assessment, to support pupil attainment and progression. The assessment framework should be built into the school curriculum, so that schools can check what pupils have learned and whether they are on track to meet expectations at the end of the key stage, and so that they can report regularly to parents.

Ofsted’s inspections will be informed by whatever pupil tracking data schools choose to keep. Schools will continue to benchmark their performance through statutory end of key stage assessments, including national curriculum tests. In the consultation on primary assessment and accountability, the department will consult on core principles for a school’s curriculum and assessment system.

Although schools will be free to devise their own curriculum and assessment system, we will provide examples of good practice which schools may wish to follow.

Outstanding schools and teaching schools have an opportunity to take the lead in developing and sharing curriculum and assessment systems which meet the needs of their pupils.

DfE Assessment Principles

The principles are designed to help all schools as they implement arrangements for assessing pupils’ progress against their school curriculum; Government will not impose a single system for ongoing assessment.

Schools will be expected to demonstrate (with evidence) their assessment of pupils’ progress, to keep parents informed, to enable governors to make judgements about the school’s effectiveness, and to inform Ofsted inspections.

DfE principles - Effective assessment systems:

Give reliable information to parents about how their child, and their child’s school, is performing

a. Allow meaningful tracking of pupils towards end of key stage expectations in the new curriculum, including regular feedback to parents.

b. Provide information which is transferable and easily understood and covers both qualitative and quantitative assessment.

c. Differentiate attainment between pupils of different abilities, giving early recognition of pupils who are falling behind and those who are excelling.

d. Are reliable and free from bias.

Help drive improvement for pupils and teachers

a. Are closely linked to improving the quality of teaching.

b. Ensure feedback to pupils contributes to improved learning and is focused on specific and tangible objectives.

c. Produce recordable measures which can demonstrate comparison against expected standards and reflect progress over time.

Make sure the school is keeping up with external best practice and innovation

a. Are created in consultation with those delivering best practice locally.

b. Are created in consideration of, and are benchmarked against, international best practice.
What will Ofsted expect?

This summary from Sir Michael Wilshaw’s speech at the North of England Education Conference in January 2014, illustrates what Ofsted will be looking for from January 2015 when carrying out their inspections:

• Schools are expected to track their pupils’ progress
• No particular approach will be endorsed

Inspectors will want to see:

• How often children are assessed and what tests are being used.
• How well the tests are linked to the curriculum
• How the results are being used to inform the school about the quality of teaching and the progress of children.

“We do expect every school to be able to show what their pupils know, understand and can do through continuous assessment and summative tests.”

A good or outstanding school will:

• Set targets for the children to achieve at the end of every key stage.
• Use assessment to see if children are hitting those targets.
• Use summative tests at the end of each year
• Not ‘teach to the test’

“Regular testing has received a bad press in recent years, as if it were somehow separate and antithetical to the business of education. It is not. It is an essential tool that allows students and their teachers to assess progress.”

This is even more important as the country moves to a more linear examination system. Quite simply, it would be unfair and unjust for young people to have to face an end-of-course exam, if they hadn’t also been exposed to regular testing throughout their school career.

On the 1st July 2014, Ofsted published information about how inspection in 2014/15 and beyond will take account of the removal of national curriculum levels.

They specified that inspectors will not expect to see a particular assessment system in place and will recognise that schools are still working towards full implementation of their preferred approach.

However, they did state that inspectors will:

• Spend more time looking at the range of pupils’ work to consider what progress they are making in different areas of the curriculum
• Talk to leaders about schools’ use of formative and summative assessment and how this improves teaching and raises achievement
• Evaluate how well pupils are doing against relevant age-related expectations as set out by the school and the national curriculum (where this applies)
• Consider how schools use 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 schools report to parents and carers on pupils’ progress and attainment and assess whether reports help parents to understand how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected.”

The note also contains details on the areas that inspectors will usually consider, in the judgments of: leadership and management; accuracy of assessment; progress; reporting


Plan I Assess I Track I Report
These statements provide an evaluation checklist for schools seeking to develop or acquire an assessment system. They could also form the seed of a revised assessment policy; there is certainly value in schools using broadly consistent approaches to assessment.

**Our approach to assessment**

- Assessment is integral to high quality teaching and learning. It helps us to ensure that our teaching is appropriate and that learners are making expected progress.
- All staff are regularly trained in our approach to assessment.
- We have a senior leader who is responsible for assessment.

**Our method of assessment**

- Assessment serves many purposes, but the main purpose of assessment in our school is to help teachers, parents and pupils plan their next steps in learning.
- We also use the outcomes of assessment to check and support our teaching standards and help us improve.
- Through working with other schools and using external tests and assessments, we will compare our performance with that of other schools.
- We assess pupils against assessment criteria, which are short, discrete, qualitative and concrete descriptions of what a pupil is expected to know and be able to do.
- Assessment criteria are derived from the school curriculum, which is composed of the National Curriculum and our own local design. (note A)
- Assessment criteria for periodic assessment are arranged into a hierarchy, setting out what children are normally expected to have mastered by the end of each year. (note B)

- The achievement of each pupil is assessed against all the relevant criteria at appropriate times of the school year. (note C)
- Each pupil is assessed as either 'developing', 'meeting' or 'exceeding' each relevant criterion contained in our expectations for that year. (note D)
- Where a pupil is assessed as exceeding the relevant criteria in a subject for that year they will also be assessed against the criteria in that subject for the next year. For those pupils meeting and exceeding the expected standards, we provide more challenging work.
- Assessment judgements are recorded and backed by a body of evidence created using observations, records of work and testing.
- Assessment judgements are moderated by colleagues in school and by colleagues in other schools to make sure our assessments are fair, reliable and valid. (note E)

**Our use of assessment**

- Teachers use the outcomes of our assessments to summarise and analyse attainment and progress for their pupils and classes.
- Teachers use this data to plan the learning for every pupil to ensure they meet or exceed expectations. Teachers and leaders analyse the data across the school to ensure that pupils identified as vulnerable or at particular risk in this school are making appropriate progress and that all pupils are suitably stretched.
- The information from assessment is communicated to parents and pupils on a termly basis through a structured conversation. Parents and pupils receive rich, qualitative profiles of what has been achieved and indications of what they need to do next.
- We celebrate all achievements across a broad and balanced curriculum, including sport, art and performance, behaviour, and social and emotional development.
Notes and commentary on the design checklist

These notes expand on the statements above with further implications or options.

The types of assessment discussed here are primarily for learning. The information generated is to be used by several different people to plan future approaches to learning. Assessment should not be a bureaucratic exercise for its own sake. The processes should be streamlined to ensure that only those are used that provide information that is useful to teachers, pupils, parents and school leaders.

A: There is a task of work to translate the National Curriculum (and any school curricula) into discrete, tangible descriptive statements of attainment - the assessment criteria. As there is little room for meaningful variety, we suggest this job be shared between schools. In fact, NAHT is commissioning a model document.

B: The most natural choice of hierarchy for criteria is by school year (certainly the curriculum is usually organised into years and terms for planned delivery). However, children's progress may not fit neatly into school years, so we have chosen the language of a hierarchy of expectations to avoid misunderstandings. Children may be working above or below their school year and we must ensure we value the progress of children with special needs as much as any other group. The use of P scales here is important to ensure appropriate challenge and progression for pupils with SEN.

C: We assume that schools will conduct formal assessments more than once a year (and informal assessment will take place continually). A formal assessment at the end of each term, against the year's criteria, is a natural pattern, although some schools will want to do this more frequently. It will take time before schools develop a sense of how many criteria from each year's expectations are normally met in the autumn, spring and summer terms, and this will also vary by subject. Consequently it will also be hard to use this framework by itself for prioritising intervention in the first few years of use.

For some years to come, it will be hard to make predictions from outcomes of these assessments to the results in KS2 tests. Such data may emerge over time, although there are question marks over how reliable predictions may be if schools are using incompatible approaches and applying differing standards of performance and therefore cannot pool data to form large samples.

D: There is a need to record a pupil's attainment against each applicable assessment criterion. The criteria themselves can be combined to provide the qualitative statement of a pupil's achievements, although teachers and schools may need a quantitative summary. Few schools appear to favour a pure 'binary' approach of yes/no. The most popular choice seems to be a three phase judgement of working towards (or emerging, developing), meeting (or mastered, confident, secure, expected) and exceeded. Where a student has exceeded a criterion, it may make sense to assess them also against the criteria for the next year.

These recorded judgements can be translated into numbers, which can then be analysed and used for prioritising. Traffic lighting is a popular method for monitoring. The most obvious method to generate a ‘colour’ or status is to count the proportion of the relevant year’s criteria that have been met at that point in time. At this stage, it is not possible to say what proportions would be cause for concern or celebration at a particular time of the year - although presumably you would expect to have mastered all applicable criteria to be green at the end of the year.

The method of ‘fitting’ a student to a criterion must be consistent to draw comparisons between groups. If the criteria are discrete, concrete and precise, this will remove some ambiguity. If a school is using a three phase judgment, one would expect the middle ‘meeting’ to be based on mastery.

E: The exact form of moderation will vary from school to school and from subject to subject. The majority of moderation (in schools large enough to support it) will be internal but all schools should undertake a proportion of external moderation each year, working with partner schools and local agencies. It is also good practice to invite external agencies with no connection to the local group of schools to verify practice from time to time.
National Association of Head Teachers
Underpinning principles for assessment

The principles, in conjunction with the design checklist that follows, will assist schools as they develop their own assessment systems. Schools will be able to review their own processes to ensure that they are underpinned by these principles and, where this is the case, determine whether the assessment system is fit for purpose.

1. Assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning.
   a. Assessment provides evidence to guide teaching and learning.
   b. Assessment provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate and review their progress.

2. Assessment is fair.
   a. Assessment is inclusive of all abilities.
   b. Assessment is free from bias towards factors that are not relevant to what the assessment intends to address.

3. Assessment is honest.
   a. Assessment outcomes are used in ways that minimise undesirable effects.
   b. Assessment outcomes are conveyed in an open, honest and transparent way to assist pupils with their learning.
   c. Assessment judgements are moderated by experienced professionals to ensure their accuracy.

4. Assessment is ambitious.
   a. Assessment places achievement in context against nationally standardised criteria and expected standards.
   b. Assessment embodies, through objective criteria, a pathway of progress and development for every child.
   c. Assessment objectives set high expectations for learners.

5. Assessment is appropriate.
   a. The purpose of any assessment process should be clearly stated.
   b. Conclusions regarding pupil achievement are valid when the assessment method is appropriate (to age, to the task and to the desired feedback information).
   c. Assessment should draw on a wide range of evidence to provide a complete picture of student achievement.
   d. Assessment should demand no more procedures or records than are practically required to allow pupils, their parents and teachers to plan future learning.

6. Assessment is consistent.
   a. Judgements are formed according to common principles.
   b. The results are readily understandable by third parties.
   c. A school’s results are capable of comparison with other schools, both locally and nationally.

7. Assessment outcomes provide meaningful and understandable information for:
   a. Pupils in developing their learning;
   b. Parents in supporting children with their learning;
   c. Teachers in planning teaching and learning.
   Assessment must provide information that justifies the time spent;
   d. School leaders and governors in planning and allocating resources; and
   e. Government and agents of government.

8. Assessment feedback should inspire greater effort and a belief that, through hard work and practice, more can be achieved.
Effective strategies for planning for assessment

By Michael Tidd, Head of Year, Vale School, West Sussex

We need to be realistic about what can be measured and recorded. It would be unrealistic to try and measure the tiny incremental changes that happen in classrooms which are the grit of daily teaching. We need to be realistic about what can be achieved at each level.

If we really want assessment to be useful, then we need to consider its many different stages as shown in this model:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Term</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Term</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schemes of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Term</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lesson Plans)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the national level, it's perfectly reasonable for the central government to set expectations. Indeed, even at school level, schools may happily adopt the yearly expectations of the new programmes of study – at least for maths and science. But below this level, schools must drive both planning and assessment in tandem.

At the medium term level, it makes sense that schools devise their own medium-term plans and that the assessment outcomes are explicit at that stage.

The short-term level is probably the most important both for teaching and assessment. A teacher who is clear about expected outcomes for the term and the year can plan appropriate lessons, and more importantly set appropriate short-term targets for the children that he/she knows well.

The targets can be meaningful for individual children, easily monitored as part of the unit’s work (particularly if schools adopt a mastery type approach) and significantly can focus on the small steps needed for the children in that class. Significantly, though, these short-term plans and assessment outcomes are unlikely to be useful for tracking. There is no sense in attempting to record every detail of them, any more than there is in insisting on individual lesson plans for every lesson.

So how does this answer the question of making assessment manageable? Here are a few key things that help to achieve this:

- Separate tracking from class-level assessment
- Link assessment expectations directly to medium term planning
- Don't expect recorded assessment in the short term

If this is the model schools use, then assessment can comfortably be carried out half-terminly in most areas, by focussing on the key progress made. Not by creating new sub-levels or scores, but by actually reviewing what the children can and cannot do.

Michael also makes reference to 7 questions which provides a useful checklist before buying into any particular assessment framework.

**7 Questions you should ask about any new ‘post-levels’ assessment scheme**

1. Can it be shared with students?
2. Is it manageable and useful for teachers?
3. Will it identify where students are falling behind soon enough?
4. Will it help shape curriculum and teaching?
5. Will it provide information that can be shared with parents?
6. Will it help to track progress across the key stage?
7. Does it avoid making meaningless sub-divisions?

To read more on Michael’s strategies, visit his blog at http://michaelt1979.wordpress.com/

Also check out:

- Rob Coe's 47 criteria for a useful assessment at http://www.cem.org/blog/would-you-let-this-test-into-your-classroom/
Interview with Sue Shoveller, Deputy Head of South Farnham School and Director of teaching school

How have you adapted to life without levels?

Our approach has been to stick with what’s working well, adapt to meet the new programmes of study and raise the bar in some areas, such as Maths.

What were your key objectives during the process of developing a new framework?

We wanted an assessment system that is able to give parents and teachers a clear indication of where children are against the new programme of study. We also felt it was very important for teachers and children to know the next steps and have clear criteria for success.

How did you approach summative assessment?

We decided to stick with numbers but instead of relating to levels as they did before, they now relate to the programmes of study. For example, if a child is in year 3, they are studying programmes of study 3 and if they have achieved what they should have done by the end of the year, they have achieved programmes of study 3A, in other words, they’ve done C, B and A.

How did you overcome the loss of a shared language?

We continued to use standardised scores, adjusted for the new programmes of study, as it worked well and we didn’t see any reason to change it.

How do you link the formative assessment for learning with your summative assessment?

We use Bloom’s taxonomy. We did some research on what makes effective pedagogy through the use of Bloom’s and also in relation to life without levels and how you make that link between summative and formative.

As part of our research, we have been working with the children in developing assessment tools that they can use themselves, using the language of Bloom’s taxonomy.

How do you ensure children know the next steps?

Our teachers are all well trained in applying our principles for learning. We take a very practical approach to staff training and as such, we’ve created cubes with the principles on each side which are in every classroom.

At the start of each class, a teacher will talk to the children about the lesson objective and work with the children to identify what the success criteria will be for the lesson.

Each child has individual targets that are at the back of their books and when teachers respond to a child they will always put a comment which is a challenge or a question. The child is then given the opportunity to discuss this in class the next day. This also allows children to work with their peers and evaluate each other’s work, both positively and critically.

What advice do you give to schools that are now looking at their assessment framework against the new curriculum?

I would also encourage schools to contact their nearest teaching school and look on the DfE website. Our doors are always open to anyone wishing to come along to Farnham Teaching School.

What have you learnt through the process of developing your framework against the new curriculum?

The research that was conducted at South Farnham Teaching school on ‘assessment after levels’ was part of a research project involving 36 teaching schools. This resource will be published early in the autumn term on http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/.

More information

The research that was conducted at South Farnham School and Director of teaching school

Want to find out more? www.infomentor.co.uk
An interview with Sheila Walmsley and Ben Owens, Blacklow Brow Primary School

Blacklow Brow Primary School, Liverpool, has 472 pupils on role and has for many years, been a popular and consistently oversubscribed school. The school has been recognised for its development of a creative and innovative new curriculum which is an area that the Headteacher, Sheila Walmsley, has always been passionate about, and more-so since working in her capacity as LLE and Chair of School Improvement of the Lord Derby Academy in Huyton. In this role, she is working with her deputy, heads of department, senior leadership and a local authority consultant to develop a seamless KS2/3 curriculum for English.

Can you describe the process that you are going through in developing your new assessment framework?

Yes, this is something that my deputy, Ben Owens and I have been working on together for quite some time. We are looking at a mix of assessment frameworks depending on what is most suitable for the subject area, so we are using a commercial provider for Maths and English whilst we have developed our own assessment framework for Reading and Science.

We have used Excel spreadsheets to track pupils against their targets, using drop down boxes to select what level children are at and we do this on a termly basis.

This does place a reliance on staff pedagogy, as the summative assessments aren’t objective but we are confident that with good quality staff training and coaching, and inset days dedicated to looking at how we assess children, we have a system that will work well for us. We were also guided by the NAHT principles and have matched against the Ofsted Inspection Criteria.

What was important to you when developing your assessment model?

For us, the most important thing is that we have assessment models that are the best fit for our school, so with the bought-in system, we have adapted it to suit our curriculum. It’s also important not to over-complicate it and create unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

What has been the biggest change that you have made so far?

We have placed the teaching of English and Maths across the whole curriculum and developed a skills based curriculum that supports this.

There are concerns among Headteachers about the transition for pupils from Primary to junior school, can you describe the approach you have taken to overcome this issue?

We have been working very closely with the Lord Derby Academy to create a seamless English Curriculum and raise attainment in KS3. We found that one of the biggest issues was that the Junior school had no idea of what a good piece of work looked like at the end of primary school and were setting their expectations too low.

The senior leadership team, teachers and assessment consultant have all now spent time at Blacklow Brow Primary to increase their understanding about primary learning. We are excited by what we are developing together and instead of re-testing children as they enter year 7, the Lord Derby will go with the primary results.

What advice would you give to Headteachers embarking on their journey to create an assessment framework for their school?

Don’t feel that you have to get it right first time. We know that this is a case of trial and error and fully expect to adapt and evolve our assessment framework over the coming year, we don’t expect for it all to fall perfectly into place straight away. You know your school and what works well and delivers good results so stick with the best bits and adapt as you go.

Plan | Assess | Track | Report
At the heart of all great teaching lies great assessment. It’s difficult to imagine how anyone can be looking at the new curriculum without considering assessment alongside it.

The key thing is to make sure you have really secure **principles of assessment** within your own school. If you don’t have principles already in place, sit down with your team and write something down, get staff discussing it and then coach staff to be able to ingrain them into planning, teaching and assessment. Then monitor and evaluate to ensure that everyone is bringing the principles into everything they do.

**Developing an assessment framework**

It’s not a case of re-inventing the wheel, look at what you already do and carry on with what’s working. If you think that your APP is really consistent but your AFL isn’t, then carry on with APP for now and develop your AFL.

The key to all good assessment models is “Do you know enough about each and every child’s learning to take them forward?”

**How to get started:**

- You need to know your curriculum and you need to know what follows on
- You must look at your assessment alongside looking at the new curriculum
- Look at what you already have in place that’s working
- Adapt where you are not covering the new curriculum

My advice to Headteachers that are starting to look at their curriculum and assessment framework is don’t panic. You have time to work on this, use this coming year as a pilot. Be experimental, cautious and measured. This is an opportunity to create an assessment framework that really works for your school, pupils and parents.

A question I am often asked is “**Should teachers be working within the next year group for children exceeding?**”

My answer to that is “**Yes, absolutely!**” The curriculum is much stronger. For children that are exceeding, they need to be working into the next year group and sometimes the year above that as well. Give them that opportunity to do that, otherwise you are just holding them back.

An effective and consistent assessment framework requires:

- Good quality qualitative data about children – ‘where are they,’ ‘what do they need to do next,’ ‘what inspires them about their learning,’ ‘what is holding them back,’ and ‘what makes them go wow’!
- High quality criteria, standardisation and modernisation
- High quality portfolios – so we all know what a high quality piece of work looks like
- One of my favourite quotes is from Roger Cull - ‘all children are born geniuses and we spent the first 6 years of their lives degeniusing them.’

Let’s never being presumptuous enough to say we are teaching them to their full potential. How do we know what their full potential is? We should assume the sky is the limit!
DfE Assessment innovation fund

In response to the removal of levels used to report children’s attainment and progress, the DfE set up an innovation fund to enable up to 10 schools to share their systems and processes on a much wider basis.

Each package would then be made freely available for other schools to access, download and use. Nine schools, as shown below, were selected and the DfE worked with them to establish ways in which they can disseminate their ideas, assessment systems and processes.

1. Durrington High School
2. Swiss Cottage
3. Trinity Academy
4. Frank Wise
5. Westminster Academy
6. Hiltingbury Junior School
7. Hillyfield Primary Academy
8. West Exe Technology College
9. Sirius Academy

At the time of going to print (July 2014), three schools that were in receipt of the fund had published their assessment frameworks: Hillyfield Primary Academy, West Exe Technology College and Hiltingbury Junior School.

Trinity Academy in Halifax has put together a brochure about their mastery pathway in advance of their system being freely available in September.


The Skills Passport developed by Hillyfield Primary Academy and Learning Ladders, developed by West Exe Technology College are covered in more detail below.
Best practice case studies – DfE Assessment innovation fund

Hillyfield Primary Academy – The Skills Passport

The Skills Passport is maintained throughout KS1&2 and builds a clear picture of the pupil’s achievement across all foundation subjects. The school has also ensured that all necessary skills for a successful start to key stage 3 are represented in the Skills Passport by working with a local secondary school. It is used as a planning tool for teachers and as a record of achievement for pupils. On demonstrating mastery of a skill, children stamp the skill in the passport.

What is a skill? Sometimes skills are known by other words such as ‘a knack’, an art, a craft or ability.

As you go through school you will learn new skills and develop them so that they will help you in life. This skills passport will be your record. As you gain a new skill, it will be stamped, just like in a passport.

The passport contains key skills for Art & Design and Design & Technology where skills are based upon the use of tools and materials. The key skills for Geography involve your understanding of maps and scientific skills are all about developing investigation and fair testing.

But how do you gain a new ability or skill? Have you heard of the expression ‘Practice makes perfect’? By carefully practising a skill over and over again, you will become better at it. For example, a footballer will by practising and improving the number of kick ups they can do, is actually developing their ball control skills. And in turn this improvement in skills will enhance their game on the pitch.
Student Profile

Name
Class

Key Stage 1 - Design and Technology

Food
- I can describe food using my senses.
- I can use the right tools to cut, peel grate and chop.
- I know why I must wash my hands.
- I can read a scale to measure and weigh out ingredients.

Textiles
- I can colour fabrics using paints to print & paint.
- I can use a template to cut out shapes.
- I can join fabrics using staples & a running stitch.
- I can decorate textiles using buttons, beads, sequins, braids & ribbons.

Construction
- I can use a simple circuit in a model.
- I can attach wheels to a chassis using an axle.
- I can join materials using tape & glue.
- I can mark out materials using a template.

Materials
- I can fold, tear & cut paper and card.
- I can roll paper to create tubes.
- I can cut along straight lines and curved lines.
- I can create hinges.
West Exe Technology College – Learning Ladders

Learning Ladders is used increasingly by their partner schools, key stages and subject areas. Nine modular assessments were replaced by six assessments per year in accordance with their philosophy “Fewer assessments = more progress”. As a method of grading they chose Bloom’s revised taxonomy to provide a coherent whole school language and framework for assessment. KS3 levels are to be replaced by West Exe levels which have been designed and agreed by subject teams and incorporate Bloom’s language.

Assessing without levels through Learning Ladders – West Exe Technology College

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Constructing ladders

‘Learning for progress’ overview ladder produced for each subject area (1x A4 page for each key stage)

Individual ‘Learning for progress’ ladders

Individual lessons* (as success criteria)

Interim formative assessments*

Periodic reviews of learning*

Summative (end of topic) assessments*

Identify assessment common elements eg. numeracy, literacy, language, cross-curricular
‘Learning for Progress’ Subject Overviews*

Common hierarchy of thinking skills based on Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Creating
- Students are required to represent information in a new/ different way. Action words: Plan, invent, design, develop, create, compose.

Bloom’s action words
- Concepts: (a) Chronology (b)
- Processes: (g) Inquiry (h) Use

Key linked to subject-specific concepts and processes within each ladder step

Each ladder step descriptor has been adapted from legacy key stage level descriptors and GCSE grade descriptors

*Example copies and templates available to download as editable files

‘Learning for Progress’ Individual Ladders*

Clarity of what is being assessed

What are being assessed on?
- Communication (C)
- Interpretation (I)
- Using Evidence (E)
- Communicating (C)
- Problem-solving (P)
- Pastoral Care (PC)
- What will the task look like?

With what level?

How well have you done?

Teachers can use the framework to support the assessment process.

NOW USE YOUR GREEN PEN TO Pupils make corrections & improvements in green pen to the work produced

*Example copies and templates available to download as editable files
Best practice case study - South Farnham School

South Farnham School has a well-established system of tracking pupils’ progress. There is a full statistical analysis of all school external and internal results of summative testing. This is used to monitor children from entry to the end of the Key Stage. Standardised scores enable us to track individual children’s progress on entry and then annually, through the school; set appropriate targets and ensure each child reaches their potential. Performance Data, both National and Local, forms part of the school’s self-evaluation process. (Value-Added ‘better than expected’in all published data since Surrey Pilot 1994/6 to present day).

With a curriculum without levels, they shall continue to use standardised tests and scores as their primary means of ensuring that each child is achieving their potential and not falling behind. The content for each year is clearly defined and will be summatively assessed each year in May as:

- embedding Year ( ) POS = EMB
- achieved and ready to progress to next POS = ARP
- exceeded and progressed to next POS = EXC

to be recorded/shown as the year of the POS e.g. 5/6 and then an assessment of whether the achievement is:-

- < 6 c or <6b (autumn/spring/summer) terms sections of Year 5/6 POS = still embedding (5/6) POS
- 6a = achieved and ready to progress to next POS
- 7 (c) (b) (a) = exceeded and progressed to next POS

Example of section of summative assessment. Pink data is baseline Yr3 baseline entry

NV SS = Non-verbal Standardised Score
Re SS = Reading Standardised Score

- embedding Year ( ) POS = EMB = Red
- achieved and ready to progress to next POS = ARP = Blue
- exceeded and progressed to next POS = EXC = Green
On entry to Year three children, are assessed to give a baseline standardised non-verbal and spelling, grammar and punctuation score. Mismatch is identified between potential and attainment. Those children who are evaluated as being pupils who may not make the appropriate progress by the end of the Key Stage are taught their Literacy and Numeracy in a small Focus Group taught by experienced teachers. We do not change the content of what is taught – the learning objectives are identical to those being taught in the rest of the class. The key factor is that the style of teaching is modified so that each child receives personalised learning appropriate to their need whether it be an intellectual, knowledge-based or behavioural-based issue that is a barrier to their progress.

Assessment for learning strategies are utilised in the classroom so that every child is aware of the next steps in their learning. Success criteria and objectives are explicit. Work is differentiated against a hierarchy of cognitive skills; children are taught in mixed ability classes but access the learning objective at their suitable personalised level.

Each term, every area of the curriculum is assessed for each pupil and the same grading used as shown above for the Maths and English.

The grid above is the summative four year record for every pupil and the End of KS target is reviewed termly.

By these means every child achieves their true potential; the gap is closed for all children including those defined as vulnerable.

For the last four years every child in the school entitled to FSM has attained level 4+ in English and Maths. The foundation of this is the ethos of high expectations that the school has managed to create. This ethos is generated and shared across the school and cultivates an environment in which all children can and do succeed.

An in-depth knowledge of each child is compiled from the start of Year 3 and individual targets established for the end of Year 6 which are aimed at enabling all children to leave for secondary school with at least level 4 in English and Maths. Targets that require children to exceed the expected rate of progress are routinely set.
Best practice case study - The Aspirations Academy Trust

In addition to the work that the Aspirations Academy Trust has done with the 2014 National Curriculum we have integrated our guiding principles and conditions for learning along-side an assessment framework. This is available to all of our schools and they are able to share examples of best practice against this framework through our curriculum focused IT system.

The Aspirations Academy Trust believes that, if children are to flourish and achieve, the learning opportunities they offer need to foster a sense of self-worth, engage all learners and provide a clear purpose to learning. Their thematic curriculum is structured around these values, providing opportunities for independent study.

The challenge is to utilise an assessment strategy that enables children to recognise and celebrate their accomplishments whilst identifying next steps of learning across the wider curriculum.

An illustration of this is shown below in an assessment matrix that focuses on how children are aware of, and contribute to the world in which they live.

By Jo Grail, Primary Curriculum and Aspirations Consultant

![Assessment Matrix Belonging for](image-url)
An international perspective

The Swedish approach combines national standard-setting and central test development with a high degree of trust in school professionals to carry out evaluation and assessment.

Many evaluation and assessment activities including student assessment, teacher appraisal and school quality reporting are managed internally at the school level. This approach fosters and encourages school leader and teacher professionalism in evaluation and assessment.

There is a strong focus on classroom-based assessments through which teachers collect a variety of evidence on student progress and provide regular feedback to students. National tests at key stages of education are intended to capture a wide range of curriculum goals through performance-based tasks including oral assessment and team projects. The tests are summative in Year 9 and upper secondary school and intend to provide a more standardised and external measure of student achievement.

Source: OECD REVIEWS OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT IN EDUCATION: SWEDEN © OECD 2011

Best practice case study - Kung Karl, Sweden

Special measures to outstanding in 3 years

In 2010, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (equivalent to Ofsted) visited Kung Karl School and the report that followed put it under special measures and was highly critical of the school and the leadership. The schools inspectorate identified 14 severe deficiencies that needed to be rectified. Catherina Luthman joined the school as the new Headteacher and took on the challenge of turning the school around.

Just three years later, the school became an outstanding school, with the same teaching staff. The achievement is largely accredited to Catherina's focus on pupil achievement and clear goal setting and tracking, and particularly, formative assessment.

Catharina believes that formative assessments are so important that she raises them in the teachers performance reviews. “In each teacher’s performance review, I go through the written reports with them. We are looking together at how they can evolve and get better.”

Catharina goes on to explain “using IT to improve pupil tracking and assessment is essential. When I took on the position as Headteacher at the school, I had the condition that we would use InfoMentor. For me, InfoMentor was essential for managing the challenge ahead. It is a prerequisite for managing change and provides an effective way to communicate with parents, carers and pupils.”
Summary

The purpose of this first whitepaper has been to address the very first steps required to initiate change, which is to gather information and evidence.

There is no doubt that there is already some fantastic work going on in schools. There is a lot of information available, however, there is no blueprint for what one must do next. The examples that we have put together in this paper are all very different, which can feel confusing but we wanted to give different perspectives, written by different people, for different schools with different challenges and pupils.

Key points and advice

Here are some key points, common themes and advice from different parts of this whitepaper:

• First of all I repeat that, Ofsted have confirmed that they expect next term to be a work in progress when it comes to implementing the new curriculum and an assessment framework to support it.

• The new curriculum and your assessment should be approached alongside each other to ensure a cohesive, school wide system.

• The government will not endorse a single system for ongoing assessment. This presents an opportunity for schools to take the lead in developing and sharing curriculum and assessment systems that meet the needs of their school.

• Re-use and re-cycle. Think about what already works well in your school and make use of the guidance available.

• Formative assessment in the classroom is important. Find a way to let this drive teaching and learning.

• Although schools will need to demonstrate and evidence progress do not jump straight to tracking. This will come once baselines have been established and your framework is in place. Remember to be realistic about what can be reasonably measured and recorded.

• There is time to work on this, and it is not expected that schools will come up with the perfect answers straight away. Accept that this will take some time and that there is no single right or wrong answer. This will help you develop something which is truly reflects your vision as a leader, that will continue to grow and evolve with your school.
Questions to ask yourself

Whilst we don’t recommend working over the summer, a break from the norm can give a moment for pause, gathering thoughts and reflection.

Below is a list of questions. They are not necessarily to answer now, but are intended to provoke thought, so that you can feel prepared to get started in the Autumn term.

• How well do you know the curriculum?

• How well do staff know the curriculum? Will they require support or examples of best practice?

• Is there work here to be done alongside your assessment framework?

• Are there any models described here that could work as a starting point for your school?

• What is good about them and what would you change?

• Do you need to approach this all at once, or are there high priority areas you could start on first?

• How will you create capacity to work on this next term?

• Who in school would be best placed to work on this project?

• Is there another school that you could work with?

• Who are your stakeholders and how will you bring them along with you?

There’s more to come

Remember, this is just the first in our series of whitepapers. The following editions will ensure that you are able to have everything you need in place to start the spring term with a coherent system for your school. We will cover,

• Understanding the curriculum, and adapting it to the needs of your school

• Developing an assessment model that is intrinsically linked to your curriculum

• A review of the commercial offerings available to support your framework, including those available in InfoMentor

• Explaining your model to stakeholders (including Ofsted, parents and pupils)

• Implementing your curriculum and assessment model

• How to work with, maintain and review your curriculum and assessment model to ensure continuous improvement

• Regular and timely updates from central government and other sources as they arise

We hope these whitepapers will help you through this period of change.

I would like to end by thanking all the contributors to this paper for sharing their excellent work with us and to wish you a restful and enjoyable summer break.

Sophie Bishop, Managing Director and Schools Development Consultant, InfoMentor (UK)
Essential references

National Association of Head Teachers – published guidelines and principles of how schools should develop their own systems for assessing. The NAHT have announced the release of their own assessment framework, details of which can be found on their website.

Time to use our heads, NAHT

Government resources:
National Curriculum and assessment from September 2014: information for schools, DfE – GOV.UK

Other useful links:
http://www.usethekey.org.uk/sample-articles/assessment-without-levels-how-are-secondary-schools-responding

InfoMentor – planning, assessing, tracking and reporting against the new curriculum
www.infomentor.co.uk

Blog articles:
http://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com/2014/03/17/replacing-national-curriculum-levels/
http://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com/2014/04/03/why-national-curriculum-levels-need-replacing/
https://classteaching.wordpress.com/assessment-without-levels/
http://clioetcetera.com/2014/02/17/beyond-levels-knowledge-rich-and-task-specific-mark-schemes/
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http://clioetcetera.com/2014/02/18/beyond-levels-part-2-summative-and-formative-assessment/
http://classteaching.wordpress.com/2014/05/05/assessment-without-levels-an-opportunity-for-growth/

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Rachel Gallyot, Principal, Dashwood Banbury Academy.

“I haven’t seen another system as comprehensive as InfoMentor.”
Jo Grail, Primary Curriculum and Aspirations Consultant, Aspirations Academy Trust.

“Since we have adopted InfoMentor lessons are more focused on the curriculum and outcomes, however, the amount of time staff are spending on planning and assessment has reduced significantly.”
Ryan Morgan, Curriculum Consultant, Senior Leader and Teacher, Trelewis Primary School.

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All pupils should reach their goals!