

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The final report of the *Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability* chaired by Lord Bew was published on 23 June 2011. The Review followed longstanding and widespread concerns about Key Stage 2 tests and their boycott by more than a quarter of primary schools in 2010. Concerns included major complaints about the tests resulting in unfair league table rankings for schools and children being drilled for them, stifling enterprising teaching and learning and narrowing the curriculum. The Review received 3,940 online responses between November 2010 and February 2011, heard oral evidence from 50 stakeholders and received written submissions from individuals and national organisations.

It is clear from the Foreword by Lord Bew that much of this submitted evidence was 'conflicting or contradictory'. While acknowledging those who highlighted positive features of the system that should be retained, he also says, '*many other respondents have argued that parts of the system are unhelpful, and at worst a barrier to teaching and learning. The strength of feeling associated with these concerns shows that some change is clearly needed. A commitment to standards should not, in principle, be at the expense of creativity.*'

This Summary reproduces the headline recommendations from the Review's publication press notice in Section 2 below, and all the recommendations from the full report in Section 3.

## 2. HEADLINES

The report recommends that:

- The current **writing test should be replaced by teacher assessment of writing composition**. This will ensure pupils can be more creative and will overcome the dangers of teaching to the test. This teacher assessment should always make up the larger part of any overall writing judgement.
- As part of writing, there should be a **spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary test**. The Review panel believes a test will raise attainment in these areas and is appropriate because there are clear right or wrong answers.
- **Maths** should continue to be externally tested.
- **Reading** tests should continue but should be refined over time.
- **Science** should continue to be teacher assessed with a sample test to monitor national standards.
- **Speaking and listening** should continue to be teacher assessed.
- **Three-year rolling averages** should be introduced to give a rounded picture of a school's performance.
- There should be a **greater emphasis on the progress of pupils**.
- **New progress and attainment measures** should be introduced for pupils who have completed all of Years 5 and 6 in a school. This would recognise that schools should not be held wholly responsible for the performance of pupils who have just joined them.
- **Teacher assessment** judgements should continue in English, maths and science, and should be **submitted before test results are announced**. This will mean more weight is attached to them and allow longer for these results to inform Year 7 teaching and learning.
- **Transition to secondary school** should be eased for pupils and their new teachers. There should be **more detailed reporting to secondary schools** so Year 7 teachers know right from the outset a pupil's attainment and the areas where extra work is needed.
- **Pupils who are ill** on the day of a test should have a week to sit it, rather than two days.

## 3. RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL

### Main uses of statutory assessment data

**There should be only three main uses of the data from Key Stage 2 statutory assessment**, in addition to the purpose defined in primary legislation (*'to ascertain what pupils have achieved in relation to the attainment targets for that stage'*):

- holding schools accountable for the standard of attainment and progress made by their pupils and groups of pupils;
- informing parents and secondary schools about the performance of individual pupils;
- enabling benchmarking between schools; as well as monitoring performance locally and nationally.

### **A greater focus on progress**

**There should be a greater emphasis on pupils' progress within the accountability system, [and] ... progress should be one of the two headline published measures (in addition to attainment), and any overall judgement of a school by the Government, local authorities or Ofsted should give at least as much weighting to progress as attainment.**

The Review:

- welcomes the Government's commitment to introduce an additional published indicator of progress focusing on the lowest attaining pupils;
- recommends that the Government should consider the outcomes of the consultation relating to the Green Paper, *Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*<sup>1</sup> with a particular focus on ensuring that the achievement of all pupils with Special Educational Needs is appropriately recognised and celebrated within the accountability system; and
- recommends that, subject to any changes to the system of levels following the review of the National Curriculum, the Government should continue to provide level 6 National Curriculum Tests for schools to use on an optional basis, with results reported to parents and secondary schools.

**The moderation process at Key Stage 1 should be developed further to be more consistently rigorous [to support progress assessment from a robust and consistent baseline].**

### **Broader accountability measures**

The Review acknowledges the feedback about league tables, which suggests they are a crude way of ranking schools, which is both unfair and unhelpful to anyone seeking an accurate comparison of different schools. It says, '**...a greater range of published information will reduce the likelihood that league tables will be created focused on one indicator alone**'.

It recommends:

- the introduction of **three-year rolling averages**, to be published alongside annual data, which 'would take into account the volatility of results of individual cohorts and provide a sense of achievement over time';
- the introduction of **additional attainment and progress measures for pupils who have completed the whole of Years 5 and 6 within a school**;
- that **schools' statutory assessment results in reading and writing should be published separately** to allow schools to present a more rounded picture of their performance in English [*rather than English as a whole subject, which is too broad*];
- **allowing a pupil who is absent on the day of the tests to take tests within an extended time frame** (not exceeding one week), and that the DfE considers trialling such a scheme in 2012.

### **Enabling effective benchmarking of schools**

The Review says that effective benchmarking by school managers is essential and requires additional tools and analysis, recommending the continued use of Raiseonline by school managers because of the detailed information it provides. It says that **benchmarking is most appropriate when schools with similar circumstances and challenges are compared**, but that every school should also be able to compare itself against the local and national average, and welcomes the Government's commitment to publish 'Families of Schools' data.

### **Publication of summative teacher assessment judgements**

The Review endorses the value of teacher assessment and says, '**... schools should submit their teacher assessment judgements ahead of receiving any test results [which] ... would help put greater emphasis on teacher assessment within the accountability system**'.

### **Reporting to parents and secondary schools**

The Review welcomes **planned changes to the performance tables** to ensure that information comparing schools locally is provided in a **clearer and more accessible format** to parents, incorporating a range of measures. It also calls for **pupil-level information** provided to parents to be improved, including a

<sup>1</sup> See Document Summary Service summary DSS 10/11 32, March 2011.

recommendation that in **mathematics and English this data should be available for each attainment target**. Criticism of National Curriculum levels is acknowledged, though the Review says that **levels should be retained** but the introduction of a new National Curriculum provides an opportunity to improve how statutory assessment is reported.

### **International comparisons**

The Review supports continuation of **participation in international comparison studies** and making that participation mandatory for the schools selected, as proposed in the 2011 Education Bill.

### **Statutory assessment**

**The statutory assessment system should include both external testing and teacher assessment.** The Review emphasises that the two should be seen as complementary and **'should not be seen in opposition to each other or used to judge each other'**. It also says, *'... decisions on whether a particular aspect of a subject should be tested or teacher assessed should be determined by the educational merits of the specific case'*.

### **Reading**

**Reading should continue to be subject to externally-marked testing**, with a focus on accuracy, fluency and comprehension and these skills should be brought out more clearly in the results of future tests that assess the new National Curriculum.

### **Writing**

In future, **writing should be assessed through a mixture of both testing and summative teacher assessment**.

**Writing composition should be subject only to summative teacher assessment, with external moderation, and teachers' own professional assessments of writing composition should always form the greater part of the overall writing statutory assessment result.**

The Review says:

*'... this will encourage pupils to develop and demonstrate a broad range of writing skills over the course of Year 6, while avoiding the perverse incentives of the current system. While maintaining national standards is vital, we do not believe that this should come at the expense of promoting creativity. We believe teachers should assess widely across a range of genres and writing styles, and that this approach should give children more opportunities than the current system does to write in a wide range of ways'*.

It also says that *'some elements of writing (in particular **spelling, punctuation grammar and vocabulary**) where there are clear 'right' or 'wrong' answers'*, lend themselves to externally-marked testing, and that **a test of these essential writing skills is developed**.

### **Speaking and listening**

**Teacher assessment of speaking and listening should continue** and it should continue to inform schools' overall teacher assessment of English. The National Curriculum Review should consider how best to reflect the importance of speaking and listening in the new curriculum.

### **Mathematics**

**Mathematics should continue to be subject to externally-marked testing.**

The amount of **reading** in the mathematics test should be kept under review, to ensure that less able readers are not unfairly disadvantaged. In addition, the current principle that questions should be placed in **order of difficulty** should be carefully adhered to in the development of future mathematics tests.

### **Science**

**Science should continue to be subject to summative teacher assessment.** National standards should continue to be monitored alongside schools' teacher assessment, and **sample testing in science should continue**.

### **Cluster moderation to support professional development**

The Review encourages continuation of the practice of teachers from a range of schools (including secondary schools) meeting on a regular basis to build a shared understanding of educational standards and to discuss their assessment of pupils' work.

### **Transition to secondary school**

Secondary schools are encouraged to make wider use of the pupil-level data available from Key Stage 2 statutory assessment to support transition of new Year 7 pupils.

Year 7 teachers should be involved in the moderation of teacher assessment judgements of Year 6 pupils' writing composition work in particular, and the Government should consider incentives to encourage Year 7 teachers to join in moderation exercises with Year 6 teachers designed to support professional development.

### **Transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2**

The same principle of encouraging cross-phase moderation should apply to infant and junior schools, and the Review recommends **moderation of Key Stage 1 teacher assessment judgements involving both Year 2 and Year 3 teachers.**

### **Timing of tests**

The Review recommends that **tests should remain at the same point in the school year.**

### **On-screen marking**

**Wide use of on-screen marking should be considered for Key Stage 2 tests** in addition to the science sample tests for which it is currently used.

### **Computer-administered testing**

The Review believes that the potential of computer-administered testing is enormous, but it needs to be approached with caution. It should be explored further and piloted, and the same approach should be taken with computer adaptive testing, given the advantages associated with pupils being able to sit their own personalised test according to their level of attainment.

### **Testing when ready**

The Review is 'not convinced by' the Single Level Test model that was piloted, and expresses reservations about the 'testing when ready' approach. It believes this approach would fit better with a curriculum which identified a core element which each pupil should master, which could be assessed when they are ready, before they move on to more advanced learning in the curriculum, and should be considered following the National Curriculum Review.

**The full Review can be viewed/downloaded via a link at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/ks2review>**