



**DOHA ENGLISH SPEAKING SCHOOL**

Learning Together • High Expectations • Celebrating Success

# **Parents' guide to Assessment without levels**

October 2016

## **Changes to Assessment Procedures**

The aim of this guide is to hopefully give you some clear information about all the changes that are happening in Education in the English National Curriculum, and what that means for the children here at DESS (Doha English Speaking School). The British Government has made a huge change in the way that children in schools are to be assessed. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment now looks very different to how it has been done for the past 20 years. Before we consider assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum has brought to subjects that are traditionally assessed.

## **The National Curriculum**

The subjects we are required to teach have changed very little. However, there are certain objectives that have been moved from later in the curriculum to earlier e.g. some of the Y3 curriculum objectives in the old curriculum now appear in the Y2 requirements. This means that it is harder to achieve year group national expectations than it was previously. This may result in a child who was achieving 'above the national average' now achieving 'the national average'. This is no reflection on your child's ability or the teaching in our school. It is simply that the goal posts have moved and that there is no correlation between old and new curriculum expectations. It also means that schools are having to play 'catch up' and are having to teach children to the new requirements in order to allow them to reach the new age related expectations, even though previously they may have been working at or beyond them.

## **The Disappearance of Levels**

The Department for Education (DfE) want to avoid what has been termed 'The level Race' where children have moved through the old National Curriculum levels quickly to achieve higher attainment. The old National Curriculum was sub-divided into levels, but these were not linked to their national curriculum year group. For example, a child in Year 4 could be a Level 3 or even a level 5. Some children were achieving Level 5 and even Level 6 at the end of Key Stage 2, but the DfE thought that although a significant number were able to achieve a Level 5 or 6 in a test - they were not secure at that level. The feeling from the DfE was that the old national curriculum and the levels system failed to adequately ensure that children had a breadth and depth of knowledge at each national curriculum level.

## **Assessing Without Levels**

The National Curriculum was reviewed, updated and rewritten for September 2014, bringing many changes and improvements. However, one of the most significant changes has been the removal of levels. It is now left to schools to decide how they will measure children's progress. This means that schools started to decide how they would report assessments without the levels previously used. At DESS we use some of the commercial assessments available but have also designed our own assessment criteria for some subject areas which gives us a clear understanding of exactly where children are in relation to the New Curriculum objectives.

From this we now know who is working below, at, or above the expected levels and we can monitor their progress. We will be able to share these assessment criteria with parents.

It is expected that most children will end the year attaining a Secure level of understanding of the objectives for their year group. However, whilst we are aiming high and trying to accelerate children's progress, it will take time to impart the knowledge and understanding needed to meet the new expectations set by the government. In the first 12-18 months using the new assessment and curriculum children may well fall below 'secure' level, and even into previous year groups until they have had the time and opportunity to embed this new knowledge.

We all want to know how well children are doing for their age (age-related expectation) and we also want to know how well they are progressing, that is to say, are they keeping up well enough, or doing even better than this? We do not want to use a complicated 'points scoring' system, which can become confusing; instead, we have tried to use plain, clear language, which makes sense to everyone. This means everyone can be clear about how well children are doing.

Please see the table below for a breakdown of the five different categories and an explanation of what they mean.

	Assessment Descriptors
<b>Mastery</b>	This is when a child can apply much of the Curriculum as a whole in more complex and in depth, cross objective, multi-modal methods. It demonstrates how skillfully a child can <b>apply</b> their learning. Mastery is not just knowing a fact, but it is using that fact in increasing more complex situations.
<b>Exceeding</b>	Exceeding national expectations for their year group. Demonstrates significant skills and knowledge beyond the curriculum.
<b>Secure</b>	Meets the end of year expectations for their year group. A successful learner who has embedded learning for all of the criteria for their year group.
<b>Securing</b>	On track to meet some, but not all, of the end of year expectations. Is successful at learning many new concepts and is starting to apply their skills independently, but not consistently. May make errors but will usually be able to improve work following feedback and support. May have some smaller gaps in learning.
<b>Emerged</b>	Can access the correct curriculum but have significant gaps in their learning. They may struggle to embed concepts and may some scaffolding to support. Can often not apply their learning independently, <b>or</b>  Are not accessing the curriculum without heavily personalised support and scaffolding, which may be due to having English as an Additional Language (EAL) or barriers to learning due to a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND). The child may be doing different tasks to the rest of the class and may be receiving, or needing some intervention. Please note that children with SEND or EAL needs may still be working within the expected range for their year group.
<b>Emerging</b>	Children at this level maybe working on objectives from a lower year group or working within P scales if they have SEND or NALDIC scales if they are EAL and new to English.

The DfE want children who are in the Mastery bracket to add more depth and breadth to their knowledge with opportunities to develop and apply skills within their year group's expectations rather than moving onto the following year group's work; Mastery = Deep Learning. However, whilst we intend to move forward with the 'dig deep' approach, we think that there will be times when we need to 'dip' into the year above in order to provide adequately challenging work for our higher attaining children.

### **How will my child be assessed?**

From September 2016, children will be assessed on entry to Early Years (reception) using teacher's assessments and observations and these will contribute to each child's learning journey. There will no longer be a requirement to produce the Foundation Stage Profile that children currently receive at the end of Early Years.

If your child was in Year 2 or Year 6 before the Summer break 2016 then they were the first year groups at DESS to be assessed on the new-style SATs. They sat papers for reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling, and maths (arithmetic and reasoning). In the future they will be awarded a standardised score. For Year 6 this will range from 80 — 130, with 100 representing the expected score for the age group.

Throughout each term, class teachers carry out assessments in English; reading, spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing and Mathematics. These assessment results are used by the teachers to inform future teaching and learning as well as monitoring each child's progress. The assessments also identify what each child can do and the next steps in learning – setting targets. Teachers use the work that children are continually doing to inform their judgements on whether a child has achieved a year group objective.

With levels abolished and the introduction of 'performance descriptors,' there will be a lot less emphasis on expected grades for each year group, but rather a focus on whether a child has acquired the expected knowledge for their age-group or not. The government has now set the precise extent of progress required in each year group.

Going forward, our school will be able to measure the progress of children from the moment they begin primary education to when they leave.

### **Progress and Achievement**

At the end of each school year, your child's school report will indicate an end of year assessment using the language of working below, working at and exceeding national expectations for that year group. These are all that are required by the DfE (Department for Education). We have decided to use the 6 gradings so we can show clearer progress. Many schools in the UK are also doing this.

During the year pupil progress will continue to be tracked and teachers will discuss whether your child is on track to achieve the end of year expectations at parents' evenings.

### **An illustration to help**

Some parents, will be familiar with the chart that health visitors in the UK use to keep track of baby weight and growth development. Regular checks pick up if this progress falls below where it should be and action can be taken to correct the situation.

As we have always done, we will be able to do exactly the same with children's assessments by measuring their progress between two points in time. This means we will be able to see whether they are progressing at the same rate, speeding up or slowing down. We can take the necessary action to address this.

Our priority at the moment is to keep a close eye on where your child is in relation to their age and to make sure that we correctly identify the things they don't fully understand and work out the right next steps in learning to help them make the best possible progress. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school.