

Primary assessment

Background

In response to the Education Committee's inquiry into primary assessment reforms, DYT has prepared an executive summary and set of recommendations. These focus on how primary assessment specifically affects SEND learners and how the next steps the government takes must fully consider this impact.

Executive summary

- There is a tension between the function of statutory assessment at primary and the way that the results are used. This tension skews both the tests themselves and the way that schools and teachers respond to them. This can be characterised as a tension between the inclusion and the results agendas.
- **Any change to primary assessment must consider the way in which assessment affects both the content of the curriculum and classroom practice. We are concerned that the focus on maths and English in primary testing is narrowing the curriculum significantly.**
- We believe that the government should consider whether the KS2 tests, as they stand, in the light of the Equalities Act (2010) are discriminatory against SEND learners.
- **Given this year's disappointing results, we worry that the tests are set at too high a level for all eleven year olds, especially in regard to reading. This has a particular disadvantage for learners with literacy difficulties. Even the access arrangements which help SEND learners to take statutory tests cannot mitigate against inaccessible test design.**
- Since the abolition of levels, teachers must now report whether a learner is 'working towards', is 'at' or is 'exceeding' national expectations for their year group. In the case of SEND and where a learner's attainment is below their peers', 'working towards' does not give either receiving schools or parents useful information. This is because it remains unquantified where they are in relation to a developmental scale.
- **A focus on SEND learners in any future consideration of primary assessments will enable all children to demonstrate their attainment in the tests.**
- Any change to primary assessment must bear in mind the impact upon teacher workload and the effect on the teacher-learner relationship.
- **We challenge the assumption that inclusion drives down standards. Instead we champion the view that an inclusive approach drives up the attainment of all children.**



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List of recommendations

1. When considering the recent reforms to primary assessment the committee needs to consider:
 - a. Learner experience in school and an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.
 - b. The specific impact on SEND learners.
 - c. The impact on teacher workload and relationships with SEND learners.
 - d. The 2015-16 cohort of pupils were not taught the curriculum sufficiently enough to succeed in the tests. This will also be true for the next two years.
 - e. The recommendations of the Rochford Review and any disadvantages this could have to assessing SEND learners.
2. We recommend that any future changes made to primary assessment test design fully meet the needs of all learners.
3. We recommend that the government should consider whether the tests, as they stand, particularly in KS2, in the light of the Equalities Act (2010) are discriminatory against pupils with SEND.
4. We recommend that the government should consider the needs of all learners and stakeholders when reporting on attainment at KS1 and KS2, and ensure that those with SEND are given information that is both relevant and useful. This means that those working towards expectations are given equal consideration which is helpful in the teaching and learning process.
5. This a real opportunity to challenge the notion that inclusion is bad for standards; we recommend the committee explores this concept.