



2022-0008702RWPO

Robin Walker MP

Minister of State for School Standards

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Mr Iain Stewart MP

By email: iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk

23 March 2022

Dear Iain,

Thank you for your email of 9 March, on behalf of a number of your constituents, regarding primary assessments.

The Department and I believe that assessment is a crucial part of a child's education and fundamental in a high performing education system. The statutory assessments at primary school are an essential part of ensuring that all pupils master the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics to prepare them for secondary school. They allow schools and parents to see what pupils have achieved in relation to the age-related attainment expectations outlined in the national curriculum and ensure teachers can identify pupils who need the most support.

We recognise that pupils will have missed a critical period of their learning due to partial school closures in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years. It is vital that we know the impact of the pandemic on this cohort of pupils nationally and can give support to schools that need it the most. We have therefore confirmed that the full programme statutory primary assessments will take place in the 2021-22 academic year. This will include the statutory introduction of the reception baseline assessment (RBA) and multiplication tables check, in addition to existing assessments, such as the end of key stage 1 and 2 assessments and the phonics screening check, following their usual timetable.


Primary assessments also allow us to hold schools to account to ensure they support all pupils, regardless of background or prior attainment, to achieve sufficient progress. As assessments will be returning for the first time since 2019, without any adaptations, the results will not be published in key stage 2 performance tables for the academic year 2021-22. However, we will still produce the normal suite of key stage 2 accountability measures at school level and share these securely with primary schools, academy trusts, local authorities and Ofsted for school improvement purposes and to help identify schools most in need of support.

It should be noted that data from assessments and progress measures are just the starting point for a conversation about a school's performance. Ofsted, local authorities, governors and parents should always look at a range of data, alongside a school's broader context and performance history, rather than focusing on one piece of information alone.

The RBA provides the basis for a fairer primary progress measure than at present, as it will take account of pupils' progress throughout the whole of primary school, including during the first three years, between Reception and year 2, and enable the Government to give full credit for the important work that schools do with their pupils. It will also enable the Department to make the existing statutory end of key stage 1 assessments, both national curriculum tests and teacher assessments, non-statutory once the RBA is fully established. This is due to the fact that they will no longer be required to provide a baseline for progress measures, reducing the overall burden of the statutory assessment system.

The Department worked with a range of early years practitioners, schools, and other education experts to develop the RBA, and all aspects of the assessment's development have been informed by an extensive evidence base of early years research. The Department conducted trials from September to October 2018 and has collected further data during the pilot to ensure that the RBA is robust. This evidence is set out in the RBA validity report, which was published in February 2020 and is available at: tinyurl.com/s5bnvaat.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Wallis'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'W'.