

# PRIMARY SATs CHANGES

## Explainer

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Last week the government announced significant changes in the primary assessment plans. In case you missed out, here's our explainer to keep you on track

### 1 SCRAP KEY STAGE 1 TESTS FOR 7-YEAR-OLDS

The consultation proposes making key stage 1 assessments non-statutory (translation: make them optional). This applies to teacher assessments and tests. But this would only come into effect when a new reception baseline test has been set up.

The government suggests it might still do "sample" tests to "ensure academic standards remain high" – the details of how this will be decided are up for consultation. One idea is that it could end up like the national reference tests, which a proportion of year 11s now take in March each year to inform GCSE results.

### 2 ESTABLISH NEW BASELINE ASSESSMENT FOR RECEPTION PUPILS

The government wants to measure progress starting from reception, all the way to the end of primary. This will be done through the introduction of "teacher-mediated" baseline assessments, which will be developed by the profession to "ensure schools are measured on how they support every child".

The tests will not be used as a direct school accountability measure. Results will only be published at national level for transparency, but will not be published at school level, nor shared with regional schools commissioners, local authorities or Ofsted. They will, however, influence the scores given to primaries for progress made by the time pupils are leaving the school.

### 3 REDUCE TEACHER ASSESSMENT 'BURDEN'

The consultation asks for thoughts about removing the requirement for schools to submit teacher assessment data when it's not used as part of school accountability.

The government is also considering whether there should be "greater flexibility" for teachers to use their judgment when assessing pupils' writing – with a nod that it might allow teachers to mark using a "best fit" model for assessments, rather than the current "secure fit". (Which means pupils would not need to meet every criteria in order to achieve a set mark.)

### 4 ENSURE PUPILS BELOW NATIONAL LEVELS ARE COUNTED IN PROGRESS

The government launched a parallel consultation on proposals from the Rochford review to ensure it "finds a solution" for pupils who are below the minimum national curriculum level and are not counted in current school accountability measures.

The government has pledged to ensure "no child is left behind", with schools recognised for the progress they make with all pupils.

### 5 GIVE THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE PROFILE A MAKEOVER

The government is also consulting on how to make improvements to the early years foundation stage profile to "reduce burdens" on staff.

It also wants ideas on how to change the collected data so more is known about a child's "school readiness".

## THINGS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

While the five proposed changes are the main things to know, the consultation document also shows some interesting trends in government thinking



### 1 A NOD TOWARDS 'COMPARATIVE JUDGMENTS' (NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH 'COMPARABLE OUTCOMES')

Comparative judgment – a process of comparing writing side-by-side – has shown promise as a quicker and more accurate way of marking pupils' writing abilities than having teachers score using a set of criteria.

The consultation asks for views on its use and asks if there are any other "robust alternative" approaches to assessment, suggesting the government is looking to quicken (and possibly cheapen) the process.



### 2 PEER-TO-PEER MODERATION OF TEACHER ASSESSMENTS, RATHER THAN LOCAL AUTHORITY INTERVENTION

Moderation of teacher-assessed parts of primary testing has so far been controlled by local authorities. However, there is evidence that some councils are stricter than others.

Hence, the consultation asks for views on other forms of moderation and says there will be a pilot of a "peer-to-peer" approach this year "in which teachers from different schools will share their teacher assessment judgments and supporting evidence in local groups, overseen by a moderator".



### 3 A TRIAL OF THE 'TIMES-TABLE CHECK' WILL GO AHEAD

In their 2015 manifesto, the Conservatives promised that all children would take a test of their multiplication skills before they left primary school. This policy is now at implementation phase, with a trial going ahead over the next year. But the consultation wants views on whether it's a good idea and, if so, if the end of primary school is the best time, given that pupils are supposed to learn their tables by the end of year 4.

