



Independent Commission on
Assessment in Primary Education

Assessment for Children's Learning: A new future for primary education

The Independent Commission on Assessment in Primary Education Final report

Authors of the report: Professor Dominic Wyse;
Professor Alice Bradbury and Rebecca Trollope.

Commissioners: Dr Kulvarn Atwal;
Hollin Butterfield; Dr Sarah Earle; Ken Jones;
Professor Bill Lucas; Professor Fiona Maine;
Dr Rachel Marks; Dr Marlon Lee Moncrieffe;
Michelle Murray; Megan Quinn; Liz Robinson;
Professor Mary Richardson.



 [facebook.com/PrimaryAssessmentCommission](https://www.facebook.com/PrimaryAssessmentCommission)

 twitter.com/primarycommiss1

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the commissioners for their time and commitment to this work, over many months, and for providing their expertise and experiences. We are also grateful to their colleagues, particularly those at the Education Learning Trust and at Surrey Square Primary School, for contributing to the ICAPE meetings. The support of schools has also been important in enabling our teacher commissioners to contribute fully to the commission.

We are grateful for the formal responses to the commission provided by educational organisations, which have added to our work. The support from the NEU research team and from Can Can Campaigns has also been invaluable in allowing us to focus on the work of the commission.

Contents

Executive summary	4
Why review assessment in primary education in England now?	6
Aims and approach of ICAPE	9
Education policies and the practices of assessment in schools	11
Research on assessment	14
The survey of educators' and parents' views about assessment	22
Views from the commissioners	28
Discussion and conclusions	32
Recommendations	34
Glossary of key terms	38
References	40
Appendices	43

Executive summary

England's policies and practices for assessment of children in primary schools are urgently in need of improvement. This is the conclusion of this final report of the Independent Commission on Assessment in Primary Education (ICAPE).

ICAPE was established to review assessment policies and practices in primary schools in England. At the heart of ICAPE are its commissioners who brought many years of expertise in classroom practice, school leadership, education research and education policy in primary education. They are experts in assessment, curriculum and pedagogy in primary education. The work of ICAPE, for most of 2022, involved: 1, regular meetings of the commissioners to discuss key issues to do with assessment in primary schools; 2, a new review of research on assessment; 3, a new survey of educators and parents to seek their views about assessment in primary education.

As a result of its work, ICAPE has proposed principles for a renewed system of assessment and curriculum in England, and made a series of recommendations about how assessment in England's primary schools could be improved. This summary highlights some of the proposed principles and recommendations, which can be found in full in the report.

Recommendations

Principles

- The main purpose of primary school assessments is to improve pupils' learning and progress during their primary school years.
- Formative assessment of children's learning is the main emphasis of the assessment system.
- Assessment of pupils is clearly separated from the means to hold schools and teachers to account.
- Assessment of pupils provides a holistic picture of pupils' achievements that reflects the whole curriculum, encompassing a wide range of understanding including creative thinking and collaboration.
- Assessment is designed to support inclusive education for all children.

Developments in assessment and curriculum to be completed within five years

1. Assessments for monitoring of standards of education over time are based on a new system of nationally representative sampling of schools and pupils.
2. The SATs and other high-stakes assessments are phased out to be replaced by more emphasis on assessment for learning.
3. Holistic assessment of each pupil's learning during their life in primary school is captured in a profile of evidence that reflects their achievements and draws on a variety of assessment methods.
4. Year 1 and year 4 are established as points for key summative assessments in primary schools to enable more time for use of diagnostic information to support children's learning prior to year 6.
5. In order to ensure sufficient breadth of assessments (including the vital areas of the arts, humanities and pupils' learning dispositions), professional learning opportunities are provided to teachers to support formative and summative assessment, as appropriate, across the whole curriculum.
6. New, more appropriate and more supportive ways of monitoring the quality of schools and teachers are developed.
7. Local authorities are empowered to support and monitor the quality of education in schools.
8. Full consideration is given to England's participation in the PISA assessments of creative thinking.

Why review assessment in primary education in England now?

Assessment is a vital aspect of primary education and education policy which has the potential to make a real difference to children's lives. Prior to ICAPE, research had shown that many teachers, researchers, educators and parents were concerned about statutory assessment processes in England. The need to review assessment became more urgent as a result of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The experiences in 2020 and 2021, when statutory assessments were suspended, offered a unique opportunity for reflection on the future of children's primary education.

England's approach to assessment should be optimal for improving children's learning. One of the best ways of ensuring an optimal assessment system is to base assessment, pedagogy and curriculum on robust and relevant research combined with evidence from exemplary education practice. Political ideology should have no place in the national curriculum and its assessment.

For the purpose of this report, the succinct overarching definition of assessment is 'the process and means of evaluating learning' (derived from *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2022). The more precise definition, and the specific focus of the report, concerns assessment undertaken as part of primary education. The most commonly used types of assessment in schools are summative and formative. Summative assessments generally review pupils' progress in learning at a particular point in time. Summative assessment can be required by government, for example statutory tests, but can also be non-statutory as part of the work of schools to reflect on pupils' progress. Formative assessment is ongoing assessment of pupils' learning: it includes the informal assessments of learning that teachers make when they talk to pupils about the work they are doing in lessons, or written feedback on homework and other tasks. Both summative and formative assessments can be used in a diagnostic way, for example to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning and who might need extra support, and those who would benefit from being challenged further.

Table 1 shows the assessments that children in primary schools in England currently have to undertake.

Table 1: Statutory assessments in the early years and primary phases in England as of 2022

Age of pupil	School year/class	Statutory assessments	Assessment type	Topics assessed
4 to 5 years	Reception	Reception Baseline assessment	Teacher assessment	Language, communication and literacy; mathematics.
4 to 5 years	Reception	Early years foundation stage profile	Teacher assessment	Communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts, designing and making.
5 to 6 years	Year 1	Phonics screening check	Tests (teacher marked)	Phonetic decoding. Pupils must decode 20 real words and 20 pseudo-words. Pupils who do not reach the expected standard in year 1 repeat the check in year 2.
6 to 7 years	Year 2	Key Stage 1 (KS1) statutory tests (known as SATs)	Tests (teacher marked)	Pupils sit the following papers: English reading paper 1; English reading paper 2; mathematics paper 1 – arithmetic; mathematics paper 2 – reasoning.
6 to 7 years	Year 2	KS1 teacher assessment	Teacher assessment	Reading; writing; mathematics; science.
8 to 9 years	Year 4	Multiplication tables check	Test (computer marked)	Multiplication recall up to 12 x 12. Pupils answer 25 questions online and have six seconds to answer each question.
10 to 11 years	Year 6	Key Stage 2 (KS2) statutory tests (known as SATs)	Tests (externally marked)	Pupils sit the following papers: reading (60 mins); grammar, punctuation and spelling paper 1 – grammar and punctuation questions (45 mins); grammar, punctuation and spelling paper 2 – spelling (15 mins); mathematics paper 1 – arithmetic (30 mins); mathematics paper 2 – reasoning (40 mins); mathematics paper 3 – reasoning (40 mins).
10 to 11 years	Year 6	KS2 teacher assessment	Teacher assessment	Writing; science.
10 to 11 years	Year 6	Science sampling tests	Tests (externally marked)	These biennial tests did not take place in the 2021/22 academic year. Arrangements going forward are yet to be confirmed.

Key Stage 1 refers to children in the year groups of Reception, year 1 and year 2 (ages 5 to 7) in England. Key Stage 2 refers to children in the year groups year 3 to year 6 (ages 7 to 11).

The statutory tests, shown in Table 1, were not carried out during 2020 and 2021 because during the Covid-19 pandemic these assessments were suspended, with the exception of the phonics screening check (PSC). The suspension of statutory assessments revealed that different futures for education, more creative futures, were possible and, for many people, desirable.

In order to optimise children’s learning, respond genuinely to the deep concerns of educators and parents, and to seize the moment that the post-pandemic period offers, society has a unique opportunity to change assessment in England’s primary schools. There is no better reason for change than improving the life chances of future generations of children.

The purpose of this commission, and hence this report, is to reflect on the state of assessment in primary schools in England and, having reviewed robust and relevant sources of evidence, to make recommendations for change now and in the future.

Aims and approach of ICAPE

ICAPE is built on a collaboration between teachers and researchers. This kind of 'close-to-practice' collaboration (Wyse et al, 2020; Wyse, 2020) is vital in generating new educational recommendations that are informed by the best of education practice and the best of education research. Many claims are made about the ways in which research can and should influence education policy but it is the view of this commission that if the focus of a review is an aspect of educational practice then research expertise needs to include strong understanding of the practical realities of teaching in schools.

At the heart of ICAPE are the commissioners who brought their extensive knowledge of primary education, teaching, assessment, curriculum, pedagogy and research to address the aims and objectives of the commission. The ICAPE commissioners are: Dr Kulvarn Atwal; Hollin Butterfield; Dr Sarah Earle; Ken Jones; Professor Bill Lucas; Dr Fiona Maine; Dr Rachel Marks; Dr Marlon Lee Moncrieffe; Michelle Murray; Megan Quinn; Liz Robinson; and Professor Mary Richardson. ICAPE is led by Professor Dominic Wyse and Professor Alice Bradbury. Brief biographies of the commissioners appear on the ICAPE website [icape.org.uk](https://www.icape.org.uk)

The work of ICAPE was supported by Candy Akomfrah, Amy Hunt, Ken Jones (commissioner) and the NEU team; Justine Stephens from Can Can Campaigns; and Ghassan Essalehi, Monika Ożdżyńska and Rebecca Trollope from the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy (0 to 11 years) (HHCP).

The main aim of ICAPE

ICAPE aims to make a groundbreaking contribution to assessment in primary schools that will have wide and long-lasting influence on practitioners, policy-makers from all political parties, and researchers.

Objectives of ICAPE

- Review the key issues for assessment in primary schools from the perspectives of teachers and other stakeholders.
- Review how a selection of the most relevant research evidence links to current policies and practices for assessment in primary schools.
- Make recommendations for improving assessment in primary schools based on the key issues informed by robust evidence.

ICAPE is funded by the National Education Union (NEU). The independence of the commission derives from the chairs of the commission and all the commissioners who brought their knowledge and independent views to address the issues. This report has been written by the chairs Professor Dominic Wyse and Professor Alice Bradbury, with the researcher Rebecca Trollope, and has been agreed by all commissioners.

The methods of ICAPE

ICAPE's methods of reviewing evidence involved the following: 1, a series of meetings of the commissioners during 2022 to consider a range of evidence and issues related to assessment (see Appendix 1 for the timing and focus of the meetings); 2, a review of research relevant to the aim and objectives of the commission; 3, a survey of educators and parents; 4, engagement with stakeholders through social media supported by Can Can Campaigns.

The ICAPE review of research began with the commissioners recommending relevant research studies from a range of perspectives, relevant examples of assessment issues, and innovative practices in schools. The commissioners' recommendations provided some topics to begin the more systematic search of relevant research studies. One particular focus of the review of research literature was on identifying evidence-based assessment practices that benefitted pupils' learning. The search began with identifying recent relevant systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses were chosen because they provide robust syntheses of multiple research studies most relevant to key topics. In addition to the selection of systematic reviews, the review of qualitative research identified the most recent relevant papers considering primary assessment in England.

Two new surveys were carried out as part of ICAPE. The work on the surveys was led by the NEU in consultation with the chairs of ICAPE. One survey sought the views of parents about assessment in primary schools, and the other sought the opinions of educators on the same topic. The surveys were set up using SurveyMonkey and were embedded in the ICAPE website. Contacts to make people aware of the survey were made via social media and with organisations which had an interest in assessment in primary education. Both surveys remained open for seven weeks in May and June 2022. A total of 1,124 responses were received from educators and 536 responses from parents. NEU researchers carried out the analyses of the data including exporting data tables and charts showing descriptive statistics for the survey questions amenable to quantitative analysis. Open-text responses were selected and organised into themes which illuminated more detailed points related to the quantitative findings.

Education policies and the practices of assessment in schools

One field of research relevant to the objectives of ICAPE is history of education policies and related school practices. The history of research in assessment is important because it can span more than the five-year cycles that particular governments and their ministers of education serve. Historical evidence can therefore provide evidence about issues that have recurred, and the kinds of solutions to problems that have been tried previously. As a result, this historical evidence enables us to check the extent to which a policy is 'new' and the extent it builds on previously published research evidence.

The current system of statutory assessment in primary education in England has evolved through a series of education policies enacted by governments from the Education Reform Act 1988 onwards. These policies have been influenced by the principle of using assessment for accountability, where statutory assessments are used to judge and compare schools. However, this system has not remained stable: since statutory assessments in schools began in the 1990s each government has changed the number and type of assessments. Thus while the current system may seem to be 'normal', it is the result of decisions made by politicians based on their priorities. These priorities have been affected by electoral cycles, the changing fortunes of political parties and individual politicians, and shifting social and media attitudes towards teachers, teaching, and education.

Research in the field of education policy has long emphasised the historically contingent and political nature of policy relating to schools, particularly the idea of governments continually 'improving' education. Some academics have identified a 'discourse of derision' (Ball, 1990), which includes features such as: blaming declining standards on any previous government; depicting teachers as underperforming; and depicting the education sector as resistant to change and ideologically motivated.

Assessment in primary education before 1988

Understanding what children know and understand, and how much progress they are making, has been a key part of teachers' roles throughout the history of education. For a period in the late nineteenth century a system of 'payment by results'¹, where funding was based on numbers of pupils attaining required scores in reading, writing and maths tests, skewed practice and narrowed the curriculum (Adams, 2014). In the 20th century this was replaced by a system providing far more autonomy for teachers. In the post-war decades the only statutory assessment for children before secondary education was the 11-plus exam, the results of which were used to allocate children to grammar schools or secondary modern schools. The results had effects on individual children which were

¹The original statutory document was: The Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education. (1864). REVISED CODE OF REGULATIONS INCORPORATING The Minutes of 21st March and 19th May 1863 WITH A SCHEDULE OF ALL ARTICLES CANCELLED OR MODIFIED, AND OF ALL NEW ARTICLES BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORDS OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL ON EDUCATION. George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode.

considerable but the purpose of the test was not to judge primary schools' effectiveness. The birth of comprehensive education brought a period where in many areas children did not undergo any formal testing at primary level. Before 1988, school leaders were able to use their judgement about how to assess children.

The beginnings of the current system of school and teacher accountability can be traced to creation of the Department of Education and Science (DES) Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) which had strategic and symbolic significance as it represented a shift of power away from schools towards government (Ball, 2021). During the 1980s the APU set national standards in reading, writing and arithmetic within a co-operative system involving schools, government and local authorities (LAs), sowing the seeds for the current national system of testing.

The introduction of national statutory assessments

The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced for the first time four 'key stages' into the education system, with an assessment in the last year of each key stage (when pupils were aged seven, 11, 14 and 16). These assessments were designed by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT), but their recommendation that results be produced through a combination of standard assessment tasks (SATs) and teacher assessment was ultimately rejected by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in favour of reliance on test results.

The key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2) statutory assessments (which quickly became known as SATs) began in the mid-1990s with a staggered introduction. Results were published in performance tables (or 'league tables') from 1997. Along with the league tables for secondary education, the assessment data were a key part of the introduction of a policy of 'market forces' applied to education. The idea was that assessment data would provide parents with information to help them choose a 'good' school, and the system would also encourage 'failing' schools to improve.

Reform under New Labour

When Labour took power in 1997, after a long period of Conservative rule, their education reforms built on the education system that they inherited but with a renewed focus on 'standards'. This included for the first time the setting of national education targets for the proportion of children gaining the expected levels in KS2 SATs in England, putting further pressure on schools to improve their pupils' scores in tests.

In 2003 Labour also introduced a new statutory assessment into reception classes, the foundation stage profile (FSP), in order to assess children across the entire early years curriculum. This involved assessment of each child against 117 different statements. Although conducted through teacher assessment over the school year, this marked a considerable shift in thinking about the statutory assessment of younger children, bringing early years teachers into the accountability framework for the first time (Bradbury, 2013). With three assessment points during the primary school years, the addition of the FSP also provided further opportunity for schools to track children's progress over time. Labour introduced contextual value added (CVA) analyses to the league tables. This enabled comparisons to be made of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, according to indicators such as numbers of children entitled to free school meals, to see if their pupils were progressing at similar rates. In 2008 the foundation stage profile was updated and renamed the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP).

In 2009 New Labour abolished the science SATs paper, replacing it with a system of national sampling. This has been seen as the cause of a decline in the status of primary science through the 2010s, with science becoming "less of a priority" (CBI, 2015) and concerns raised about reduced teaching time (Wellcome, 2017; Ofsted, 2019; Ofsted, 2021).

Reform since 2010

From 2010 onwards the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government and then the Conservative government brought out a new raft of education reforms. The context for the reforms included some recognition that teacher workload and bureaucracy had become too much.

Assessment policy reforms were numerous, and included the abolition of national curriculum levels, widely used for internal processes of tracking attainment. The EYFSP was reformed to reduce the number of aspects to be assessed to 17. A three-way assessment judgement with categories of emerging/expected/exceeding was introduced.

In 2012 the phonics screening check was introduced in year 1, involving a one-to-one assessment of 40 words and pseudo-words. In 2015 a new assessment for the start of reception class called Baseline assessment was introduced, with the aim of providing a starting point for measures of progress from age four to 11. This represented a continuation of the trend towards value added measures (the Conservative government replaced CVA with a non-contextual measure) (Leckie & Goldstein, 2017). Problems with the three different commercial providers for the Baseline assessment, and widespread resistance to the disruption caused by the new assessment meant it was abandoned in 2016. Baseline returned from 2019 with one single provider of the tests and two years of piloting, before becoming compulsory in 2021. The current system involves a computer tablet-based assessment in the first six weeks of reception, resulting in data which are stored until the pupils reach year 6.

Revised SATs were introduced in 2016 following the introduction of the national curriculum of 2014, which was based on then Education Secretary Michael Gove's vision of a return to a more traditional education (Adams, 2014). A grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS or 'SPAG') test was included for the first time. The use of calculators was removed from the KS2 maths tests. Teacher assessment was established for assessing writing and continued for science. A further statutory assessment, the

multiplication tables check (MTC), was brought into year 4 in 2022. This is an online test where pupils are required to answer times tables questions within six seconds.

Following two years of disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic, where the only statutory assessment to have continued was the phonics screening check, in 2022 it was announced that KS1 SATs would become non-statutory. This had been proposed previously as a result of the Baseline tests forming an alternative first point of assessment for progress measures. Throughout the period of Conservative-led governments, the overall trend has been towards increased accountability for teachers and schools based on test outcomes.

Research on assessment

Since 1988 the national curriculum and assessment system in England has been the subject of multiple research studies, from a range of disciplinary and methodological perspectives. A key point in history was 1988 when a national curriculum and statutory assessment system in England became a legal requirement for state schools for the first time. One year prior to the implementation of these national curriculum and assessment systems the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT), led by Professor Paul Black, reviewed what would become new legal requirements on assessment and testing. We quote directly two of the recommendations because they remind us that the issues that England currently faces are not new:

We recommend that the basis of the national assessment system be essentially formative, but designed also to indicate where there is need for more detailed diagnostic assessment. At age 16, however, it should incorporate assessment with summative functions. (Department for Education and Science and the Welsh Office, 1987: Section 27)

We recommend that teachers' ratings of pupil performance should be used as a fundamental element of the national assessment system. Just as with the national tests or tasks, teachers' own ratings should be derived from a variety of methods of evoking and assessing pupils' responses. (Department for Education and Science and the Welsh Office, 1987: Section 60)

Some years later the large-scale Cambridge Primary Review (CPR) was contextualised in understanding of the history of primary education in England. One of the research surveys of the CPR concluded that: a) the focus on testing and test results had narrowed the curriculum; b) an increase in test scores reflected teachers getting better at teaching to the test not necessarily improvements in pupils' learning; c) national monitoring would be better done as national sampling; and d) a renewed focus on formative assessment was needed (Wyse & Torrance, 2009). The final reports of the CPR as a whole came to similar conclusions, in addition to a finding that assessment for accountability should be uncoupled from assessment for learning (Alexander, 2010).

The importance of formative assessment

An important source of research evidence that has grown in influence in recent years is from systematic reviews and meta-analyses. This kind of research systematically groups together relevant studies in relation to the research questions of interest. Many systematic reviews include multiple large-scale research studies with robust research designs, for example randomised controlled trials (RCTs), that have compared different teaching approaches. The systematic review and meta-analysis by Wisniewski, Zierer & Hattie carried out in 2020 was a review of 435 research studies that were relevant to assessment. The authors found that effective feedback from teachers had an effect on pupil learning on average of 0.48², an effect-size statistic which some equate to about five months of pupil progress (Higgins et al, 2012). The systematic review also concluded that the more information that feedback from teachers to pupils contains, the more effective it is for pupils' learning. Feedback with more information focuses on tasks, process and sometimes pupils' self-regulation. It helps pupils not only to understand mistakes but also why they made mistakes and what they can do to avoid them in future. Contrary to offering more information as part of feedback, simple forms of reinforcement of points, or using feedback in relation to punishment, were found to have low effects on learning. Some caution is needed in applying the findings of this meta-analysis due to the wide range of education contexts in which the research studies included in the review were set. For example, only a proportion of the selected and reviewed studies were undertaken in primary schools because the review covered all education phases.

Being cautious about applying the findings of Wisniewski, Zierer & Hattie's (2020) systematic review, but also any single research study, and the importance of the specific context in which

feedback is to be given to pupils, is a point also made in the more recent systematic review on feedback (Newman et al, 2021), funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Nevertheless, on the basis of the systematic review the subsequent EEF guidance report recommended six principles that could inform teacher feedback to pupils (EEF, 2021). Firstly the EEF guidance emphasises the importance of well-planned high quality teaching which to some degree means that less feedback to pupils is likely to be needed. The importance of the context for teacher feedback recurs in the point that feedback needs to be carefully timed to be at the right moment for individual pupils. Feedback should also focus on moving learning forward, and avoid focusing on learners' personal characteristics or be too general or vague.

The evidence from experimental trials showing the benefits of formative assessment to support pupil learning is strong; however for teachers to effectively undertake formative assessment they need to acquire certain skills. A systematic review of 54 studies (Schildkamp et al, 2020) identified the knowledge and skills that were regarded as crucial. Formative assessment requires educators to have the knowledge and experience to construct and use a range of assessment tools. Assessment requires teachers to collect, analyse and interpret data. This knowledge and these skills need to be actively developed as part of teacher professional development. Furthermore, the study identified how a high level of pedagogical content knowledge is required for successful formative assessment, for example the ability to assess pupils' misconceptions but also to use content knowledge to provide accurate and complete feedback.

Assuming that teachers have the necessary commitment to formative assessment, and have had appropriate professional development, there is a range of other factors that has to be taken into account. A systematic review of 52 studies (Yan et al, 2021) investigating teachers' intentions and implementation of formative assessment

² Expressed as 'd' which denotes a calculation of effect size in a quantitative research study.

noted the importance of an appropriate education policy environment if formative assessment was to be effective. School environments need to provide support for teachers, and appropriate working conditions more generally. It is in this kind of finding from research that we see some vital connections between education policies and practices in schools that are at the heart of this report.

Understanding the impact of assessments

Another source of research when considering appropriate systems of assessment is philosophy and theory. Work of this kind identifies problems, and possible ways forward, through analysis and logical argument. For example, the concept of *assessment dysmorphia* (Richardson, 2022) can be summarised as the distortion of the purposes of assessment so that they reduce pupil achievement in education to very narrow criteria for determining pupils' success or otherwise in schools. This work also reminds us that any assessment can only be a proxy for the learning that actually happens in human brains and minds. Such theoretical work also raises questions about ethics. For example, although some tests are regarded as reliable and accurate, when the impacts on pupils and families of preparing for and taking such tests are taken into account the ethical argument may suggest that on balance it is not appropriate to implement the tests. The impacts on primary pupils, and resultant questions about the ethical appropriateness of SATs, were memorably captured as early as the 1990s in a pupil's view of herself and her prospects: "I'll be a nothing" (Reay & Wiliam, 1999).

A full picture of a topic in question requires not only the review of evidence from quantitative studies, and review of relevant theory, but also relevant qualitative research. Qualitative research about assessment includes studies exploring the repercussions and impacts of the current assessment system in the primary phase in England. A study with a sample of head

teachers that involved 288 survey responses and 20 interviews reported that preparation for high-stakes assessment altered classroom and pedagogical practices and narrowed the curriculum. Participants described the use of grouping by 'ability': in particular the prioritisation of pupils who were borderline in relation to national benchmarks, and the increased use of interventions to enable such pupils to 'catch up' (Bradbury et al, 2021). This includes practices of 'educational triage' (Gillborn & Youdell, 1999), where particular groups of students are prioritised. The processes of labelling and grouping pupils, based on high-stakes assessments, have consequences for how they feel about themselves. These kinds of impacts have been found in numerous contexts internationally where there are high-stakes tests.

National surveys of teachers and parents have also highlighted concerns about some forms of assessments. A survey of teachers organised by the NEU in 2018 found that 89 per cent of the 1,254 respondents agreed that SATs negatively affected pupils' wellbeing, and 86 per cent thought the SATs narrowed the curriculum (NEU, 2018). In March 2022, a survey organised by Parentkind (the organisation for parent/teacher associations) involving 1,727 parent responses, found that 89 per cent of parents would support SATs being replaced by an alternative measure such as ongoing teacher assessment checked by external moderators. **Counter to the argument that results help parents to choose schools, this survey found that 86 per cent of parents "did not consider SATs results as important" when choosing a school, and 70 per cent did not look into a prospective school's SATs results at all (Parentkind, 2022).**

A seminal systematic review found that low-attaining pupils had lower self-esteem after the introduction of the National Curriculum Tests in England (Harlen & Crick, 2002). This review also found evidence that pupils showed high levels of test anxiety and that repeated practice tests reinforced pupils' low self-image. There was also evidence that when tests are high stakes, pedagogy is distorted, for example by teachers adopting a knowledge transmission style of

teaching as opposed to a wider range of more creative approaches to teaching.

With regard to whether high-stakes summative tests cause children stress, important counter arguments have been made recently. In a robust large-scale study of this issue, based on analysis of data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), Jerrim (2021) found no evidence of a statistically significant link between KS2 tests in England and lower levels of happiness, enjoyment of school, self-esteem or children's mental wellbeing. However, as reported in the paper, there are at least two important caveats: 1, the survey data were collected in 2012, a period which pre-dates the current national curriculum and assessments systems that include the additions of the phonics screening check, the grammar, spelling and punctuation test, and the multiplication tables check; 2, the survey questions were not directly about the way that children felt about their primary school assessments – they were more general questions about their attitudes to schooling and their wellbeing. The paper also critiques some qualitative research and other studies, particularly smaller scale surveys, even suggesting possible bias in some survey outcomes because of who funded these studies. A similar criticism could be made about the surveys that were undertaken by the NEU for this report (see later section for the findings from these surveys). However, as we outlined in the methods section earlier, the surveys for this report were undertaken in good faith and were distributed as widely as possible to encourage a range of views. Taking due account that responses to surveys are always contingent on context, we took each survey response seriously and as a genuine comment on current assessment practices (the unpalatable alternative is to doubt the respondents' motives and the veracity of their comments). What is more, no matter how few parents and teachers report negative consequences for children, society has a duty to take these seriously and seek to mitigate them wherever possible.

The consideration of inclusion and accessibility in assessment is another important source of evidence. Wider movements in society have

highlighted these important considerations, particularly in the last five years. The January 2022 primary school census data noted that 21.2 per cent of pupils in primary schools spoke English as an additional language (EAL) (Department for Education, 2022a), 13 per cent of pupils required special educational needs (SEN) support, and 2.3 per cent of pupils had an education, health and care (EHC) plan (DfE, 2022b). The most common need (almost a third) identified on an EHC plan is autistic spectrum disorder.

A study exploring 21 SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) teachers' opinions on the assessment of autistic pupils (Howell et al., 2022) found that teachers believed that the assessment systems currently in place do not show 'the bigger picture' of all children's learning. Focus group discussions in this research noted the importance of a holistic approach towards assessment to demonstrate children's development a whole.

An online survey in 2015 which collected 1,131 teachers' opinions reported that 71.1 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that Baseline assessment helped to identify the needs of SEN children, and 68.2 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that Baseline assessment helped to identify the needs of EAL children (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2016). A survey of 1,254 teachers conducted by NEU in 2018 found that 88 per cent thought that children identified as SEND are particularly disadvantaged by Key Stage 2 SATs (NEU, 2018).

Mathematics assessment and ability grouping

A case study of one school's primary mathematics results illustrated how the processes of 'educational triage' based on assessment pressures resulted in distortions to classroom practices (Marks, 2014). Examples of such distortions included that low attaining pupils who were put into smaller teaching groups were more likely to be taught in smaller physical areas around the school, because the larger groups were located in classrooms. Pupils in the lowest attainment set (children grouped into classes based on ability) were placed in unsuitable teaching spaces which were likely to be disturbed. Additionally, as they were not located in the classroom, pupils did not have easy access to mathematical resources which could support their learning. Furthermore, the group encountered inconsistent staffing, with teaching shared between a 'floating' teacher and a teaching assistant (TA), because the regular classroom teachers were prioritised for use in the borderline attainment group and the higher attaining groups.

As we demonstrated above, one of the most robust findings from large-scale research is the importance of formative assessment to help children's learning and, as part of this, that the right kind of feedback from teachers to pupils has a powerful effect on pupils' learning. The power of feedback is an example of why formative assessment in general is important for children's learning, but also that the right kind of formative assessment is vital. At the same time, research on the impacts of high-stakes statutory testing has repeatedly highlighted serious concerns, particularly the distortions to school and classroom practices and therefore pupils' learning. **It is the view of the commission that if the policy environment is not sufficiently**

conducive for effective formative assessment, for example if summative assessment is too dominant, then it is unlikely that pupils will learn as effectively as they should.

High standards, not high stakes

Between 2019 and 2021, the British Educational Research Association (BERA)'s expert panel on assessment produced the report *High standards, not high stakes* (Moss et al, 2021). This report presented a new system as an alternative to SATs which could be implemented in primary schools across England.

The recommended system included the removal of all annual tests (such as SATs) to be replaced with a longitudinal sample of pupils. The use of a nationally representative longitudinal sample would be beneficial to teachers, school leaders, researchers and members of the government alike, as it would combine information from sampling scores with information from the National Pupil Database. This would allow contextual variables to be considered when identifying methods of educational improvement, both at school level and across the country. It was suggested that this system may also improve social equality, considering regional contextual factors. This system would make the use of data for accountability more nuanced, benefitting the school by removing the likelihood of school comparisons and acknowledging the school's context. Teacher, pupil and parent questionnaires are also proposed as a method of further improving the dataset to provide richer data.

Furthermore, it suggests that the recommended system would allow for the consideration of pupil wellbeing, enjoyment of school, and socio-emotional outcomes in addition to the inclusion of wider skills such as oracy.

To support this new system, the report recommended the formation of a new organisation to act independently of the government; the use of new assessment instruments; the production of summary reports to share the data outcomes accessible to all members of society; a different inspection process; and ongoing improvement from stakeholders.

This system overhaul is presented as a long-term goal, with a focus on increasing educational standards for all pupils without additional pressure on high-stakes assessment and accountability.

Comparing with other countries

For those who live and work in England it can appear that there are few alternatives to the systems of assessment in place at a given time. As we outlined earlier in this report, the idea of statutory assessment tests, known as SATs, has been in place in England since the Education Reform Act 1988. For the nation's newest teachers this can mean that not only have they not experienced different kinds of assessment systems as teachers, but they have also not experienced their own primary schooling without SATs. In order to emphasise the point that alternative systems are not only possible but are also being effectively used in other regions, we feel it is important to consider examples of assessment systems in other countries in order to better understand what might be possible in the future in England.

The regions selected for the comparison in this report (see Appendix 2) include regions that are geographically close to the UK, and which have some aspects of a shared history, but also more distant regions particularly where English is the dominant language. An important contribution to the study of curriculum and assessment has been called *Home-International Comparison* which, for example, uses the proximity and

history of UK nations as the basis of selection for comparison (eg Wyse et al, 2013), a point also addressed more recently in the report from the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) which noted the importance of UK comparative work (REF 2021, 2022). Similar language of instruction in schools is an important criterion for comparison because, for example, the teaching of literacy has unique challenges and differences dependent on the target language. In all the selected regions many languages are spoken and written in the communities that the education systems serve. In addition to English being a language of instruction in these regions, Canada (and our selection of Canadian states) and Ireland are also regions that have consistently scored particularly highly in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) overall scores, and all the selected regions in our analysis are typically above the PISA average. While the political interpretation of international comparative assessments such as PISA remains contested, they are an important source from a rigorous method that includes national sampling of pupils. Given the UK and England's long-term involvement in such comparative assessments, it is unclear why the decision was made by government not to participate in the new PISA creativity assessments (OECD, 2019). Involvement in this cross-curricular measure could be an important comparison with the more narrow measures of reading and mathematics to which England does contribute.

Perhaps the most striking example in Appendix 2 is New Zealand which has no statutory assessments at all. Teachers use their professional judgement to assess pupils' learning. Ireland moved from a system of no statutory testing to the requirement, from 2012, for standardised tests to be implemented and reported in reading and mathematics in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes (ages 7 to 8; 9 to 10; and 11 to 12). The relevant circular notes that the data is not to be published nor to be used for league tables of schools.

In other regions the use of e-assessments is a relatively new development particularly at national or state scale: for example in Scotland,

Wales, Ontario in Canada, and New South Wales in Australia. One of the most recent and interesting examples is Wales where the timing of pupil assessments is at schools' and teachers' discretion.

In comparison with these other regions, England currently has a large, probably excessive, number of statutory assessments, and an undue emphasis on statutory tests carried out for all pupils at the same time nationally which are reported publicly to inform league table comparisons. The dominant focus of statutory assessments in primary education in England is on reading, writing and mathematics.

Putting creativity at the heart of education

The assessment of creative thinking in schools by PISA (OECD, 2019) is a current example of an innovation in secondary education which presents opportunities for primary educators. This work builds on field trials in English primary schools (Lucas, Claxton & Spencer, 2013; Lucas, 2016), where creative thinking is not part of the curriculum, and in Australia, where it is (Lucas, 2022). These shifts in policy and practices have been well documented by Rethinking Assessment³ in England, New Metrics for Success⁴ in Australia and the Brookings Institution⁵ in the USA.

A useful example comes from the Australian curriculum, which identifies critical and creative thinking as one of a small number of general capabilities that need to be embedded in every aspect of the primary and secondary curriculum. Within the country

the implementation of education policy is devolved to individual states and one of these, Victoria, has led the world in thinking about how to assess creativity. By developing critical and creative thinking capability, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) aims that pupils will develop:

- + understanding of thinking processes and an ability to manage and apply these intentionally
- + skills and learning dispositions that support logical, strategic, flexible and adventurous thinking, and
- + confidence in evaluating thinking and thinking processes across a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Critical and creative thinking is defined as having three strands – questions and possibilities, reasoning, and meta-cognition. The VCAA provides a range of curriculum and professional development resources to support teachers in making creativity a key part of learning in all subjects. To ensure that there is a clear understanding of progression in primary schools, VCAA has produced a scope and sequence document which, in questions and possibilities for example, describes what a pupil's development might look like (see table at end of this example box).

Later, at secondary level, the critical and creative skills of all students are assessed at age 15 using engaging scenario-based online tests. These tests are low-stakes with individual and school results not being made public but with Victoria capturing the overall progress of students in the state.

³ rethinkingassessment.com/

⁴ education.unimelb.edu.au/new-metrics-for-success

⁵ skills.brookings.edu/

Foundation to level 2	Levels 3 and 4	Levels 5 and 6
Questions and possibilities		
Identify, describe and use different kinds of question stems to gather information and ideas.	Construct and use open and closed questions for different purposes.	Examine how different kinds of questions can be used to identify and clarify information, ideas and possibilities.
Consider personal reactions to situations or problems and how these reactions may influence thinking.	Explore reactions to a given situation or problem and consider the effect of pre-established preferences.	Experiment with alternative ideas and actions by setting preconceptions to one side.
Make simple modifications to known ideas and routine solutions to generate some different ideas and possibilities.	Investigate different techniques to sort facts and extend known ideas to generate novel and imaginative ideas.	Identify and form links and patterns from multiple information sources to generate non-routine ideas and possibilities.

Overall, taking account of our selection of countries, which generally speaking are seen to have effective education systems, it is clear that there are many different ways of assessing primary pupils and many different approaches to statutory assessments including tests. The comparison in Appendix 2 shows that other ways of assessing pupils and schools are not only possible but are also practical, as their implementation in other comparable regions shows.

The survey of educators' and parents' views about assessment

ICAPE's two new surveys provided up-to-date views about assessment in primary schools from: 1, parents and carers (referred to here as parents); 2, teachers, school leaders and teaching assistants (referred to here as educators). The most notable finding was the extent of parents' discontent with the assessment system, including the powerful emotions revealed in their comments about the impact of tests on children. The majority of educators (93 per cent) and parents (82 per cent) were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the system of statutory assessment.

When asked whether the current assessments benefit children's learning the majority of educators disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea that Baseline, KS1 and KS2 SATs, the phonics check and the multiplication tables check were beneficial. The only assessment that teachers were more divided about was the EYFSP, where 32 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the EYFSP was beneficial, and 32 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. KS1 and KS2 SATs were opposed the most, with more than half of respondents saying they did not benefit children's learning, followed by Baseline assessment.

How satisfied are you overall with the current system of statutory assessment in primary education in England?

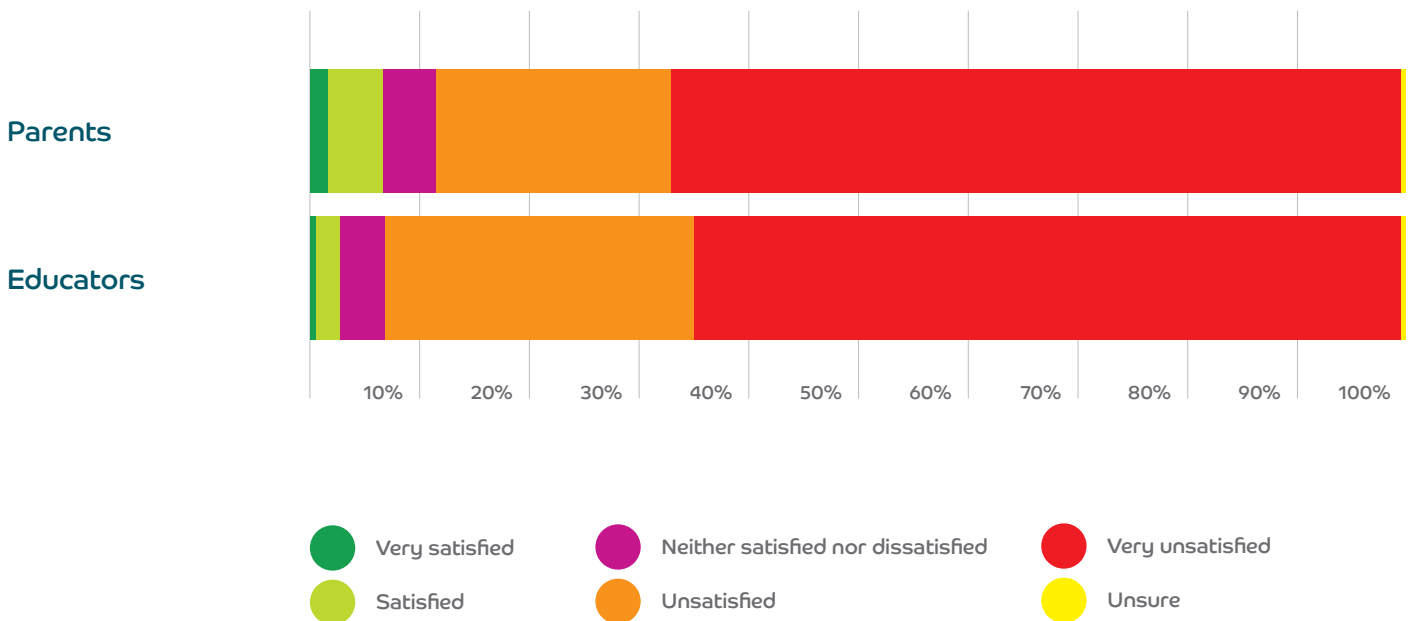


Fig. 1: Responses to the question: 'How satisfied are you overall with the current system of statutory assessment in primary education in England?'

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following assessments benefits children's learning?



Fig. 2 Responses from educators to the question: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following assessments benefits children's learning?'

Parents, who were asked if the entire system benefitted children's learning, also disagreed or strongly disagreed in high proportions (88 per cent).

Educators held strong negative opinions about the assessment regime, with the majority disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that it:

fairly assesses children's learning (93 per cent); provides useful information for parents (89 per cent); or focuses teaching on what is most important in the curriculum (93 per cent). The majority agreed or strongly agreed that statutory assessment narrows the curriculum (95 per cent) and increases teacher workload (91 per cent).

A strong desire for change

More than three quarters of parents (76 per cent) and educators (76 per cent) agreed with the statement: 'There should be no statutory assessment in primary schools.' Among the comments there were questions about the worth of the assessments and how the information provided was not useful, such as:

“““

These assessments serve no purpose to support children, parents or teachers and actively prevent children and teachers from dedicating time to learning in order to create an easy to monitor metric which provides information which is at best flawed.

(Parent)

Reception Baseline doesn't provide any information, in fact none of the assessments provide info for parents.

(Parent)

The tests are there to measure school performance, not individual pupil progress. The teachers know the children's ability. Forcing the children into a pressured short period of time only causes stress in many families.

(Parent)

Statutory tests do not tell teachers anything that they do not already know.

(Educator)

The tests are expensive, time-consuming and stressful for the children and educators and do not give us, as teachers, any additional information about the attainment of our children. They are an unnecessary burden!

(Educator)

Too much statutory assessment that is only a snapshot but used incorrectly by various agencies. Teachers do not need these needless tests to know what the next steps are for the children.

(Educator)

Negative views of the impact on children

In addition to what is known about the impact of high-stakes assessment on teachers' stress and workloads, the survey results were notable in the strength of feeling relating to stress for children. 95 per cent of educators agreed or strongly agreed that the current system worsens pupil stress, with 77 per cent strongly agreeing. For the same question, 91 per cent of parents agreed or strongly agreed, with 73 per cent strongly agreeing. It is a worrying finding that over three quarters of parents and educators think the current system adds to children's stress, at a time of increasing concern over children's mental health (Children's Commissioner, 2021).

Among the written comments, parents explained the impact on children:

“““

Every time a set of tests comes up my child becomes anxious, tearful and upset. Obviously children vary, but when many of them are becoming upset, despite the school doing their best to reassure them, it's negatively impacting their childhood.

(Parent)

I have huge concerns about the mental health of all children going through and experiencing these futile tests.

(Parent)

They put far too much pressure on still very young children.

(Parent)

These assessments do not tell educators anything they do not already know. They cause anxiety and damage to young people's mental health.

(Parent)

To what extent do you agree that the current system worsens pupil stress?

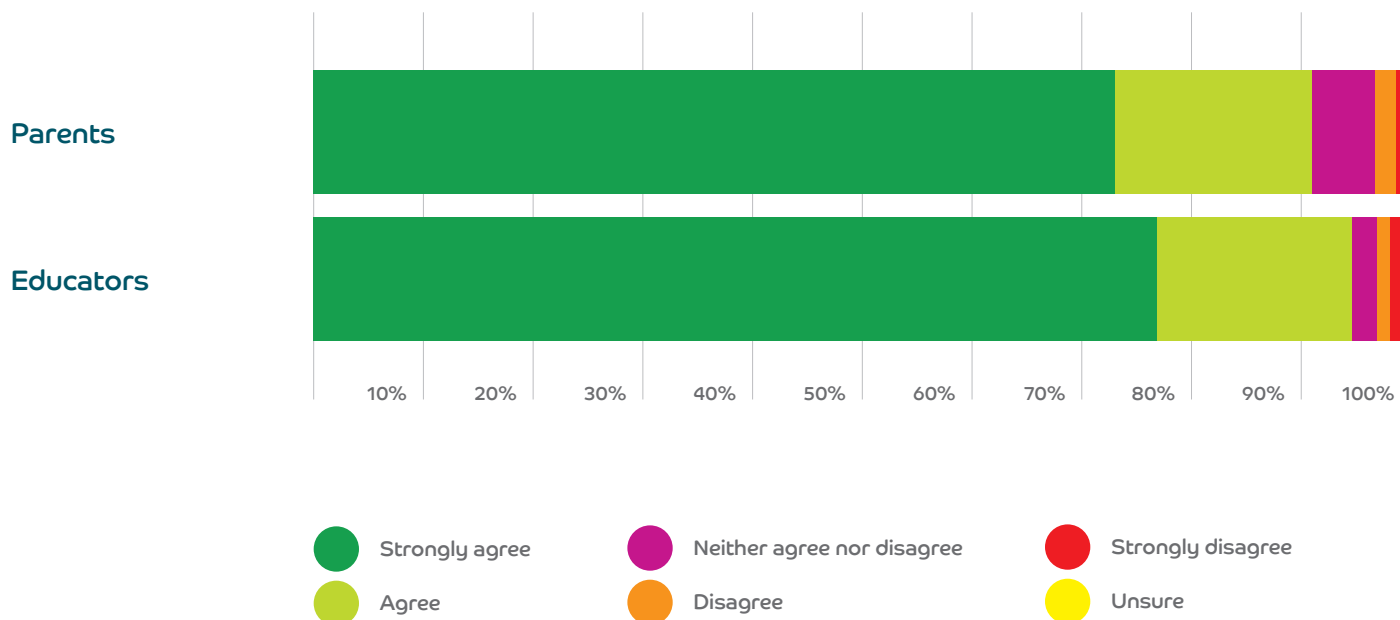


Fig.3 Responses from parents and educators to the question: 'To what extent do you agree that the current system worsens pupil stress?'

[Assessments] caused ongoing mental health issues.
(Parent)

It is simply wrong to set such stressful examinations for children and expect them to have the mental reserves to deal with this at ten years old.
(Parent)

Educators similarly noted the stress placed on children, which they compared to the benefits of the assessments:

“““

The SATs tests impact negatively on pupils' mental health and wellbeing in order to 'test' schools.
(Educator)

These tests are completely unnecessary and put unneeded pressure on both children and staff. The teachers working with the children are highly skilled and qualified to assess the children in their care which they do daily. To force the children to take a test purely to prove what the teacher knows is pointless and a huge waste of everyone's time and money.
(Educator)

A system that sets children up to pass or fail by the time they are 11 cannot be good for their mental health. We need to set up a system which allows children to feel that they are successful and valued. Children have a range of talents, and develop at different rates and the current system does not allow for this.
(Educator)

The children's mental health is affected as their only worth seems to be these results.
(Educator)

Educators and parents appeared to feel particularly strongly about the impact on children. It is feasible that the previous two years of Covid disruption exacerbated the tensions present within the system, not least because of the times when there were no tests. The changed circumstances of 2019 to 2022 shed new light on the issue of testing and pupils’ wellbeing. The strength of feeling indicated in these results is notable, and the commission takes very seriously this concern, among parents particularly, that the assessment system is having a negative impact on children’s stress and mental health. Parents and educators see reducing children’s stress as a priority for reforms.

Parents’ and educators’ responses to questions about priorities for a reformed system also focused on reducing stress for children. When asked to select three options to the question: ‘In a redesigned assessment system, which of the following would you prioritise?’, parents’ most selected option by far was ‘reducing stress on children’. Allowing teachers to use their own judgements was the next most popular priority, followed by assessing where additional pupil support is needed. The least popular priorities were at a school level – understanding each school’s performance over time and demonstrating different levels of attainment in year 6.

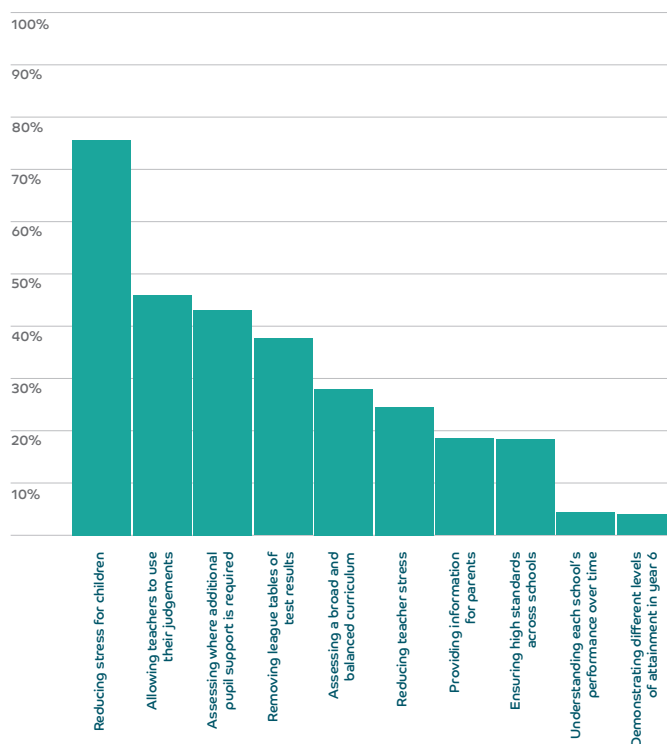


Fig. 4 Responses from parents to the question: ‘In a redesigned assessment system, which of the following would you prioritise?’

When asked about their priorities for reform, educators’ most popular priorities were also reducing stress for pupils and allowing teachers to make professional judgements. Again, the least popular priorities were those relating to the school’s performance.

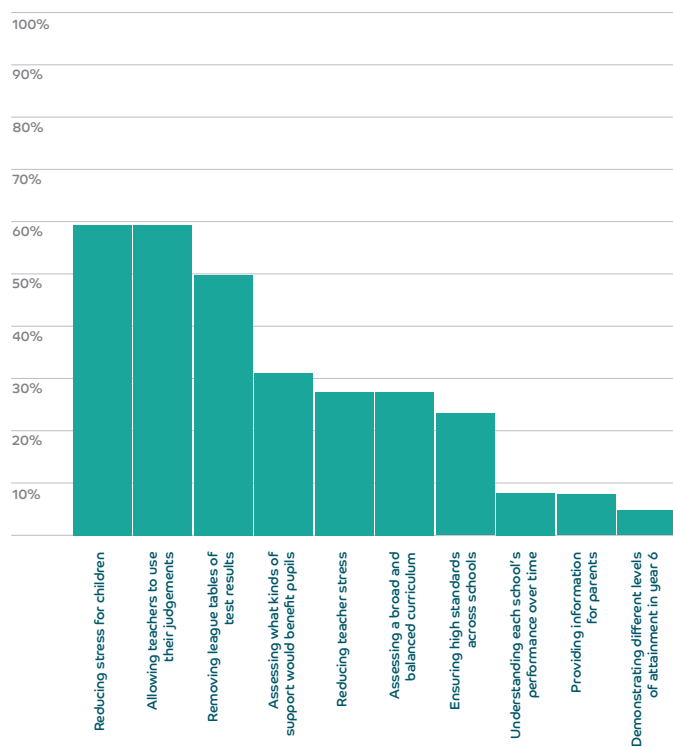


Fig. 5 Responses from educators to the question 'In a redesigned assessment system, which of the following would you prioritise?'

Educators and parents explained how alternative systems could reduce stress by allowing teachers to assess in other ways:

“““

Just ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is being delivered. You can do that by observations and seeing pupils' work. No need to put teachers and children through such a stressful situation.

(Parent)

Replacing the current system with continuous sampling of ongoing teacher assessment of children's progress across the breadth of the curriculum would go a long way to improve our children's primary education. The focus on a narrow range of frankly bizarre SATs content is highly damaging to our children's wellbeing and academic progress.

(Parent)

Teacher assessment is a much more valid and better option for children. SATs carry too much stress for all involved.

(Educator)

Teacher assessment is fairer and the pressure on some children can be very damaging.

(Educator)

When asked if there were any new ways of thinking about assessment that they thought the commission should look into further, there were many suggestions, including comparative judgements, other countries' approaches, multiple alternative options for in-school assessments, observations and, most commonly, teacher assessments.

Views from the commissioners

The commission's meetings provided a wealth of information based on the extensive combined experience and expertise of the commissioners, and their colleagues who on occasion joined the meetings. Here we summarise some key themes and ideas which emerged as a result of the discussions, and records taken, at the meetings.

The significance of underlying purposes and aims for assessment

A recurrent theme in the discussions was the importance of clarity over the purpose for assessment: the underlying rationale for the form and content of assessment. The current system was seen as lacking clarity, for example the confusion of purposes for assessment evident in SATs and Baseline. The commissioners agreed that assessment needed to serve clear purposes in order to be effective. This discussion emphasised the importance of assessment within the system as representing what matters in the curriculum and in primary education more generally; for example, the need to assess the whole curriculum to some degree and not prioritise a narrow range of subjects too much. There is also a need for assessment to value a broader range of skills, competencies, and other ways of learning, with a lesser focus on some of the types of knowledge prioritised in the national curriculum. Related to this is the issue of how assessments should cover skills, knowledge or characteristics of effective learning, and again what purpose these should serve. Overall, the commissioners agreed that the motivating purpose should always be to

help children's learning, not to judge the school: this is a departure from the current system of accountability.

The negative impact of assessment on classroom practices and the pressure placed on teachers

The insights provided by commissioners based in the classroom reminded the group of the everyday pressures exerted by the system of statutory assessment. One member spoke about the instruction from school leaders to reduce the time for subjects other than English and maths until they were confident results would be improved, and the resulting increase in concern from parents about this narrowing of the curriculum. Heads on the commission explained the pressure on schools, something which corroborated the findings from educators in the NEU survey carried out as part of the commission.

The need to create space between assessment of school and assessment of the child

Commissioners pointed out that the emphasis on statutory assessment to judge schools was the main cause of many of the negative impacts of high-stakes assessment seen in schools. These would be resolved, it was argued, if tests were not 'high-stakes': the purposes of assessment for children's learning and of holding schools to account should be decoupled. This led to extensive discussion of how best to track changes over time among all schools, including systems of sampling, such as that proposed in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) report *High standards, not high stakes* (Moss et al, 2021). The impact of the move to sampling for science was discussed as a possible model, but it was also agreed that a renewed national system would have to be built from a new understanding of purposes for assessment.

schools to reflect on use of assessment in their own context.

Teacher assessment requires understanding of both assessment and the content that is being assessed. TAPS professional learning promotes responsive teaching and active pupils. Ongoing formative assessment is designed to support learning, and inform summative judgements when required. Shifting thinking towards primarily formative assessment means that discussions about 'meeting expectations', and what pupil progress looks like, are focused on consideration of next steps for the children's learning (Earle, 2021). Discussions of examples of work can become moderation as part of professional learning. This can result in developing a shared understanding of progression, and greater confidence in teacher assessment.

Subject-specific support for teacher assessment literacy

The Teacher Assessment in Primary Science (TAPS) project (pstt.org.uk/resources/curriculum-materials/assessment) is a collaboration with teachers to develop subject-specific support for assessment as an embedded part of teaching and learning (Davies et al, 2017). The TAPS focused assessment approach supports teachers to make judgements about science learning. Lesson plans provide examples of ways to do this within the context of a science enquiry. This helps with the application of disciplinary knowledge which is the most challenging area of assessment in primary science. TAPS has also collected examples of children's work, assessment strategies, and processes to showcase the variety of practice across the UK, by supporting

The need to recognise a broader range of knowledge, skills, dispositions and understanding

Consistent with the well-understood effects of assessment narrowing the curriculum (eg Boyle & Bragg, 2006), commissioners argued for a greater recognition of knowledge and understanding across the breadth and depth of the whole curriculum. This included recognising the importance of creativity as a vital aspect of 21st century curricula. Particularly useful insights came from commissioners on the potential use of portfolios as representations of children's wider attainment and achievements at the end of primary school. Examples of online portfolios provided examples of how year 6 children could create effective portfolios of their work, independently of teachers. Portfolios could include attainment scores but would not prioritise them in the way the

current system of assessment does. We agreed that the purpose of these portfolios would be to recognise the broad attainment of children, rather than as transition documents for secondary schools, given some reluctance to use information from primaries. During the course of the commission's discussions, the organisation Rethinking Assessment (Lucas, 2021) and the Times Education Commission (2022) published recommendations specifically including the development of a digital learner profile for all pupils, with a portfolio starting in the primary phase. Above all, it was agreed that the purpose of a portfolio should be a thorough representation of each child's achievements, rather than a measure of the school.

Innovative approaches to primary assessment

Big Education is a trust committed to a more expansive education for children. At Surrey Square Primary School, establishing what success for pupils could look like has been key to developing assessment approaches that can capture the breadth of children's learning. Teachers have worked to develop a range of teacher assessment and pupil peer assessment approaches. Working with ImpactED has been useful to identify some aspects of pupil personal development and wellbeing which can be captured in quantitative terms and related to external benchmarks.

Each of the schools has developed e-portfolios as an approach to summative assessment. These draw in a range of data and information, and are curated and managed by the pupils themselves, even in reception classes. The e-portfolios become the basis for a pupil-led conference, where they present their learning from the year to parents and teachers.

The impact of these processes of assessment is clear in terms of pupils'

greater sense of ownership of their own learning and development. Parents and carers deeply value this opportunity for communication, not least because it is more meaningful to them than test scores and grades alone.

The need for inclusive assessment

The commission agreed that any assessment system should be equitable and inclusive, and recognised how exclusionary practices in assessment (eg inappropriate emphasis on culturally specific content as part of assessments) could have significant effects. These concerns related to the need to decolonise the curriculum, in other words to ensure that the curriculum was a truer more equitable representation of human life relevant to the experiences of all children. Given what head teachers perceive as a disproportionate impact of assessment on pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (Bradbury et al, 2021), we saw the principle of inclusion as a key factor in any reform.

Inclusive teaching, learning and assessment

Research with teachers has suggested that often their assessments of children's historical knowledge have been focused disproportionately on white European historical facts and ideas (Moncrieffe, 2020). This Eurocentric approach means that formal and informal assessments can lead to under-valuing the wider skills and knowledge of marginalised groups. In contrast, where teachers are trained to teach and assess through critical historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2004), this generates opportunities for them to implement more inclusive approaches to their practice, including more critical thinking about curriculum aims and contents. For example, the following is a quote from a teacher discussing the content of the history curriculum, and the requirements of fundamental British values, with her colleagues:

"There is nothing post 1066 about explicit migration. Pre that, it discusses movement through the Stone Ages; the Iron Ages; the Roman empire, Anglo-Saxons. But post that, unless... unless you take it on yourself as teacher, you are not going to get that. I think like if we are going to be talking about 'tolerance' and 'equality,' if we are going to be teaching and assessing learning on those British values, then we are going to need to have multicultural perspectives within the curriculum."

(‘Diana’, in Moncrieffe, 2020, p81, 83)

Inclusive assessment involves recognising the ways in which the curriculum may centre dominant perspectives, and working to diversify how teachers understand children's knowledge and skills.

Reforms to specific assessments, and wider repercussions

Finally, there was agreement among the commissioners that the entire system requires reform, not just year 6 SATs. Baseline was regarded as a particularly problematic assessment, given the lack of information it provides to teachers. Current Baseline assessment was seen as conflicting with the principle identified above that all assessment should aid children's learning. Commissioners also highlighted various points relating to teachers' work: the need to improve teachers' assessment literacy in order to increase their confidence in their own judgements; the need to prevent increases to workload; and the relation of assessment to problems in teacher retention. It was also argued that parents need more information about assessment, because few know the extent and implications of the testing system for their children.

Discussion and conclusions

The modern history of England's approach to assessment in primary schools, and to the national curriculum, shows that in spite of many changes to aspects of assessment, the system remains rooted in the ideas of competition, and markets of schools, that underpinned the introduction of national statutory testing in the 1990s. Most striking of all is that in the face of the profound new challenges that face society there has been no fundamental review of the main purposes for assessment in primary schools. The developments that led to England's national curriculum of 2014 failed to build on the research evidence available at the time, and were too ideologically and politically oriented (see expert advisor Mary James, 2012, for an account of this process). A significant review of curriculum and assessment is long overdue, and the need for a better alignment between appropriate research evidence, policy and practice is pressing. The unique circumstance of the Covid-19 pandemic only served to heighten the need for such a review.

Another very strong rationale for change comes from the evidence from research. Earlier research showing the vital importance of formative assessment has been augmented by more recent research. The case for a renewed emphasis on formative research is inescapable: greater emphasis on formative assessment is highly likely to result in improvements in children's learning, a goal that all in society share. The merits of national statutory summative assessment are strongly contested. While accepting that well-designed standardised tests provide one important and reliable contribution to assessing children's learning, the well-documented risks of high-stakes assessments are of great concern. In particular the current assessment system

is poorly suited to addressing the needs of all children, including the need to avoid wherever possible negative impacts on children's wellbeing. The evidence that high-stakes assessments nearly always distort the curriculum is another risk that should and can be avoided.

The comparison of curriculum and assessment policies in primary education in other countries and regions has a long history (Wyse & Anders, 2019). One feature of the comparisons made by politicians in England has been inappropriate 'cherry-picking' of single regions and a consequent lack of robust criteria to make selections for comparison. Another feature of international comparison is the growth of interest in studies such as PISA, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). One relevant aspect of such comparisons is what they reveal about the different contexts, including assessment policies, that have been adopted by regions which score highly in comparative tests. These data illustrate that different ways of organising assessment is possible and practicable.

Perhaps the most worrying finding from ICAPE's new surveys was the reporting of negative impact on children caused by high-stakes summative tests. The strength of parents' views about the impacts on their children was shocking and, when combined with the views of teachers, gave another clear rationale for change. People in society should ask themselves whether any negative impact on children of this kind is acceptable and, if not, should seek to improve the system in the best interests of children, teachers and parents.

The commissioners' views are based on extensive experience in classroom practice and school leadership, long contributions to research relevant to assessment, and strong appreciation of the ways in which research and practice may or may not influence education policy. The commissioners strongly highlighted the lack of clarity in the purposes for assessment in primary education: for example, the problems with narrow assessment processes failing to capture children's capabilities across the whole curriculum were singled out. The use of assessment to hold teachers and schools to account has distorted primary education and children's learning, and created undue and inappropriate workload and stress for teachers. These distortions have also contributed to a lack of equity and inclusiveness, particularly through the lack of sensitivity to what all children bring from their communities and cultures.

For the main reasons highlighted in this discussion section, and the myriad of other reasons that the voice of every child, teacher, parent, researcher and policy-maker has articulated prior to and during ICAPE, we say that

the time for fundamental reform of assessment and curriculum in primary education is now, if we are to safeguard and improve primary children's education and hence life chances.

Recommendations

As a result of the work of the commission we consider the following principles and recommendations, which we end this report with, to be necessary if children's learning and life chances are to be improved. One of the recommendations is to change the age at which children's main summative assessments are carried out. The reason for recommending a change from the main assessment points of year 2 and year 6 to year 1 and year 4 is so that any diagnostic and formative information from these assessments can be used to plan for, and give more time for, teaching to maximally improve children's learning while still in primary education.

Principles for assessment

- The main purpose of primary school assessments is to improve pupils' learning and progress during their primary school years.
- The assessment system, the national curriculum and pedagogy in schools in England are educationally ambitious, evidence based, holistic and build the foundations for children's lives in the 21st century.
- Formative assessment of children's learning is the main emphasis of the assessment system.
- Assessment is designed to support inclusive education for all children.
- Assessment of pupils provides a holistic picture of pupils' achievements that reflects the whole curriculum, encompassing a wide range of understanding including creative thinking.
- Summative assessment is undertaken at times in a pupil's primary schooling that allow for learning to be substantially improved as a result of analysis of the summative assessments.
- Assessment of pupils is clearly separated from the means to hold schools and teachers to account.
- Curriculum and assessment policies are based on evidence not ideology.
- Changes to national curriculum and assessment policies are developed over sufficient timescales to ensure they are genuinely world-class.
- Changes to national curriculum and assessment policies are developed democratically and collaboratively including through sustained involvement of educators, educational researchers and policy-makers.
- The assessment systems in England support and underpin the aims and programmes of study of the national curriculum.
- The assessment system increases teachers' sense of expertise and carefully considers the pressures of primary teachers' workload.

Developments in assessment and curriculum to be completed within five years

1. Assessments for monitoring of standards of education over time are based on a new system of nationally representative sampling of schools and pupils.
2. The SATs and other high-stakes assessments are phased out to be replaced by more emphasis on assessment for learning.
3. Holistic assessment of each pupil's learning during their life in primary school is captured in a profile of evidence that reflects their achievements and draws on a variety of assessment methods.
4. Year 1 and year 4 are established as points for key summative assessments in primary schools to enable more time for use of diagnostic information to support children's learning prior to year 6.
5. In order to ensure sufficient breadth of assessments (including the vital areas of the arts, humanities and pupils' learning dispositions), professional learning opportunities are provided to teachers to support formative and summative assessment, as appropriate, across the whole curriculum.
6. New, more appropriate and more supportive ways of monitoring the quality of schools and teachers are developed.
7. Local authorities are empowered to support and monitor the quality of education in schools.
8. Full consideration is given to England's participation in future PISA assessments of creative thinking.

Table 2: indicative details of the likely timescales for development of the long-term recommendations of ICAPE.

Development year	Assessment for children's learning	Assessment of national standards
1	<p>Reception Baseline assessment, the phonics screening check (PSC) and multiplication tables check (MTC) are discontinued.</p> <p>The early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) is made non-statutory.</p> <p>KS1 SATs remain as non-statutory.</p> <p>KS2 SATs continue but results are not available to be published in 'league tables' of schools.</p> <p>Professional learning programmes to support formative in-class assessment are established, including training against unconscious bias and SEND issues.</p> <p>The development of a reformed curriculum and assessment system is started in consultation with the sector. The timeline for developments is established. Work to develop options for a more holistic assessment of each pupil's learning begins with research, including taking note of promising practices from across the world. Work on the curriculum continues in tandem with work on assessment to ensure alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.</p>	<p>A high-level task group of teachers, researchers and policy-makers is established to plan redevelopment of national curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>A curriculum and assessment authority (CAA) is established which includes representation by teachers, researchers and policy-makers.</p> <p>Plans are devised by the CAA and consulted upon for a national sampling instrument to assess standards overall.</p>
2	<p>KS2 SATs continue but results are not published.</p> <p>Piloting of summative assessments using a combination of teacher assessment and tests in year 1 and year 4, used by teachers to assess progress across a range of subject areas. Results are available within school, including for parents/carers.</p> <p>Continued professional learning programmes on assessment literacy. Updating of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in line with new assessment priorities.</p>	<p>Continued work on national sampling instrument including piloting, with particular reference to principles of inclusion.</p>

Development year	Assessment for children's learning	Assessment of national standards
3	<p>Trialling of new summative assessments in year 1 and year 4.</p> <p>Options for a more holistic assessment profile are piloted in primary schools, along with associated professional learning for teachers.</p> <p>Continued professional learning programmes on assessment literacy.</p>	Trialling of national sampling instrument.
4	<p>Based on evidence from national sampling trial, KS2 SATs are discontinued. KS1 SATs materials are no longer provided.</p> <p>Alternative summative assessment materials are provided as non-statutory. Options for the holistic assessment profile are offered to schools as non-statutory.</p> <p>Options for the holistic assessment profile are offered to schools as non-statutory.</p>	Implementation of national sampling instrument.
5	<p>New curriculum and assessment systems are implemented. Alternative summative assessments become established as the norm, following feedback from previous year and ongoing improvements.</p> <p>Schools are offered various options to develop assessment profiles, supported through work by the curriculum and assessment authority, but it remains a non-statutory requirement.</p>	Continued evaluation of national sampling instrument.

Glossary of key terms

Assessment

The process and means of evaluating learning.

Assessment, diagnostic

A type of formative assessment. Use of assessments to enable the teacher to identify pupils' knowledge and misconceptions in order to better support their future learning.

Assessment, formative

The use of assessment information to help, support and improve learning. Teachers can use the information/data to support and strengthen their teaching, for example, by changing the pace of lessons, altering the level of challenge or providing additional support. It also provides teachers with an opportunity to provide feedback to pupils.

Assessment, high-stakes

The use of assessment outcomes, typically tests, to judge schools' and teachers' effectiveness.

Assessment, statutory

Summative assessment that is required by the government. The results are used to measure school performance and hold them accountable for pupil progress.

Assessment, summative

Assessment that takes place at the end of a course of study. The data provides summaries of pupils' learning at a point in time.

Assessment for learning (AFL)

A particular approach to formative assessment.

Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP)

A statutory assessment measuring pupils against the 17 early learning goals. This is undertaken by teachers and takes place at the end of the reception year. Used to support transition between EYFS and KS1.

KS1 SATs

Statutory tests in reading and mathematics taken at the end of key stage 1.

KS2 SATs

Statutory tests in reading, maths and GPS (grammar, punctuation and spelling) taken at the end of key stage 2.

Misconception

A pupil's idea or understanding which is not yet fully formed, incorrect or does not match the accepted wisdom. Also referred to as alternative framework, 'working theory' or preconception.

Moderation, external

The process that teachers and external moderators use to check and agree that assessments are accurate according to pre-set criteria.

Moderation, internal

The process that teachers and in-school moderators/colleagues use to check and agree that assessments are accurate according to pre-set criteria.

Multiplication tables check (MTC)

A statutory test measuring year 4 pupils' recall of multiplication facts up to 12 x 12.

Phonics screening check (PSC)

A statutory assessment measuring year 1 pupils.

Portfolio

A purposeful collection of pupils' schoolwork and data describing and demonstrating a pupil's learning experience. A portfolio could be physical or digital, and might include a variety of materials such as observations, artefacts, projects, exhibitions, work-in-progress or interviews.

Reception Baseline assessment (RBA)

Statutory assessment conducted within the first six weeks in reception.

SATs

A commonly used term for statutory tests currently taken in year 2 and year 6 in primary schools in England.

Teacher assessment, statutory

Teachers judge the level a pupil is working at. They use a range of evidence to support their judgement. Statutory external moderation takes place when teacher assessment is used.

References

- Adams, P (2014). *Policy and Education*. Abingdon, Routledge.
- Alexander, R (Ed) (2010). *Children, their World, their Education. Final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*. Routledge.
- Bradbury, A (2013). *Understanding Early Years Inequality: policy, assessment and young children's identities*. London, Routledge.
- Bradbury, A, Braun, A & Quick, L (2021). Intervention culture, grouping and triage: high-stakes tests and practices of division in English primary schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 42(2), 147-163.
- Bradbury, A & Roberts-Holmes, G P (2016). "They are children... not robots, not machines": *The Introduction of Reception Baseline Assessment*. London: ATL and NUT.
- Ball, S (1990). *Politics and Policymaking in Education*. London, Routledge.
- Ball, S J (2021). *The education debate (fourth edition)*. Bristol, Policy Press.
- Boyle, B & Bragg, J (2006). A curriculum without foundation. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(4), 569-582.
- CBI (2015) *Tomorrow's World: Inspiring Primary Scientists*. London: Confederation of British Industry.
- Children's Commissioner (2021). *The Big Answer*, childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-answer/
- Davies, D, Earle, S, McMahon, K, Howe, A & Collier, C (2017). Development and exemplification of a model for Teacher Assessment in Primary Science. *International Journal of Science Education*, 39:14, 1869-1890.
- Department for Education (2022a). *Academic Year 2021/22: Schools, pupils and their characteristics*. Retrieved on 26 September 2022 from explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics
- Department for Education (2022b). *Academic Year 2021/22: Special educational needs in England*. Retrieved on 26 September 2022 from <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2021-22>
- Department for Education and Science and the Welsh Office (1987). *National Curriculum: Task Group on Assessment and Testing, a Report*. London: DES.
- Earle, S (2021). *Formative Decision-Making in Response to Primary Science Classroom Assessment: What to do Next?* *Frontier Education*, 5:584200. [frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2020.584200/full](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2020.584200/full)
- Education Endowment Foundation (2021). *Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning*. educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/feedback
- Gillborn, D & Youdell, D (1999). *Rationing Education: Policy, Practice, Reform and Equity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Harlen, W., & Deakin Crick, R. (2002). A systematic review of the impact of summative assessment and tests on students' motivation for learning. <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=108>
- Higgins, S, Kokotsaki, D & Coe, R (2012). *The Teaching and Learning Toolkit: Technical Appendices*. Education Endowment Foundation & The Sutton Trust.
- Howell, M, Bradshaw, J & Langdon, P E (2022). 'There isn't a checklist in the world that's got that on it': Special needs teachers' opinions on the assessment and teaching priorities of pupils on the autism spectrum. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 26(1), 211-226.
- James, M (2012). *Background to Michael Gove's response to the Report of the Expert Panel for the National Curriculum Review in England*. bera.ac.uk/bera-in-the-news/background-to-michael-goves-response-to-the-report-of-the-expert-panel-for-the-national-curriculum-review-in-england
- Jerrim, J (2021). National tests and the wellbeing of primary school pupils: new evidence from the UK. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 28(5-6), 507-544.
- Leckie, G & Goldstein H (2017). The evolution of school league tables in England 1992–2016: 'Contextual value added', 'expected progress' and 'progress 8'. *British Educational Research Journal*.
- Lucas, B (2016). *A Five-Dimensional Model of Creativity and its Assessment in Schools*. *Applied Measurement in Education* 29(4): 278-290.
- Lucas, B, Claxton, G & Spencer, E. (2013). Progression in Student Creativity in School: *First steps towards new forms of formative assessments*. *OECD Education Working Papers No. 85*. Paris: OECD.
- Lucas, B (2022). *A field guide to assessing creativity in schools*. Perth: FORM.
- Marks, R (2014). Educational triage and ability-grouping in primary mathematics: a case-study of the impacts on low-attaining pupils. *Research in Mathematics Education*, 16(1), 38-53.
- Moncrieffe, M L (2020). *Decolonising the History Curriculum: Eurocentrism in Primary School Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Moss, G, Goldstein, H, Hayes, S, Chereau, B M, Sammons, P, Sinnott, G & Stobart, G (2021). *High standards, not high stakes: An alternative to SATs that will transform England's testing & school accountability system in primary education & beyond*. British Educational Research Association. bera.ac.uk/publication/high-standards-not-high-stakes-an-alternative-to-sats
- NEU (2018). *SATs do not benefit children's learning and are bad for their wellbeing – NEU survey*. neu.org.uk/press-releases/sats-do-not-benefit-childrens-learning-and-are-bad-their-well-being-neu-survey
- Newman, M, Kwan, I, Schucan Bird, K & Hoo, HT (2021). *The impact of Feedback on student attainment: a systematic review*. London: Education Endowment Foundation.
- Ofsted (2019). *Intention and substance. Further findings on primary school science from Ofsted's curriculum research*. Manchester: Ofsted.
- Ofsted (2021). *Research review series: science*. gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-science/research-review-series-science
- Oxford English Dictionary* (2022). Assessment. oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/assessment
- Parentkind (2022). SATs poll. parentkind.org.uk/research-and-policy/parent-research/research-library/sats-poll#heading284541
- Reay, D & Wiliam, D (1999). 'I'll be a nothing': structure, agency and the construction of identity through assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 25(3), 343-354.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. (2022). *Overview report by main panel C and sub-panels 13 to 24*. ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/main-panel-overview-reports/

Richardson, M (2022). *Rebuilding public confidence in assessment*. London, UCL Press.

Rüsen, J (2004). Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development. In P. Seixas (Ed.). *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (p.63–85)

Schildkamp, K, van der Kleij, F M, Heitink, M C, Kippers, W B & Veldkamp, B P (2020). Formative assessment: A systematic review of critical teacher prerequisites for classroom practice. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 103, 101602.

Wellcome (2017). *State of the Nation report of UK Primary Science Education*. London: The Wellcome Trust.

Wisniewski, B, Zierer, K & Hattie, J (2020). The power of feedback revisited: A meta-analysis of educational feedback research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3087.

Wyse, D & Anders, J (2019). Primary education curricula across the world: qualitative and quantitative methodology in international comparison. In L Suter, E Smith and B Denman (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Comparative Studies in Education*. p.342-369.

Wyse, D & Torrance, H (2009). The development and consequences of national curriculum assessment for primary education in England. *Educational Research*, 51(2), 213-228.

Wyse, D, Brown, C, Oliver, S & Poblete, P (2020). Education Research and Educational Practice: The Qualities of a Close Relationship. *British Educational Research Journal*, DOI: 10.1002/berj.3626.

Wyse, D (2020). Presidential Address: The academic discipline of education. Reciprocal relationships between practical knowledge and academic knowledge. *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 46 (1): p.6-25. DOI: 10.1002/berj.3597.

Wyse, D, Baumfield, V, Egan, D, Gallagher, C, Hayward, L, Hulme, M, Leitch, R, Livingston, K, Menter, I & Lingard, B (2013). *Creating the Curriculum*. London, Routledge.

Yan, Z, Li, Z, Panadero, E, Yang, M, Yang, L & Lao, H (2021). A systematic review on factors influencing teachers' intentions and implementations regarding formative assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 28(3), 228-260.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Dates and topics of ICAPE meetings

1	22 March	Introduction to work of commission; agree on terms of reference, scope and ways of working.
2	19 April	Establishing agreed definitions; starting the review of latest robust research on assessment; reviewing recent suggested alternatives to assessment in England.
3	24 May	Assessment practices in schools and assessment of the whole curriculum.
4	29 June	Reflections on other relevant commissions and initiatives.
5	19 July	Research on assessment. Led by commissioners with main expertise in research.
6	21 September	Reviewing and agreeing the report and recommendations.

Appendix 2: A comparison of statutory assessments in a selection of regions

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional Information
England	Reception	4 to 5 years	Language, communication and literacy; mathematics.	Reception Baseline assessment	Teacher assessment	Teacher administered. Takes place in the first six weeks of reception. Data will be used to measure pupil progress across primary school.
England	Reception	4 to 5 years	Communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development; literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts, designing and making.	Early years foundation stage profile	Teacher assessment	Teachers assess pupils against the 17 early learning goal descriptors. The assessment takes place at the end of reception.
England	Year 1	5 to 6 years	Decoding words and pseudo words	Phonics screening check	Test	Teacher marked. Phonetic decoding. Pupil must decode 20 real words and 20 pseudo-words. Pupils who do not reach the expected standard retake this in year 2.
England	Year 2	6 to 7 years	English; mathematics.	KS1 tests (SATs)	Test	Teacher marked. Pupils sit the following papers: English reading paper 1; English reading paper 2; mathematics paper 1 – arithmetic; mathematics paper 2 – reasoning.
England	Year 2	6 to 7 years	Reading; mathematics; writing; science.	Teacher assessment	Teacher assessment	Teachers assess pupils' attainment, taking into consideration their results from the KS1 SATs and their classwork.
England	Year 4	8 to 9 years	Multiplication/ times tables recall	Multiplication tables check	Test	Multiplication recall up to 12 x 12. Pupils have 25 questions to answer, with 6 seconds for each question.

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional information
England	Year 6	10 to 11 years	Reading; grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS); mathematics.	KS2 tests (SATs)	Test	Pupils sit the following papers: reading (60 mins); GPS – grammar and punctuation (45 mins); GPS – spelling (15 mins); mathematics paper 1 – arithmetic (30 mins); mathematics paper 2 – reasoning (40 mins); mathematics paper 3 – reasoning (40 mins).
England	Year 6	10 to 11 years	Writing; science.	Teacher assessment	Teacher assessment	
England	Year 6	10 to 11 years	Biology; chemistry; physics.	Science sampling tests	Test	Externally marked. Test is taken by a representative sample of pupils across England every two years. Pupils sit three papers (biology; chemistry; physics) lasting 25 mins each.
Scotland	P1	5 to 6 years	Literacy; numeracy.	Scottish national standardised assessments (SNSAs)	Test	P1 pupils sit two tests in May: one in literacy and one in numeracy. These last an estimated 30 minutes each. These tests are delivered online and have no time limit. The questions are adaptive, responding to how well the child is doing. The assessments are delivered online and marked automatically, providing teachers with immediate feedback and diagnostic information about pupils, both individually and at the class level.
Scotland	P4	8 to 9 years	Reading; writing; numeracy.	Scottish national standardised assessments (SNSAs)	Test	P4 pupils sit three tests in May: one in reading, one in writing and one in numeracy. These last an estimated 40 minutes each. These tests are delivered online and have no time limit. The questions are adaptive, responding to how well the pupil is doing. The assessments are marked automatically, providing teachers with immediate feedback and diagnostic information about pupils, both individually and at the class level.

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional information
Scotland	P7	11 to 12 years	Reading; writing; numeracy.	Scottish national standardised assessments (SNSAs)	Test	<p>P7 pupils sit three tests: one in reading, one in writing and one in numeracy. These last an estimated 40 minutes each.</p> <p>These tests are delivered online and have no time limit. The questions are adaptive, responding to how well the child is doing. The assessments are marked automatically, providing teachers with immediate feedback and diagnostic information about pupils, both individually and at the class level.</p>
Northern Ireland	Year 4	7 to 8 years	Communication; using mathematics; using ICT.	Levels of progression (LoP)	Teacher assessment	<p>Teacher assessed. Schools are externally moderated every three years. The LoP assesses literacy, numeracy and ICT knowledge through cross-curricular skills.</p> <p>The LoP paper titles are: communication; using mathematics; and using ICT. Communication assesses talking and listening, reading, and writing.</p>
Northern Ireland	Year 7	10 to 11 years	Communication; using mathematics; using ICT.	Levels of progression (LoP)	Teacher assessment	<p>The LoP assesses literacy, numeracy and ICT knowledge through cross-curricular skills.</p> <p>The LoP paper titles are: communication; using mathematics; and using ICT.</p>
Wales	Year 2	6 to 7 years	Reading; numeracy (procedural); numeracy (reasoning).	Personalised assessments	Test	<p>The numeracy (procedural) moved online in the 2018/19 academic year; reading in 2019/20; and numeracy (reasoning) in 2020/21. There is no set time of year for personalised assessments, the timing is decided by the school.</p>
Wales	Year 3	7 to 8 years	Reading; numeracy (procedural); numeracy (reasoning).	Personalised assessments	Test	

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional information
Wales	Year 4	8 to 9 years	Reading; numeracy (procedural); numeracy (reasoning).	Personalised assessments	Test	
Wales	Year 5	9 to 10 years	Reading; numeracy (procedural); numeracy (reasoning).	Personalised assessments	Test	
Wales	Year 6	10 to 11 years	Reading; numeracy (procedural); numeracy (reasoning).	Personalised assessments	Test	
Ontario, Canada	Grade 3	7 to 8 years	Reading; writing; mathematics.	Primary division		e-assessment
Ontario, Canada	Grade 6	10 to 11 years	Reading; writing; mathematics.	Junior division		e-assessment
Alberta, Canada	Grade 1	5 to 6 years	Literacy; numeracy.	LeNS – English letter name and sound assessment; the Castles and Coltheart test 3; the provincial numeracy screening assessment.	Tests	Alberta is the province in Canada that tests the most. The LeNS test is beginning in January 2023. LeNS assesses the names and sounds of letters, along with the sounds of multi-letter graphemes. CC3 assesses phonological decoding and whole word recognition.

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional Information
Alberta, Canada	Grade 2	6 to 7 years	Literacy; numeracy.	LeNS – English letter name and sound assessment; the Castles and Coltheart test 3; the provincial numeracy screening assessment.	Tests	
Alberta, Canada	Grade 3	7 to 8 years	Literacy; numeracy.	LeNS – English letter name and sound assessment; the Castles and Coltheart test 3; the provincial numeracy screening assessment.	Tests	
Alberta, Canada	Grade 6	10 to 11 years	English language arts (writing and reading); French language arts (writing and reading); mathematics; science; social studies.	Provincial achievement testing program	Tests	Students can use up to double the official time. The following tests are multiple choice questions: English/French language part B; mathematics part B; science; social studies.
British Columbia, Canada	Grade 4	8 to 9 years	Literacy; numeracy.	The foundation skills assessment	Tests	These are taken online and in paper form. The tests are not used to rank the success of students, teachers, schools or districts. Pupils who are EAL and pupils with SEND do not have to complete the assessment if the school principal thinks it is unsuitable.

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional information
Ireland	2nd class	7 to 8 years	English reading; mathematics.	Standardised test	Tests	Schools receive funding to buy standardised tests. Schools may choose to use the Drumcondra tests, Micra-T tests, or the Sigma-T tests.
Ireland	4th class	9 to 10 years	English reading; mathematics.	Standardised test	Tests	
Ireland	6th class	11 to 12 years	English reading; mathematics.	Standardised test	Tests	
New South Wales, Australia	Year 3	8 to 9 years	Writing; reading; conventions of language – spelling, grammar and punctuation; numeracy.	National assessment program – literacy and numeracy	Tests	Online. Adaptive design (questions change based on performance).
New South Wales, Australia	Year 5	10 to 11 years	Writing; reading; conventions of language – spelling, grammar and punctuation; numeracy.	National assessment program – literacy and numeracy	Tests	
New South Wales, Australia	Year 7	12 to 13 years	Writing; reading; conventions of language – spelling, grammar and punctuation; numeracy.	National assessment program – literacy and numeracy	Tests	

Country	School year group	Age of pupils	Subject/area of focus	Assessment title	Type of assessment (teacher assessed or test?)	Additional information
New Zealand	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No statutory national testing in the primary phase. Teachers and schools are encouraged to use any type of assessment that meets the needs of their class and pupils, to further enhance their learning. Teachers have access to the progress and consistency tool (PaCT) which can be used by teachers to link their judgements to the curriculum.



Follow the commission here
icafe.org.uk/reports-and-research

