

# The new National Curriculum



**A practical guide to Assessment after Levels  
Whitepaper No. 3**



**Whitepaper No. 3**

# **10 steps to implementing your assessment framework**

Includes an example of practice from: Jo Grail  
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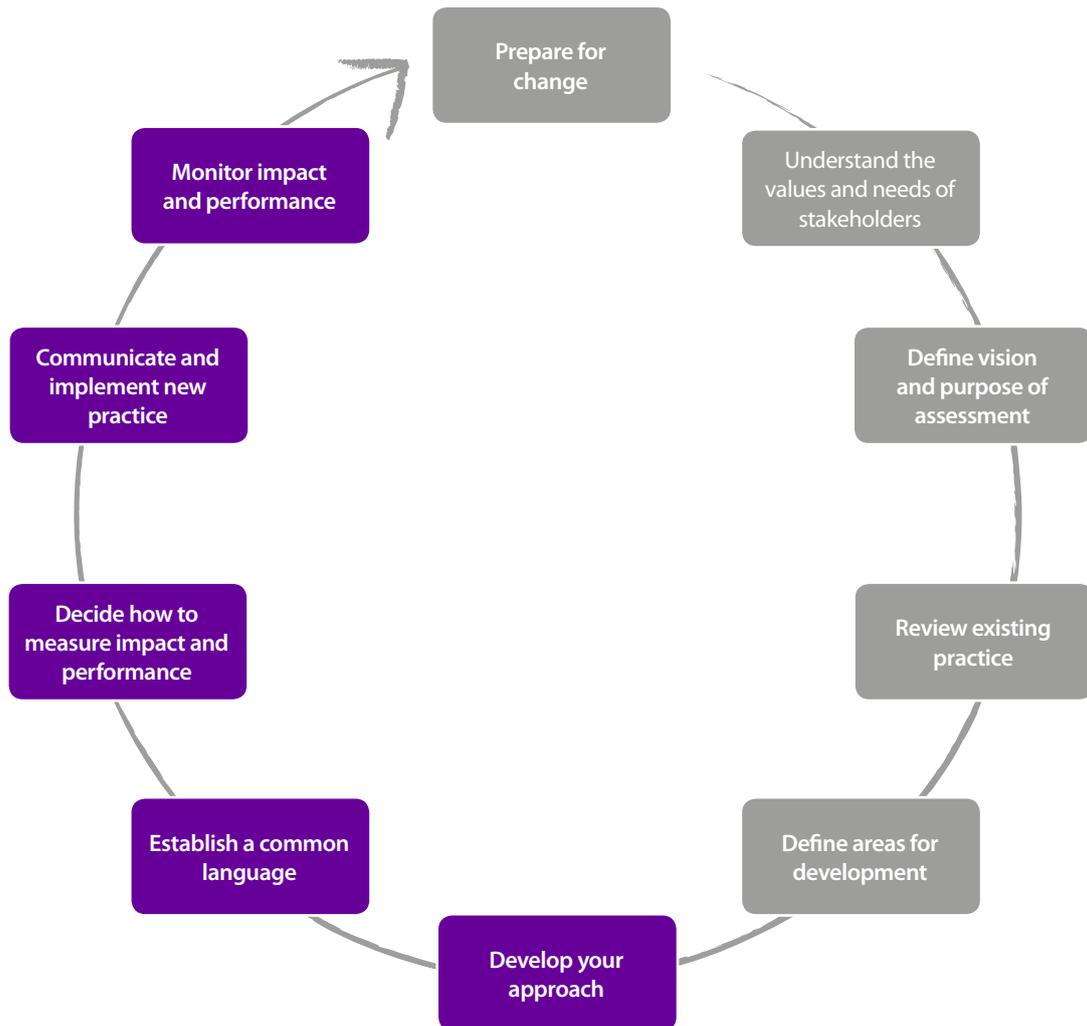
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## 10-step-process overview

This third whitepaper sets out the next five steps, shown in purple below, in a 10-step process for implementing a new assessment framework. The first five steps were outlined within Whitepaper 2.

The 10-step process is a free tool to support school leaders in managing both the cultural and technical changes required to embed a positive assessment practice to improve outcomes for pupils in your school.



## Introduction

The Commission on Assessment without Levels report has been released and provides guidance for schools as they move towards a new assessment model. Although hotly anticipated, the feeling amongst educators is that it would have been helpful to have this information two years ago when the changes were first announced.

Our first two whitepapers outlined the reasons for the removal of levels, provided early examples of best practice around the country and gave guidance for schools to build the foundations for implementing their assessment framework, including:

- Vision and purpose
- Assessment policy and principles
- Putting together a project team who understand their roles and responsibilities

Since the publication of our last whitepaper we have carried out research with schools, conducted assessment workshops and referenced the Commission's report to help inform this third and final whitepaper in the series. Those of you who are only just starting to prepare a new assessment framework will be relieved to hear that this is the situation for most of the schools that we have been in touch with. The sections that follow will complete the process for implementing your assessment framework and address the issues and questions identified to us by schools.

## 6. Develop your approach

Before you start it is important to take a moment to reflect on why levels are being removed in the first place, to ensure you do not recreate old problems in your new system. In brief the rationale for leaving levels behind is as follows:

### Pace

Because progress points were gained for pupils who covered new content, the levels system incentivised moving quickly through new content. The focus therefore was to rush through new material rather than embedding a thorough understanding of key concepts. This meant that some pupils struggled later on because they had gaps in their understanding.

### Consistency

Levels were interpreted and measured differently. This led to mistrust between schools.

### Lack of narrative

Levels were not a good indicator of what a pupil could or couldn't do. They did not provide sufficient information for other adults, such as a parent or a new member of staff, to accurately understand what pupils needed support with.

### Labels

Although they were designed specifically to do the reverse, levels became a label for pupils.

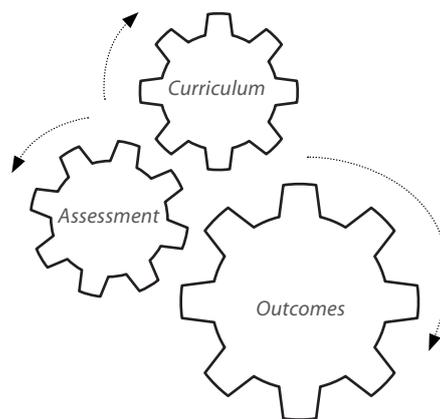
### Best practice

Other nations who have successful education systems and are therefore looked to as examples of best practice do not use levels.

## 6.1 Curriculum and assessment

Your curriculum and assessment practices need to coexist in order to improve outcomes. Therefore your starting point lies with your curriculum.

Many of you by now will have spent time with the new national curriculum, incorporated your own principles and ethos and designed how it will be delivered in your school to make it relevant and engaging for pupils.



The National Curriculum 2014 sets out what should be taught by the end of each key stage. It also states the core aims for each of the subject-specific programmes of study.

The emphasis of the new national curriculum and the intention with the removal of levels is to focus on **mastering key concepts**. If you have not already done so, you should revisit curriculum planning, ensuring that it supports a mastery approach. (See section 6.2)

*“Study fewer things in greater depth, so a deeper understanding of central concepts and ideas can be developed. Assessment should focus on that.”*

*Tim Oates, 2014*

### Tips for schools

- Clearly set out which parts of the curriculum are to be taught in which year group so teachers can easily build relevant links between subjects and topics.
- Make decisions about which aspects of your curriculum should be assessed and why.
- Save teachers' time by linking formative assessment directly to planning, resulting in an accumulation of more valuable data at the point of learning.

### 6.2 Mastery

To have mastered a skill or concept, you must possess a deep understanding and be capable of applying that skill or concept creatively and/or in a range of different contexts. For example, if I can play a piano piece from memory, I can recall a song that I have been taught. If I can create a new arrangement for the piece and teach a friend how to play it, it would be fair to say I had mastered the piece.

Another example could be the application of skills and knowledge independently in a different context. For example, if you take a class and teach them how to create a bar graph and they can recall what they were taught in class to complete a worksheet, this shows that they can recall that information. However, if they independently recognise that in a science project they can use a bar graph to show some data they have collected, this could be evidence of mastery. The understanding goes beyond recall because the pupil has recognised how they can use their new skills and knowledge and apply them in different ways.

Dr Jo Saxon explains it like this:

***“Cognitively we can confirm understanding if something we know we have taught pupils, and we know they can recall, can be used by them in a different context from one they’ve been explicitly taught.”***

*Dr Jo Saxon, Director of the Curriculum Centre, 2015*

The principle of deep learning or mastery has been applied with great success in high-performing jurisdictions around the world; therefore the idea is certainly worth exploring. Before embarking on a change of assessment practice, schools need to consider how this broader change of ‘fewer things in greater depth’ translates into practice.

Begin the process with your long- and medium-term planning, arranging your curriculum into ‘chunks’ or

‘units’ set over longer periods of time. Teachers will need to adapt their approach and style based on the progress of the group. Regular assessments, testing and quizzing is required to gauge when the group is ready to move on.

***“Mastery learning breaks subject matter and learning content into units with clearly specified objectives which are pursued until they are achieved. Learners work through each block of content in a series of sequential steps. Students must demonstrate a high level of success on tests, typically at about the 80% level, before progressing to new content. Mastery learning can be contrasted with other approaches which require pupils to move through the curriculum at a pre-determined pace. Teachers seek to avoid unnecessary repetition by regularly assessing knowledge and skills. Those who do not reach the required level are provided with additional tuition, peer support, small group discussions, or homework so that they can reach the expected level.”***

*Education Endowment Foundation, June 2015*

Another significant change is that all pupils in a year group are expected to progress through content together.

***“The expectation is that the majority of pupils will move through the programmes of study at broadly the same pace. However, decisions about when to progress should always be based on the security of pupils’ understanding and their readiness to progress to the next stage. Pupils who grasp concepts rapidly should be challenged through being offered rich and sophisticated problems before any acceleration through new content. Those who are not sufficiently fluent with earlier material should consolidate their understanding, including through additional practice, before moving on.”***

*DfE, July 2014*

In order to achieve this, teachers will need to find ways to support pupils who are struggling to progress at the same pace as the rest of the class, as well as by creating tasks for faster learners to deepen their understanding, which enables the whole class to move through content together.

### Tips for schools

- Develop units that clearly identify the core concepts that are to be mastered.
- Develop clear learning objectives and opportunities for formative assessment in your planning (these could be developed through your

assessment framework and/or by teachers, to make them relevant for their pupils).

- Mastery involves a pupil being able to use their deep understanding of a concept and apply it in a range of contexts. Make sure you have prepared problems that challenge students to apply their knowledge in different ways, including through different subjects where relevant.
- Use tests and questioning to gauge how well pupils are grasping concepts. Be prepared to provide additional support at the earliest opportunity for pupils who are at risk of falling behind, to help keep the pace of the group moving forward. Keep grouping and differentiation fluid.

### 6.3 Taxonomy

Taxonomy is simply a classification. The model you choose describes what your mark scheme means. It also provides a shared language to describe where a pupil is on their learning journey towards deep understanding of a subject area or concept.

The illustration below takes Anderson and Krathwohl's revision (2001) to the cognitive domain from Bloom's taxonomy, to illustrate depth of learning and how this could sit alongside a mark scheme.

Remember this model may not be appropriate for all subjects – that is OK. Choose to apply the taxonomy

that best suits the subject area and, if necessary, refer to the further domains of Bloom's taxonomy to support this, namely the affective and psycho-cognitive domains.

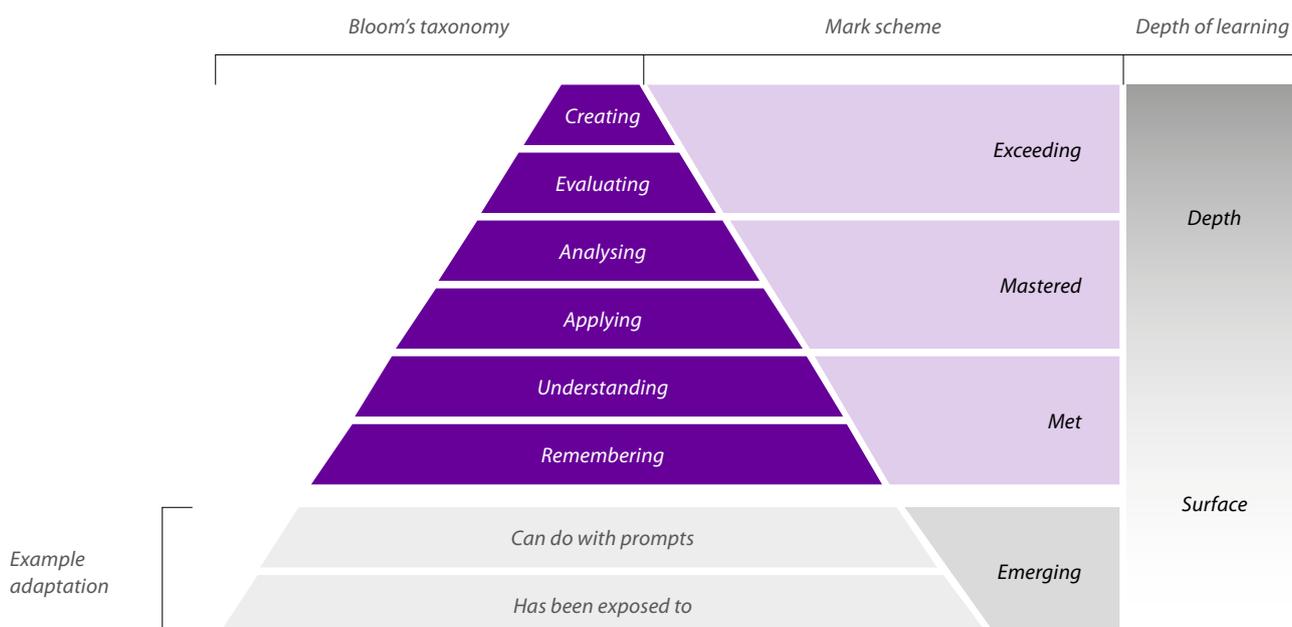
### Tips for schools

- Train staff and provide clear explanations.
- Choose a taxonomy that is easy to understand.
- Use or adapt an existing taxonomy that has been tried and tested, with supporting materials already in place.
- Check that the taxonomy is relevant to subject areas and adjust if necessary.

### 6.4 Creating milestones

The purpose and aims sections in each subject area of the National Curriculum 2014 identify the main objectives of the programmes of study. They describe the concepts pupils will need to have mastered by the end of the key stage in order to meet the expected standard. This is what they will be measured on nationally and it is the only consistent measure that will be comparable across all schools, so should be taken into account when developing your milestones for progression.

The curriculum statements within the programmes of study suggest what should be taught within a year or key stage in order to master a concept.



These therefore become the guide from which you can develop your milestones for each subject for your school or group of schools. You could also use a taxonomy such as Bloom's to help you describe what these milestones look like. Remember, you don't need to assess everything: focus on the key statements that are critical for a pupil to understand in order to achieve the overall goal of meeting the expected standard by the end of the key stage.

This concept is illustrated well in the NAHT assessment framework. Their expert team have reviewed the National Curriculum 2014 and identified a number of statutory requirements as higher-order statements, which they refer to as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). From these they have also developed an end-of-year Performance Standard for each of the core subjects, which summarises the identified KPIs (see section 8 for more details).

#### Tips for schools

- Create clear milestones that are easy for teachers, pupils and parents to understand.
- Use your milestones to indicate what pupils are expected to have mastered by the end of each year group.
- Concentrate your milestones on what you want to assess against the curriculum.
- Each milestone should show a clear progression from the last and be communicated when achieved.

#### 6.5 Skills and knowledge

If you are developing your own assessment framework, it is essential to focus on understanding the skills and knowledge that are required by pupils to learn key concepts, rather than developing content or activities for pupils to do. It is important that, at the start of every lesson, teaching staff know what it is they want pupils to learn, rather than what task they are going to ask pupils to complete.

Getting this right at class level is crucial. After all, if the focus of the lesson is on the task, how can you effectively assess what has been learnt?

As a school you must decide how to reference learnt skills and knowledge, and consider how to moderate judgements. This helps teachers identify mastery evidence against key concepts when they see it. Frameworks such as the NAHT provide samples of exemplar work and guidance notes to support teaching staff so they can make accurate judgements against each KPI.

The *Rising Stars Progression Frameworks*, developed in association with Cornwall Learning, provide descriptions of what a teacher might expect to see as a pupil develops depth of understanding for each curriculum statement.

Many schools we have spoken to have broken down the core skills and knowledge required by pupils into shared learning objectives or 'I can' statements, meaning that teachers have a consistent framework to follow to ensure pupils gain a deep understanding of the key concepts by the end of each year.

#### Tips for schools

- Staff must be given time to understand and embed a new skills-based assessment framework; it will not happen overnight.
- Teachers must collaborate to understand what they want to assess and how they want to assess it.
- Choosing a framework can take time, and sometimes asking schools in your area is a good place to start.

#### 6.6 Curriculum coverage and assessment

It is true that curriculum and assessment work in partnership; however, there should still be clear definition between how you will monitor curriculum coverage and how you will monitor performance, progress and the development of a mastery of concepts.

*"Somehow coverage has also become a pseudonym for learning. In essence, teaching can be unwittingly mistaken for learning."*

*Beth Budden, bethbuddenteacher.wordpress.com, 2014*

You will need to demonstrate that your school is prepared to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which is accessible to all pupils. This means you will need to evidence both what is planned to be taught and what has been taught. Your curriculum should also be arranged in a way that supports a mastery approach as discussed in 6.2.

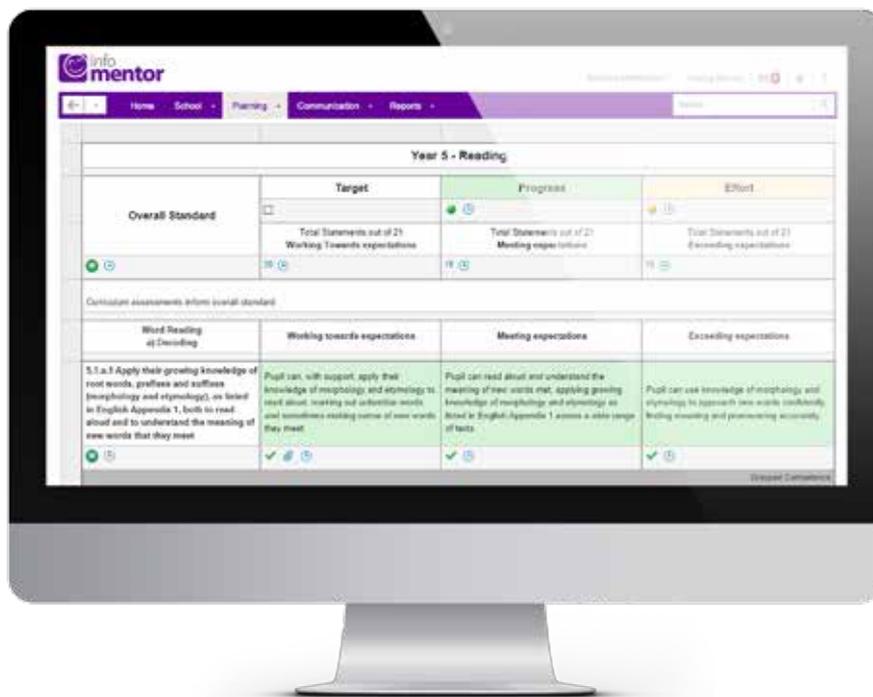
Recorded assessments, however, need to capture the key knowledge and skills that have been learnt, in order for pupils to achieve the expected standard as a result of the curriculum that has been taught.

*"While some have simply copied and pasted the whole of the programmes of study into a spread sheet and then created some boxes to tick, this is unsustainable and not very useful in helping teachers to understand pupils' depth of understanding."*

*Chris Quigley, Head Teacher Update, May 2015*



NAHT – Key Performance Indicators



Rising Stars Progression Framework

When planning, find a system that removes the administrative burden of tracking and recording curriculum coverage. For example, InfoMentor's curriculum tool helps teachers to track what they are teaching, and to share plans with one another. You can see what was covered, when it was taught, and where links to other subjects were made.

#### Tips for schools

- Seeing all your curriculum in one place allows you to focus on delivery.
- Removing the administration of recording curriculum coverage gives teachers time and confidence that what they are teaching relates to the programmes of study.

### 6.7 Deciding what and how much to record

Assessment takes place in a range of different ways throughout the school day. All assessments should be related to the curriculum that is being taught in school.

Although it is true that assessment has become more focused on fewer areas, we are now looking for greater depth in the assessment that takes place and therefore more assessments are needed.

#### ***"More assessment, not less, but all directed towards enhanced learning."***

*Tim Oates, TES, Oct 2014*

However, not all assessments need to be recorded in a formal system. No one wants to unnecessarily increase teacher workload and schools must be both realistic and selective when it comes to deciding what gets formally captured and monitored. Schools must avoid the trapping of 'tick and click' assessment practice, expecting teaching staff to duplicate all of the marking, questioning and feedback they do in the classroom. Any system will need to capture a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate progress towards mastery of key concepts, rather than a grid showing summative assessments.

Schools must decide which concepts and skills they are monitoring against and how they want to capture evidence of learning. It is the quality and integrity of what is recorded, and not how much you record, that is important.

#### ***"Ofsted will take a range of evidence into account when making judgements, including published performance data, the school's in-year performance***

***data and work in pupils' books and folders. However, unnecessary or extensive collections of marked pupils' work are not required for inspection."***

*Ofsted Handbook, 2015*

Evidence of learning will present itself in many different ways, and if you are looking for a pupil to use their knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts to evidence mastery, then the information you collect is likely to differ from pupil to pupil.

Teachers do not need to record everything. They must use their expertise to spot and record relevant evidence when it happens rather than be preoccupied with ticking off a list of what pupils can or cannot do. They are building a development portfolio against each key skill or concept.

#### ***"Different forms of assessment have different strengths and weaknesses."***

*Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels (p. 21)*

The NAHT and Michael Tidd recommend capturing evidence against the Key Performance Indicators or Key Objectives rather than assessing against every statement, and capturing evidence as pupils present it to back up judgements. This is widely recognised as a best practice approach and will ensure that learning is focused on outcomes, whilst remaining manageable for staff.

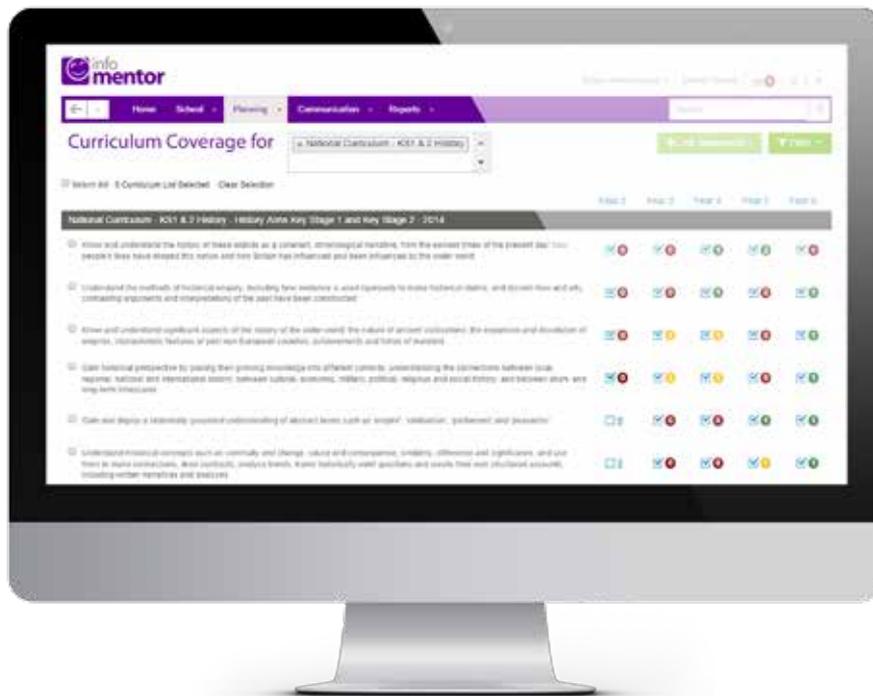
When deciding what to record, you will need to be mindful of, but not directed by, what is necessary in order to provide adequate reports to stakeholders, which is covered in section 9.

#### Tips for schools

- Remember that all recorded assessments should be useful for moving pupils forward in their learning.
- If necessary, make decisions about the key curriculum areas that teachers should be recording evidence against to reduce workload.
- Ensure teachers are clear on the purpose of the formative assessment they are expected to carry out.

### 6.8 Monitoring attainment and progress

I am sure you are all acutely aware that the bar for attainment has been raised considerably. The change was instigated when the government concluded, following a period of research and investigation, that previous expectations were set too low.



Curriculum Coverage



Capturing Evidence

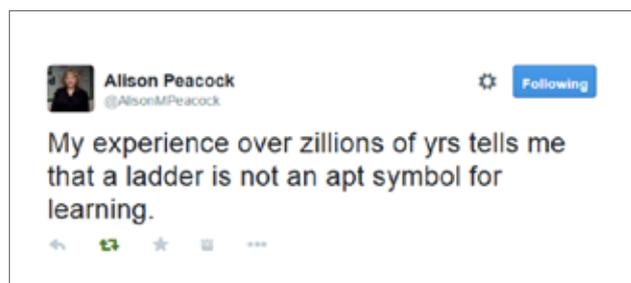
***“In 2012, less than half the pupils who had only just reached the current expected standards at key stage 2 went on to achieve five good GCSEs, including English and Mathematics. In contrast seven in ten of those with a ‘good’ level 4 or above achieved this GCSE standard.”***

*Reforming assessment and accountability for primary schools. Government response to consultation on primary assessment and accountability. March 2014*

Primary schools are now expected to have 85% of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by the end of key stage 1 and 2.

***“The attainment standard from 2016 will be based on the proportion of pupils reaching the new expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. To reach the new expected standard, each pupil will be required to attain a scaled score of 100 or more in the tests in each of reading and mathematics, as well as being assessed by their teacher as reaching the new expected standard in writing. A school will be above the attainment floor if 85% of pupils reach the new expected standard in each area.”***

*DfE, March 2014*



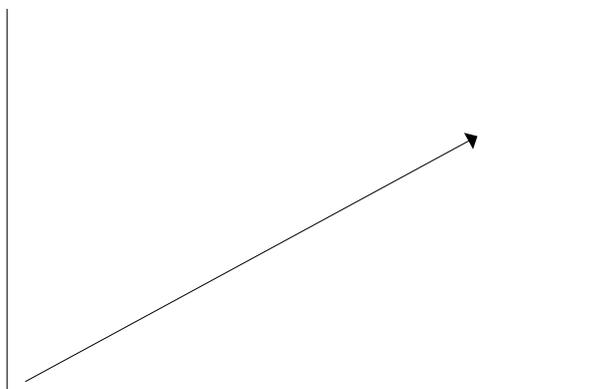
Your taxonomy will be helpful in describing where pupils are in terms of their attainment for each core concept.

If you wish to summarise overall performance in a subject area for the purpose of internal reporting, your milestones and taxonomy will also be useful in helping you to describe whether a pupil has met a milestone at the expected point on their journey towards mastery.

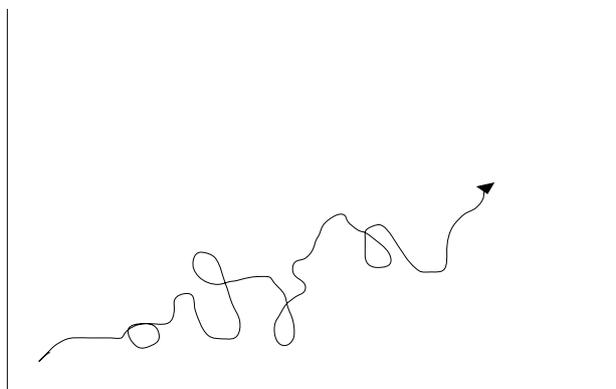
**Progress in learning** is not linear; there are no ladders to climb or trajectories to follow. Learning is a journey and it's often messy. This means it is difficult to rationalise through facts and figures. When we go away travelling, we will often record a journal. A collection of things we have learnt, places we have been and experiences we have had. Of course I could track the number of miles I have travelled or rate the quality of food to produce some data, but this only gives me a fraction of the story. It is no different with monitoring a learning journey. Learning is a series of events, experiences, steps forwards, backwards and sideways.

*Dame Alison Peacock, Twitter, June 2015*

*Ideal progress*



*Real progress*



***“Deep learning should look nothing like we imagined ‘good learning’ would be like when we were kids. There should be crossings out, notes, drafts, dead ends and arguments, disagreements and a great scratching of heads.”***

*Beth Budden, bethbuddenteacher.wordpress.com*

Schools are now being asked to demonstrate progress through the depth of learning. They are not being asked to count how many new statements each child has covered. They need to monitor and evidence the learning journey, and for the first time they can choose how. The only requirement is that they do not use levels; therefore, replicating the levels system with different labels in order to recreate progress graphs is simply not the answer.

Schools are still very confused about how they should evidence progress for Ofsted. Many are suspicious following the removal of levels and believe that they will be expected to present a range of graphs and tables demonstrating progress, having removed the label of levels. However, this is contradictory to all of the guidance released thus far.

#### **Ofsted**

***“Ofsted does not expect performance and pupil-tracking data to be presented in a particular format. Such data should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to track and monitor the progress of pupils in that school.”***

*Ofsted, Clarification for Schools, March 2015*

#### **Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted**

***Demonstrating progress to Ofsted involves “how the school uses assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning or who need additional support to reach their full potential – including the most able”.***

*Michael Wilshaw, July 2014*

Because the focus is on depth of learning or mastery, it is expected that pupils will learn the same content within their year group and will not move on to new content if they have not met the expected standard. Instead pupils will deepen their understanding through practice and applying their new skills and knowledge in a range of different settings and scenarios. This of course impacts traditional tracking. What happens when a pupil reaches mastery before expected? They cannot gain any extra points progress. You will need to consider how to demonstrate that he or she is still making progress by deepening knowledge and understanding.

There is undoubtedly a place for data in schools. Hard numerical data is still required to spot children who are falling behind, moving at a faster pace or at risk. A flag needs to be raised wherever concerns might be.

But consider whether a teacher is better placed to raise the flag than a computer system. Of course moderation needs to be in place and judgements must be backed up with good-quality evidence, but is there an opportunity to place trust in staff to manage this using their professional judgement?

Regardless of the decisions you take when it comes to data collection and evidencing progress, two things are very clear:

- Teaching staff will need to be able to evidence progress towards mastery of a concept. Simply stating that Pupil A has gained progress of two points in maths is not sufficient. Showing evidence of what a pupil could do at the beginning and end of term in fractions and comparing them is a far superior way to demonstrate progress towards mastery of a concept.
- Schools will still be expected to demonstrate that they have a robust assessment practice in place and they will need to find a way to keep parents, governors and Ofsted informed (with evidence) with regard to how well pupils are progressing towards the expected national standard.

#### **Tips for schools**

- Remember, Ofsted will allow for a period of transition; you are not expected to have this perfected right away.
- Focus on capturing evidence of deep learning.
- Consider how progress will be demonstrated once pupils have achieved the expected outcomes for their year group.

#### **6.9 Reporting**

The definition of reporting is ‘to give a spoken or written account of something that one has observed, heard, done, or investigated’.

The way in which you communicate your reports and the frequency with which you provide them is dependent on the audience. However, all recipients of your reports should clearly understand exactly what the report means and how it came about.

In his speech on assessment after levels in February 2015, Nick Gibb described how the use of levels had

failed to give parents clarity over how their children were performing. He stated that schools had lost sight of the need for a “genuine conversation” with parents and that too much attention had been paid to getting children over boundaries.

***“Pupil progress and achievement should be communicated in terms of descriptive profiles rather than condensed to numerical summaries (although schools may wish to use numerical data for internal purposes)...”***

*NAHT Commission on Assessment, 2014*

Providing narrative rather than numerical reports is likely to be helpful to all audiences. Data is arrived at for a reason and can be interpreted in different ways. Whilst it is likely that numerical reporting will provide an important tool internally, all schools should be looking to find ways of describing to all audiences what a pupil or group of pupils can do well and where additional support is needed.

For example, it is far more helpful for a governor to know that most year 5 pupil premium pupils are struggling with geometry, rather than most year 5 pupil premium pupils are ‘working towards’ when they should be ‘met’. Understanding the information behind the top-level data will help them make informed decisions and perhaps support a proposal for additional resources targeted in areas where they are most needed.

### **Reporting to parents**

Traditionally, reporting to parents has been carried out at key points across the academic year. An End of Term Report normally describes what has been taught and how well a pupil has understood these concepts. A good report will also describe what a pupil should focus on next, giving parents an understanding of how to support their child in moving forward.

***“Focusing assessment on the content of the school’s curriculum will allow for communications with parents and carers to provide a clearer sense of how to support their children to build and consolidate learning.”***

*Final report of the Commission on Assessment Without Levels, September 2015*

In Iceland, where 98% of the market use InfoMentor, schools share real-time assessments as they happen, which means parents are able to support their child during their learning rather than after it has taken place.

### **Numerical data**

As mentioned in section 6.8, there will be times when reports of numerical data are still required, particularly for internal high-level diagnostics. For example, you will need to know whether pupils are on track to meet their targets at the end of the year, as this will give an indication as to whether they will be able to demonstrate mastery in core concepts by the end of the key stage. It is however important to remember that reports of this type should be used to identify opportunities for teaching and learning and not merely as an exercise in record keeping at the end of the year.

### **Tips for schools**

- Decide what you will report to whom and when.
- Write down the purpose for each report that you are creating.
- Challenge yourself and your stakeholders by questioning why the report or data is needed and what it will be used for next. Check that your report is fit for purpose.
- Focus on what pupils can do and what they are learning next.
- Make it easy for staff to create narrative reports clearly structured around the concepts that have been, or are being, learnt.

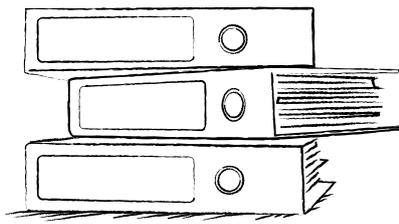
### **6.10 Transitioning pupil data to a new model**

We often receive requests from schools who have developed new assessment models, wanting to make use of their existing data by translating it to their new framework without levels, in order to plot where pupils are.

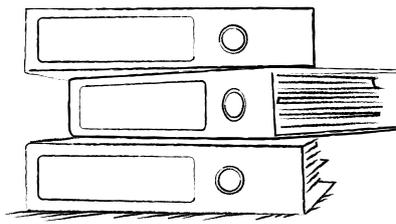
Technology allows this to be possible; however, the output is often wildly inaccurate, teaching staff have no idea of how that judgement has been made and it costs schools money.

If you are thinking of taking this step, stop. Ask another school if they have been through the same process. If they have, and they have tested the data (and are honest), they are highly likely to tell you that they have experienced significant difficulties.

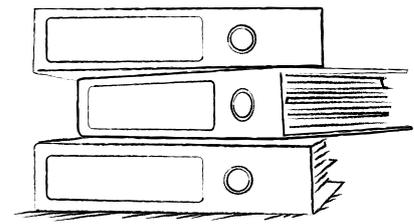
We have a new curriculum and a new way of conducting assessment. Any new system will not, and should not, fit with the levels system.



*Working towards*



*Mastered*



*Exceeding*

***“We have been concerned by evidence that some schools are trying to recreate levels based on the new national curriculum. Unless this is addressed, we run the risk of failing to put in place the conditions for a higher-attaining, higher-equity system.”***

*Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels*

Rachel Gallyot, head teacher at Dashwood School, considered her approach and, having seen examples from other schools, concluded that teaching staff need to make this judgement themselves. She took the time to sit with her staff to go through the new curriculum and the school’s new skills framework and consider each pupil. She told staff to go and get their pupils’ books, look at them, and put them into piles depending on where they considered each pupil to be.

This method is far more accurate because teachers understand how and why the judgement has been made and, crucially, what it is they need to focus on to support pupils through the changes.

## **7. Establish a common language**

One of the problems with the end of levels is that we have lost a common language by which to explain the point a child is at within his or her learning.

Your agreed taxonomy will provide a shared language to what each stage of development looks like. However, to implement a successful policy and practice it is essential that everyone understands each other in a broader context.

Take this opportunity to ensure everyone has a common understanding of the variants of terminology in use in your school and the wider educational community. An example where confusion is often prevalent is with the use of words such as learning objective, learning step, learning intention, learning goal, learning outcome and target. Use our glossary for reference (on page 24), but pick the right terms for your school and make sure everyone understands them.

## **8. Decide how to measure impact and performance**

Record who is going to evaluate the impact and performance of your new assessment model, and how. If you are going to measure these in terms of your assessment goals or principles, how will you decide whether they have been met or not?

It is important to consider methodology before implementation so that you can perform the necessary

actions to establish where you are now. For example, if one of your goals is to enhance communication to parents, you should send out a parent survey before and after implementation to determine the quality of communication and whether it has been improved.

It is also worth comparing the results of summative testing for each child with your own teacher assessments. Of course, using an online assessment system makes this task a lot easier, as most systems will allow you to upload results. Do your teacher assessments reflect what is being shown in the summative tests? If the comparison shows that pupils' attainment is higher, this indicates that your thresholds have been set too low and need to be raised.

## 9. Communicate and implement new practice

All the major decisions have now been made and you are ready to bring everyone else on board with your finalised approach to assessment within your school. Hopefully you will have involved all stakeholders from the start of the process and therefore they should already be aware that changes are coming.

Your communications strategy will detail how and when the various stakeholders will be informed about changes and timescales, as well as detail how your new approach will be described.

What are you going to communicate?

- Explain key drivers behind the change.
- What are the key messages?
- How will you demonstrate that your stakeholders' needs have been taken care of?

Your assessment policy is a comprehensive document containing a wealth of information about the role of assessment within your school, including: your purpose and types of assessment, target setting, marking and feedback, record keeping, reporting, and roles and responsibilities.

Your assessment policy can be shared with all stakeholders via email, hard copies and publication on your website, as appropriate to each audience. Print a copy for every staff member and make sure they read it.

Hold meetings with staff to ensure they understand the changes that are taking place and give them the

opportunity to give feedback and ask questions. It's also useful to have a short and succinct explanation which is easy for everyone to understand. This may summarise how progress and attainment will be demonstrated and what will be shared with parents and pupils.

Consider how to communicate the answers to the following:

- How will it be introduced to teachers/pupils/parents/governors?
- What opportunities will you create for stakeholders to give feedback?
- How will you keep communication going? Is there a point of contact in the school that people can go to with any questions?

Ofsted have made it clear that "engaging parents in contributing to and realising the vision of school leaders" is an important requirement and even go as far as stating that for a school to obtain an outstanding judgement in terms of Leadership and Management, it must be evidenced that "the school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers".

Parents will need help understanding the changes and it will be useful for them to be given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions on the new assessment policy in a face-to-face meeting.

It is particularly helpful to put the changes into context, so invite parents into school to observe your new policy in practice. Focus particularly on assessment methods they may be unfamiliar with, such as 'assessment for learning'.

## 10. Monitor impact and performance

In the final review stage of this project, it is beneficial to discuss and record the impact and outcomes of the project and take some time to reflect on the benefits of working together to develop your assessment practice. You have already figured out how to monitor (**section 6.8**) and whose role it is to carry this out, so set a date to discuss the findings and create an action plan for what needs to be done.

Following the research carried out by the Wroxham transformative learning alliance and South Farnham teaching school alliance, schools were asked to submit some key outcomes and impact statements. Some of

the outcomes noted within the report, which you may identify with, include:

- Increased professional dialogue
- Clarity about the purposes of assessment
- Pupil involvement in the learning process
- A culture shift
- An opportunity to take a broader view

From the research report "Beyond Levels: alternative assessment approaches developed by teaching schools", September 2014



## Conclusion

Although change is never easy, the implementation of a new curriculum and the removal of levels at the same time provides a unique window of opportunity for education leaders to take ownership and really make a difference to the lives of young people.

***"In reality it is through classroom assessment that attitudes, skills, knowledge and thinking are fostered, nurtured and accelerated – or stifled."***

*Hynes (1991) cited in Earl, L. 2004. Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Achievement to Maximize Student Learning. Experts in Assessment. Corwin Press Inc. Thousand Oaks, California*

As a leader you have been given permission to put in place changes that will improve outcomes for pupils in your school(s). Remember, when it comes to assessment, anything goes (except levels!). Be bold, start with big ideas and don't be held back by old ways of thinking.

We wish you luck in your journey towards a life without levels, and look forward to hearing your experiences over the next school year.

*Sophie Bishop and  
the InfoMentor Team*

## Example of practice

*Jo Grail, Curriculum and Aspirations Consultant, Aspirations Academy Trust*

### Life with levels

The national curriculum levels led to a narrow, linear curriculum. Schools began to seek continuously accelerated progress, moving quickly through new content in order to achieve higher standards.

Over time levels became labels, with a 'level' assigned to summarise attainment across a whole subject – e.g., Pupil A is a 3A in maths.

This gave little information about the strengths and weaknesses of the individual pupil, or their targets for the future. A child could achieve a Level 3A with significant gaps in their knowledge, but would still be expected to move to the next level in order to demonstrate progress. The impact of this was that many pupils had gaps, or misconceptions, in their conceptual understanding so that, whilst they could make progress in the short term, the ability for long-term 'deep' learning was hindered.

The assignment of levels to pupils moved further and further away from the requirements of the national curriculum due to the pressures of making and recording assessments.

Our schools and our teachers have been using this system for over quarter of a century and are secure working in this way. Moving towards a mastery curriculum requires a shift in thinking and, consequently, has implications for professional development.

### Life without levels

The key principles underpinning the theory:

- Judgements about attainment should be based on assessments of the age-related expectations from the curriculum (PoS in specific subjects for specific year groups).
- Assessments should be made at the point of learning, and built up over time to give an accurate picture about what a child knows, understands and can do (or not).
- When a child is adjudged to have understood the concept, further opportunities should be provided to ensure complete understanding by demonstrating using and applying the concept in wider, complex, independent situations.

- Pupils are not expected to accelerate through the content for their year group in order to access content from the next year.
- Careful assessments should ensure pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of **all** aspects of all subjects.

### A mastery approach

*(based on Bloom's updated taxonomy)*

There are many different definitions regarding developing a mastery approach. This is my attempt to clarify the situation!

If we are to develop a consistent approach, we all need to have a shared understanding, and language, of the theories underpinning the assessment strategies.

The cognitive domain from Bloom's taxonomy identifies six stages in developing knowledge and intellectual skills, which are seen as degrees of difficulty, with the first one needing to be mastered before the next one can take place.

What does that look like in practice?

- **Remembering:** The ability to recall or retrieve previous learnt information.
- **Understanding:** Comprehend the meaning, be able to communicate in own words.
- **Applying:** Use the concept in a new situation or unprompted.
- **Analysing:** Separate concepts into component parts so that the structure is understood. Understand how the component parts work together.
- **Evaluating:** Make judgements about the most appropriate function for a specific problem.
- **Creating:** Use information from different elements to create new meaning or structure.

If we use Bloom's taxonomy to support our assessments, we can assign terminology to these stages:

If a child:

- Has been introduced to a concept but has not retained or understood it, they have not yet met the expected expectations.
- Remembers and understands a concept, evidenced over time, they can be adjudged to have 'met' the expected expectations.
- Can use the concept in different situations, unprompted, and understands how all the

different component parts are linked, they can be adjudged to have mastered the concept.

- Can, independently and unprompted, work out which of the component parts are most efficient for a particular problem, or can draw on component parts from different concepts to create new meaning or structure, they have exceeded the age-related expectations.

The curriculum breaks down the component parts and clearly outlines what pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of each year group.

This information is used for teachers to plan and assess, and communicate achievement and next steps to pupils and parents, through their 'Learning Journals' /personal targets.

An illustration:

Based on the requirements of the Y3 Maths curriculum for fractions:

- count up and down in tenths; recognise that tenths arise from dividing an object into 10 equal parts and in dividing one-digit numbers or quantities by 10.
- recognise, find and write fractions of a discrete set of objects: unit fractions and non-unit fractions with small denominators.
- recognise and use fractions as numbers: unit fractions and non-unit fractions with small denominators.
- recognise and show, using diagrams, equivalent fractions with small denominators.
- add and subtract fractions with the same denominator within one whole.
- compare and order unit fractions, and fractions with the same denominators.
- solve problems that involve all of the above.

To demonstrate a mastery approach, pupils could evidence knowledge:

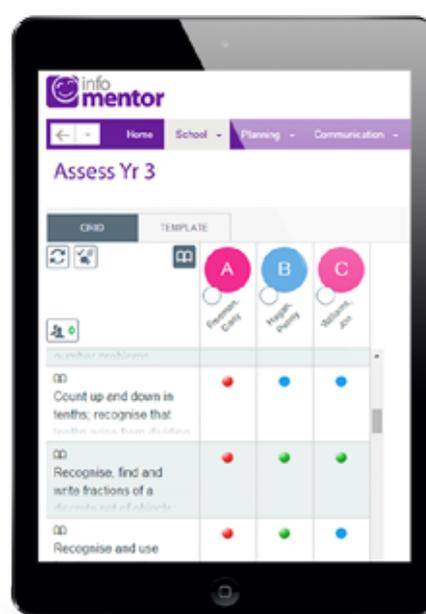
- within a mathematical context.
- within geography (analysis of populations).
- within independent investigations, e.g. science.

In order to have reached the age-related expectations for Y3, a pupil should be able to evidence that they remember and understand ALL the concepts. Once they have evidenced this, they should be able

to use them to 'solve problems that involve all of the above', independently and unprompted. If they can consistently do this, they can be said to have a deep understanding and have 'mastered' this particular aspect of the maths curriculum.

If pupils can independently link concepts of fractions to other unrelated concepts, or use the knowledge in a wider context, they can be said to have exceeded the age-related expectations. (This might well involve them, unprompted, using their knowledge to extend to the requirements of the next year group.)

*Example: Maths Fractions Assessments: Y3*



#### **Pupil A**

Has been exposed to the concepts but has little understanding; assessment = not met

**However:** if this was at the beginning of the unit/year, the teacher would be able to give a judgement about whether they were 'on track' to understanding the concept by the end of the teaching block. If not, interventions should be put in place.

#### **Pupil B**

There is evidence that the child has consistently remembered and understood the concepts: assessment = met

If this is at the beginning of the unit/year, the prediction would be to 'master' the concept by the end of the year.

### Pupil C

Once a child has 'met' the expectations, supporting evidence of independent and unprompted use of the skills should be collected over time and across the school year in order for a judgement of 'mastered' to be given at the end-of-year assessment point. (Previous assessments would indicate: met expectations – on track to master.)

In order to give an overall subject judgement about attainment in relation to age-related expectations, supporting evidence needs to be available across all aspects of the subject.

For example, the component parts of Maths Y3 are:

Number and place value, addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, fractions measurement, geometry, and statistics

Overall assessments of pupils indicate:

The information below would be used to complete summative judgements giving an overall assessment at key points in the year.

More importantly it will be used to inform future planning, pupil target setting and reports.

For example:

### Pupil A

*'Overall, pupil A has not yet met the age-related expectations for the year group. They have met the requirements for number, place value, addition, subtraction and geometry and are on track to meet the expectations for multiplication, division, fractions and measurement. Their target is to gain a complete understanding of using and interpreting data within statistics.'*

An in-depth understanding of the subject requirements, along with knowledge of individual pupils, will inform teachers' about whether they are 'on track' to meet expectations by the end of the year.

### Pupil C

*'Child C has met the age related expectations for the year group, and exceeded in all aspects of number and fractions. Overall they are adjudged to have mastered the maths curriculum in year 3.'*

### Maths year 3

Pupil A	Pupil B	Pupil C
Number and place value Addition and subtraction Multiplication and division Fractions Measurement Geometry Statistics  Assessment = not met/emerging	Number and place value Addition and subtraction Multiplication and division Fractions Measurement Geometry Statistics  Assessment = met/expected	Number and place value Addition and subtraction Multiplication and division Fractions Measurement Geometry Statistics  Assessment = Mastered/exceeded

## Interviews

We asked two head teachers how they were tackling the changes to their assessment practice:

### Dame Alison Peacock DBE

*Dame Alison Peacock DBE, DL, DLitt is co-author of Creating Learning without Limits (2012) and Executive Headteacher of The Wroxham School, a primary teaching school in Hertfordshire.*

#### How do you track pupil progress?

We do not spend lots of time tracking, instead we are developing ways of assessing what has been learnt each time we complete a unit of work. We have used a simple grid to record which children are confident in each area of learning and use this to form a cohort tracking grid at the end of each year against specific areas of the curriculum. This usefully informs the leadership and teaching team about areas that have been mastered by each child and areas that they need to develop further.

Our tracking system is mainly for external scrutiny, ie Ofsted or governors. On a termly basis we hold progress meetings whereby myself, the inclusion leader and teachers talk about each child in turn. We discuss who the children are that are surprising us and who we need to support more. Our focus is about what can we do as a whole team; how can we support the children who are finding learning difficult and what can we all do to ensure we are offering sufficient challenge to those that are really flying. The meetings are essentially about pedagogy and resource, rather than performance and accountability – although that obviously underlies it.

**We are not tracking to catch people out**, we are tracking just as an overview to make sure that no one is falling through the net, the focus being much more on the individual child, their performance and the feedback to the child.

#### There is now a greater emphasis on engaging parents and carers. How do you do this?

Something that we started last year is to run **family workshops** with the children and their families so they can learn together about the new curriculum.

We have also published the **curriculum on our website** so parents can see it line by line. In the past we have given parents an A4 sheet, with the topic, for example, the Romans, with the things we will be covering. Instead, we are now **sending home**



#### information about what the national curriculum covers in those particular subjects.

We also do **pre-learning** for homework. This outlines what we are going to be doing the following week. This advantages the children that may benefit from having a bit of notice to think about things. It also gives the children a chance to show what they can already do and it shows the parents very clearly what we are setting out to teach.

We also hold Learning Review meetings that the children in year 5 and year 6 lead for the families. Each child presents their learning to their family and teacher. I also attend these meetings. The conversation is about the child's self-assessment, the teacher's reflection on that and what their next steps are.

Rather than being about what grade is my child? It's **what can we do collectively to help support this child to learn more?** These meetings are celebratory but they are also rigorous. Children are their own best critic- they know if they should sit nearer the front or challenge themselves more!

## Llyn Codling

Llyn Codling is executive head teacher, NLE, and lead of teaching school at Portswood and St Mary's C of E Primary School. Llyn also chairs the teaching alliance of 70 schools.

### What are you using in the absence of levels?

We use a clear criteria of **pre-emerging, emerging, expected, exceeding and exceptional.**

For every child, we ask: are you working at an expected level? How are we going to move you to be exceeding? If you are working beyond the expectation, are we also broadening out what you are doing?

It's about making sure the child has got that depth and breadth of understanding and the detailed knowledge of how to apply that learning. It's about skilful questioning, skilful analysis, and also about ensuring that the children have got a really clear understanding of the difference between whether they are self assessing or self evaluating.

### How do you demonstrate how formative and summative assessment is used by leaders and governors to improve teaching and raise attainment?

#### Observing lessons

I do a thorough walk-around once a week in each school and complete a monitoring form.

#### Work scrutiny

In September, the teachers were scrutinised by their phase leaders to make sure they had clear learning intentions and success criteria that were skills based and application based so that we can really make sure the children are applying that knowledge to show progress.

#### Workbook assessment

We scrutinise marking and feedback to make sure that the feedback in the books is responded to by the children and enables the children's learning to be moved forward. We encourage teachers to provide small feedback notes within lessons of what they've asked them to do, and then you can see the progress in their book with the rest of the work they've done.

At the end of a piece of work, we do a small piece of assessment to find out what they know, what more they need to know and more importantly what more they want to know. That helps us measure that progress towards that learning.

### Demonstrating progress

We use progress sheets where teachers plot whether they think the child is pre-emerging, emerging, expected, exceeding or exceptional and use an arrow to indicate where the child is moving to. We highlight whether they are able, EAL, pupil premium or SEN and then, as leaders, we can identify children that we want to have a discussion about with the teacher.

### How do you ensure the accuracy of assessment through internal and external standardisation and moderation?

We moderate across the schools, the cluster, the alliance and within the local authority.

So, if, for example, I am saying this is an exceptional piece of year 5 writing, would the school down the road agree with me? We are starting to set portfolios up exactly as we did for levels. It's about standardising those judgements and making sure moderation is very clear and that we are all in agreement. We asked our staff within their year groups to start writing down and recording what it is that makes a good piece of writing good in each year.

The one thing I say to all my teachers, all of the time, is: **do you know enough about the learning of each and every child to take their learning forward?**

What is it about that child's learning that needs to be moved and how can we move them?

### What do you do to show that you have adopted the best practice of working together to moderate assessment for year groups and the end of key stages?

There are moderation meetings set up for the alliance and LEA for teachers to work together on moderation. The teachers are permanently moderating; it's part of the culture. You'll often find two teachers sitting down with a book between them, saying what do you think of this? What do you think I need to do to move this child forward?

It's the culture of the way we work – **partnership working, with "nobody being on their own".**

### How do you demonstrate that your school is using assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning or who need additional support to reach their full potential, including the most able?

By making sure that we are continuously assessing children. We have teachers always questioning, pulling back groups of children onto the carpet to go over

things again and providing high-quality feedback during class, enabling that child to move forward there and then rather than wait until the teacher marks over the weekend. I have seen teachers stop a whole class to go back and review something to ensure that they have deep enough learning for application.

We teach children to be independent. If they are doing maths, we put the answers up somewhere so they can go and check their own answers so they're not waiting with their hand up. The teachers here are going to the children with feedback to move their learning forward rather than giving them an answer which they can go and get themselves.

**Would you like to use the Portwood pupil progress sheets within your school?**

Please contact Llyn on:

[llyn.codling@portswood.southampton.sch.uk](mailto:llyn.codling@portswood.southampton.sch.uk)  
to request a pack.

## Glossary

*For clarity we have created a glossary of terms used within this whitepaper that we hope you will find useful when reading this whitepaper.*

**Assessment** – any systematic method of obtaining evidence from tests, examinations, questionnaires, surveys and collateral sources used to draw inferences about characteristics of people, objects or programmes for a specific purpose.

**Assessment coordinator/assessment leader** – the member of school staff who leads on assessment.

**Assessment for learning (AFL)** – any assessment activity that guides further learning.

**Assessment policy** – should cover all aspects of assessment and school targets and identify the responsibilities of staff in relation to assessment.

**Attainment tests** – used to ascertain whether pupils, who have completed a course of study, have acquired a requisite level of mastery in the relevant area of the curriculum.

**Curriculum** – the lessons and academic content taught in a school.

**Floor standards** – used by Government to set standards in order to hold schools to account.

**Formative assessment** – ongoing assessment activities that show teachers what pupils have already learnt and help teachers decide what to teach next. Considerable research has gone into the positive impact of good quality formative assessment, including the renowned findings of Black & Williams.

**National curriculum** – sets out the programmes of study and attainment targets for key stages 1–4.

**National curriculum tests** – tests taken at the end of a key stage (end of year 2 or year 6). Formerly known as, and now incorrectly referred to as, SATs. Pupils take national curriculum tests in the core subjects (English and maths at age 7 and English, maths and science at age 11).

**Performance descriptors** – the draft DfE performance descriptors are intended for use in key stage 1 and 2 statutory teacher assessment for 2015/2016.

**Programmes of study** – defines what must be taught (statutory requirements) in all local authority-maintained schools.

**Pupil progress** – the measure of new knowledge gained within a specified timeframe.

**Raw score** – the actual mark or score obtained in a test. This may be converted to a standardised score.

**Statutory attainment tests** – assessments that schools are legally obliged to carry out (e.g. at the end of a key stage).

**Summative assessment** – used to evaluate pupil learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined period – typically at the end of a year or key stage.

**Target** – defines what pupils will aim to achieve next. Targets may be short term or longer term. They may be set for individual pupils, for groups or for a whole class.

**Task** – a practical activity used for assessment purposes. It may be observed by a teacher who will take notes on how the pupil completes the task.

**Test** – a series of questions that a pupil answers on his or her own, without help.

## Acknowledgements and resources

[http://www.teachprimary.com/learning\\_resources/view/planning-assessment-without-levels](http://www.teachprimary.com/learning_resources/view/planning-assessment-without-levels)

[http://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/sites/default/files/user\\_uploads/00\\_news/documents/developing\\_a\\_new\\_approach\\_to\\_tracking\\_pupil\\_progress\\_dec2014.pdf](http://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/sites/default/files/user_uploads/00_news/documents/developing_a_new_approach_to_tracking_pupil_progress_dec2014.pdf)

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Beyond Levels: alternative assessment approaches developed by teaching schools. Research report September 2014

Beyond Levels: summary of evidence of outcomes and impact. Research report September 2014

Julie Lilly, Alison Peacock – The Wroxham transformative learning alliance and Sue Shoveller, Dr d’Reen Struthers – South Farnham teaching school alliance

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<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/expertspeakers/assessmentforlearningdylanwiliam.asp>

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<https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/curriculum/dt-national-curriculum-for-england-2014/>

<https://thehub.walthamforest.gov.uk/news/planning-assessment-without-levels-article-dylan-wiliam>

<http://www.risingstars-uk.com/subjects/assessment>

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*

### Government resources:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspections-clarification-for-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspections-clarification-for-schools)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/298568/Primary\\_assessment\\_and\\_accountability\\_under\\_the\\_new\\_curriculum\\_consultation\\_document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298568/Primary_assessment_and_accountability_under_the_new_curriculum_consultation_document.pdf)

[http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/fs\\_13/index.html](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/fs_13/index.html)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/461534/Commission\\_report\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461534/Commission_report_.pdf)

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Llyn Codling, executive head teacher, NLE, and lead of teaching school at Portswood and St Mary’s C of E Primary School. Llyn also chairs the teaching alliance of 70 schools

## About InfoMentor

InfoMentor is an award-winning online solution that is designed to complement your chosen assessment framework. Use it to plan and teach rich, curriculum-focused lessons, to collect assessments and evidence of learning, and to share relevant and useful information with teachers, parents and pupils.

### 1. Plan and Teach – develop a broad and balanced curriculum for all

- Spend less time on the admin of planning and more time on developing good lessons
- Create lesson plans and templates for your school
- Teaching resources can be added to lesson plans which can then be shared, giving less experienced colleagues or cover teachers more support
- Curriculum coverage can be monitored in real-time
- Units and lesson plans are matched to the curriculum
- Timelines – a collaborative feed in planning and groups
- Portfolio – store and record best work

### 2. Assess and Analyse – identify what pupils already know to inform future learning

- Monitor progress for a class, group or an individual
- End-of-term reports for pupils and parents
- Create bespoke data templates and use flexible filters to find the information you need
- Share homework, learning objectives, lesson resources or a child's assessment results with parents and pupils on any device

### 3. InfoMentor Home – engage with parents and carers

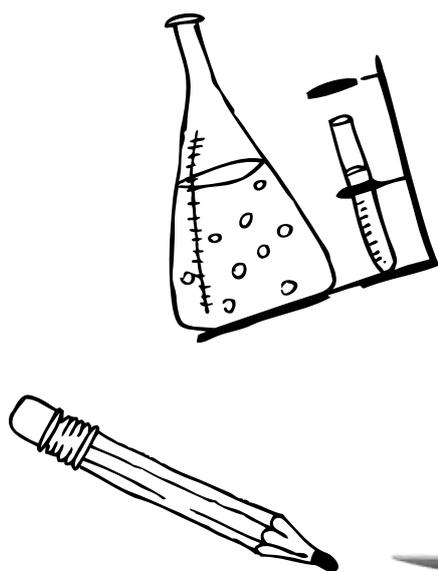
- Effective communication between teacher, child and parent
- Understand the school's curriculum and units of learning
- Share up-to-date information about areas of strength and weakness

### Have a question to ask?

Call: 0845 680 3681

Email: [enquiries@infomentor.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@infomentor.co.uk)

Visit: [www.infomentor.co.uk](http://www.infomentor.co.uk)

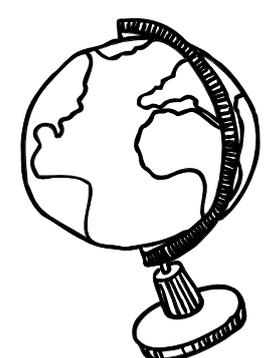
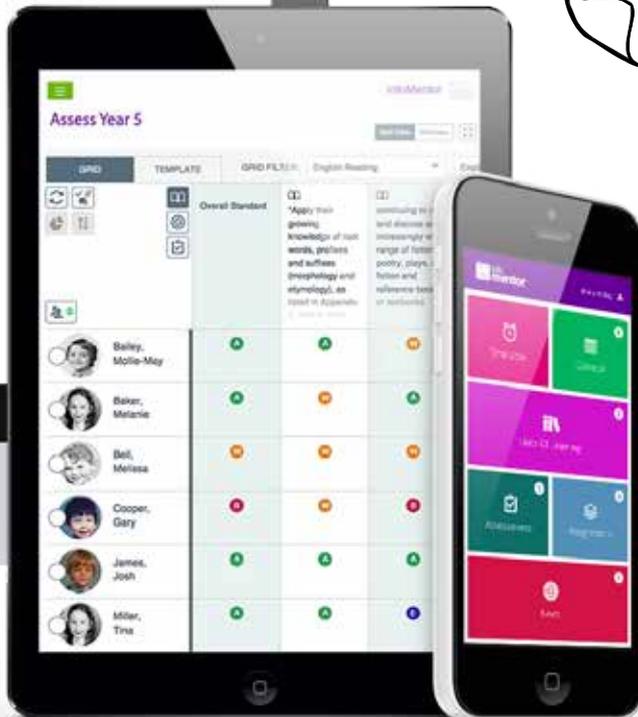




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