

# **Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability**

## **Call for evidence report**



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## Remit of the Review into Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability

This Review has been framed by a particular remit. It may be helpful to begin by revisiting our remit so that we can be clear about what is in our scope.

There are two broad positions to which the Secretary of State has asked us to adhere throughout. Firstly, the Government is mindful that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concludes that external accountability is a key driver of improvement in education and particularly important for the least advantaged. It therefore views a system of objectively measuring pupil progress and holding schools to account as vital. Secondly, the Government has made it clear that it wants schools and teachers to be free to set their own direction, trusted to exercise their professional discretion and accountable for the progress of the children in their care. The Secretary of State has therefore been clear that school autonomy must be accompanied by robust accountability.

Within those parameters, this Review was asked to address the following key issues:

- how best to ensure that the system of assessment in primary schools can improve standards of attainment and progress of pupils, and help narrow gaps;
- how best to ensure that schools are properly and fairly accountable to pupils, parents and the taxpayer for the achievement and progress of every child, on the basis of objective and accurate assessments; and that this reflects the true performance of the school;
- how to avoid, as far as possible, the risk of perverse incentives, over-rehearsal and reduced focus on productive learning;
- how to ensure that parents have good quality information on the progress of their children and the success of schools;
- how to ensure that performance information is used and interpreted appropriately within the accountability system by other agencies, increasing transparency and preserving accountability to parents, pupils and the taxpayer, while avoiding the risk of crude and narrow judgements being made;
- how to ensure that tests are rigorous, and as valid and reliable as possible, within an overall system of assessment (including teacher assessment) which provides the best possible picture of every child's progress;
- how best to ensure that the assessment system allows us to make comparisons with education systems internationally;
- how to make administration of the system as simple and cost-effective as possible, with minimal bureaucracy.

# Introduction

Given the scale and complexity of this Review, we endeavoured to gather as much evidence and feedback as possible in an open, transparent and outward-facing way. An online call for evidence launched on 25 November 2010 and closed on 17 February 2011, inviting all interested parties to contribute. As a result we have received nearly 4,000 online responses, taken oral evidence from 50 stakeholders, and many written submissions have been sent in.

Our *Progress Report*, published in April, summarised the evidence and opinion we have received. In particular, it outlined the main views we heard through oral evidence sessions and written submissions.

This *Call for Evidence Report* summarises the main findings from the nearly 4,000 respondents to the Review's call for evidence.

Full discussion of the evidence, including the published research material we have considered, the conclusions we have reached and the recommendations we have made, can be found in our *Final Report*.

## Stakeholders who have submitted evidence to the Review

### Oral evidence

We are grateful to the following individuals and organisations who presented oral evidence to the panel, together with a written summary.

Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA)

Advisory Council for Mathematics Education (ACME)

Professor Robin Alexander

ARK Schools

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

Professor Jo-Anne Baird

Professor Sir Michael Barber

Julian Barrell, Director, Simply Efficient Ltd

Professor Margaret Brown

Cambridge Primary Review

Professor Richard Daugherty

Professor Janette Elwood

GL Assessment

Professor Wynne Harlen

Bill Holledge, Culloden Primary School, Tower Hamlets

Dr. Tina Isaacs

Warwick Mansell

Dr Christine Merrell

National Governors' Association (NGA)

National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

National Union of Teachers (NUT)

Dr. Paul Newton

Tim Oates  
Ofsted  
Pearson UK  
Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)  
Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship  
Lord Sutherland  
Professor Peter Tymms  
Professor Dylan Wiliam

## Heads and teachers

We are particularly grateful to the heads of the following schools who took the time to meet the Panel to offer their feedback and share their experiences.

Jeremy Bird, Head Teacher, Greswold Primary School, Solihull  
Lynne Bruce, Brookside School, Leicestershire  
Barbara Coates, Head Teacher, Little Hallingbury CE Voluntary Aided School, Essex  
Val Cobb, Hawkes Farm Primary School, East Sussex  
Charles Daniels, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Liverpool  
Tony Draper, Head Teacher, Water Hall Primary School, Milton Keynes  
Sian Fenton, Head Teacher, Shelf Junior and Infant School, Calderdale  
Karine George, Head Teacher, Westfields Junior School, Hampshire  
Katherine Leahy, Cam Hopton CE Primary School, Gloucestershire  
David Linsell, Ratton School, East Sussex  
Tony Markham, Head Teacher, The Herne Junior School, Hampshire  
Tony Newman, Head Teacher, Stanley School, Wirral  
Debra Okitikpi, Head Teacher, Edward Wilson Primary School, Westminster  
Kevin Parfoot, Head Teacher, Purbrook Junior School, Hampshire  
Paul Williams, Head Teacher, Shaftesbury High School, Harrow  
Peter Wilson, Old Bexley CE Primary School, Bexley  
Kate Utting, Head Teacher, Horndean CE Junior School, Hampshire

## Written evidence

We would like to thank all those who have provided written submissions to the Review to put forward detailed evidence and feedback.

Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)  
Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)  
Centre for Policy Studies  
Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA)  
Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government  
Girls' Day School Trust (GDST)  
General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)  
Colin Green, Director of Children, Learning and Young People, Coventry City Council  
C J R Luckin, Head Teacher, St Andrew's CE Primary School, Steyning  
National Education Trust (NET)  
National Primary Headteachers' Association (NPH)  
Ofqual  
Alison Peacock, Head Teacher, The Wroxham Primary School, Hertfordshire  
Alastair Pollitt  
Renaissance Learning

Professor Colin Richards  
 Professor Pam Sammons  
 Alan Simpson, Head Teacher, Seaton Primary School, Devon  
 Science Community Representing Education (SCORE)  
 The Tiptree and Stanway Primary Schools Consortium, Essex  
 Roger Titcombe  
 Professor Harry Torrance  
 Wellcome Trust

In addition, a significant number of other educational professionals and associations chose to submit detailed evidence and feedback to the Review through the online call for evidence.

## Responses to the online call for evidence

**3,940** individuals and organisations responded to the call for evidence document.

The organisational breakdown of respondents is as follows:

Respondent	Numbers	Percentage
Primary School Headteacher	2,386	61%
Primary School Teacher	900	23%
Other	159	4%
Parent/Carer	156	4%
Governor	124	3%
Other educational professional	71	2%
Pupil	59	1%
Local Authority	36	1%
Secondary School Teacher	21	1%
Secondary School Headteacher	15	less than 1%
Union/Professional Association	13	less than 1%

As this table shows, 84% of responses were from primary school head teachers and teachers (over 3,000 in total). This is a very large proportion of the responses, particularly in comparison with other important groups of stakeholders such as governors, parents/carers and secondary school head teachers and teachers. The following summaries of the responses to each question therefore primarily reflect the views of primary head teachers and teachers who responded to the Review.

The following report provides a summary analysis of the responses to each question within the call for evidence.

As some respondents may have marked a number of options for some questions, the total percentage listed under any one question may exceed 100%. Throughout the report, percentages are expressed as a measure of those answering each question, not as a measure of all respondents.

# Online call for evidence questions

The call for evidence document asked for responses to the following questions:

- Q1 Are there any aspects of the current system which you think work particularly well and should be retained?
- Q2 The Government accepts that there are flaws in the current system of Key Stage 2 tests. What parts of the current system do you think most need to change or be improved?
- Q3 a) What are the most important purposes for externally-marked tests at the end of Key Stage 2?
- To enable parents and the public to compare levels of achievement across schools;
  - To help teachers to set expectations and inform them about the performance of their pupils;
  - To provide information about pupils' achievement at the time of transfer between teachers and schools;
  - For government to measure the national performance and to compare England's performance against the rest of the world;
  - Other (please specify).
- b) Do you think one of these purposes is more important than the others?
- Q4 Do you agree that the current system achieves the most important purpose effectively?
- Q5 We need to consider how to make administration of the system as simple and cost-effective as possible, with minimal bureaucracy. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?
- Q6 When would be the best time or times for external Key Stage 2 tests to take place?
- At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6);
  - At the start of secondary education (Year 7);
  - Earlier in Key Stage 2 (e.g. Year 4, Year 5);
  - Shorter tests at more than one point;
  - Don't know;
  - Other (please specify).
- Q7 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in English reading are?
- b) What could be changed or improved in the assessment of reading?
- c) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in English writing are?
- d) What could be changed or improved in the assessment of writing?



- e) Are there aspects of English which you think should only be assessed by teachers (for example speaking and listening)? If so, which?
- Q8 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics are?  
b) What could be changed or improved in mathematics assessment?  
c) Are there aspects of mathematics which you think should only be assessed by teachers? If so, which?
- Q9 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 teacher assessment in science is?  
b) What could be changed or improved in science assessment?  
Q9 c) Are there aspects of science which you think should only be assessed by teachers? If so, which?
- Q10 We need to ensure that the system of assessment in primary schools can promote improved standards of attainment and progress of pupils. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?
- Q11 We must also ensure that parents have good quality information on the progress of their children and the success of schools. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?
- Q12 What information should be used to compare schools and hold them accountable?
- External test results;
  - Schools' own teacher assessment;
  - Ofsted's inspection reports;
  - Surveys and feedback from parents and pupils;
  - Don't know;
  - Other.
- Q13 We must consider how best to ensure that the assessment system allows us to make comparisons with education systems internationally. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?
- Q14 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make.

# Online call for evidence summary

## Q1 Are there any aspects of the current system which you think work particularly well and should be retained?

There were **3,809** responses to this question.

Yes 1,941 (51%)      No 1,753 (46%)      Don't Know 115 (3%)

Just over half of all respondents said that there were aspects of the current system that worked well and should be retained.

1,287 (34%) respondents said that teacher assessment worked well and the use of teacher assessment to provide evidence of standards of attainment across the country should be retained. They believed the current system of teacher assessment at Key Stage 1 was relevant and rigorous and had appropriate external moderation, and that a similar system could be introduced at Key Stage 2. Respondents also felt that teacher assessments provided a much more accurate and long-term assessment of a pupil's achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 than results achieved on the single day when tests were administered.

254 (7%) felt that the current system provided national standards for comparison and consistency, noting the following:

- standard tests allowed schools to be compared nationally;
- the current system allowed schools to identify the needs of children, including high achievers and those children who were underachieving;
- the current system enabled schools to maintain their accountability to public funding; and
- external tests did not allow schools to inflate their results.

246 (6%) said that formal testing was as important and valuable, as it was an externally-marked exam that changed every year and prevented teachers from teaching to a set test. Respondents also believed that external tests allowed schools to check how valid their own teacher assessments were. Some noted that testing still remained a more time-efficient method of assessing than continuous teacher assessment.

177 (5%) respondents noted issues concerning RAISEonline data. They said that RAISEonline was a valuable self-improvement tool and supported school improvement. However there were a number of respondents who did not see the value of the RAISEonline data for their schools.

Respondents also suggested that the current assessment system worked well, as it gave a measure of pupil achievement and progress and made schools more accountable. They also welcomed the provision of test papers, noting that the test

papers and mark schemes were very useful as they gave an opportunity for standardised assessment across the country. They also noted that the materials were relevant and of a good quality.

## Q2 The Government accepts that there are flaws in the current system of Key Stage 2 tests. What parts of the current system do you think most need to change or be improved?

There were **3,504** responses to this question.

1,743 (50%) respondents wanted the league tables removed or suggested that test results should not be used for compiling tables. They suggested the removal of all public league tables as their impact had skewed the whole test regime. Respondents felt that the tables should be removed as they reflected so little about a school. Some commented that even if a school had outstanding teaching practice, coming lower in the tables than other local schools could mean parents might see the school as inferior, leading to fewer pupils applications.

1,644 (47%) respondents said that the current tests encouraged schools to 'teach to the test' and narrowed the curriculum. Respondents said that as there was pressure on schools to do well in the tests and improve or maintain their position in the 'league tables', children were simply taught the areas on which they would be tested. They believed that this would mean children would miss out on a rich and varied curriculum in their final year at primary school.

1,250 (36%) respondents noted that the tests placed too much stress on the children and that many did not perform well in test situations. Some respondents commented on the excessive pressure on pupils to do well in the tests to help a school maintain its position in the tables. They also said that to test everything in such a short time span was stressful, and that tests should be more spread out. They felt that children should be allowed to take the test on alternative days, for example if they were ill on the test date itself.

1,159 (33%) respondents said that they did not think that testing should ever take place and that the tests should be scrapped. They did not believe that testing was the best way to obtain data on progress. They believed that a system that used teacher assessment throughout the year, alongside the school's own rigorous target setting and pupil performance reviews, would provide more accurate data. In general respondents felt that the whole Key Stage 2 assessment process was flawed, costly, and bureaucratic. Respondents also noted that the remaining weeks of term after the tests had been taken was often seen as a waste of time by parents and children, as all the hard work was over. Some respondents expressed concern that schools might focus on the borderline children at the expense of others. Finally, respondents felt it was unfair to judge a child's performance based on performance on one specific day, in effect dismissing his or her abilities displayed in class work throughout the year.

862 (25%) respondents were concerned that the quality of marking was either poor or at best variable. Respondents said that, for the tests to be equitable, the marking needed to be of a consistent quality. Respondents noted that their experience included many examples of poor or inconsistent marking, and respondents felt that markers were not always sufficiently experienced. Respondents were also concerned that the process of arranging for papers to be re-marked was time-consuming,

complicated and costly for schools, and that in general the results of the tests took too long to be returned to schools, creating difficulties in planning.

523 (15%) respondents said that they were concerned that Ofsted relied too much on the test scores. They said that the test was often seen as a definitive measure of a pupil's ability and therefore of the school's effectiveness. They were unhappy that the data by which schools were judged should be solely based on one test, taken during one week, rather than information gathered from teacher assessment throughout the year.

412 (12%) respondents suggested that teacher assessment data should be considered alongside the test results. They said that the tests should be viewed as one part of the assessment process, and should be used to help confirm the teacher's own assessment. Respondents noted that the tests only covered a small proportion of the work from the Key Stage, and that teacher assessment covered a much wider area. Some felt that including teacher assessment in the overall view of how a child had performed would help to alleviate the pressure to teach children how to pass the tests.

383 (11%) said that the tests placed too much pressure on teachers. They said that, as so much depended on how well the school did in the tests, the teachers felt pressurised into doing all they could to make sure the children performed well, sometimes at the expense of a rich and varied curriculum. School staff, especially school leaders, suggested that a single set of bad test results could damage their careers or the reputation of their schools. This was felt to be hugely damaging to morale and energy, especially for those who chose to work in the most challenging environments. Respondents believed that schools must be accountable but that school staff should not feel under constant threat.

346 (10%) respondents said that the tests did not take into account external or home factors. They suggested that if a child was absent or ill on the day of the test, this could have a marked effect on a school's results. They also noted that issues in a child's home life, such as a recent death in the family or illness, could have a serious affect on his or her ability to perform on the day, leading to a big difference between the test result and the teacher assessment. Respondents noted that flexibility to allow children to retake or to sit the tests on an alternative date would be beneficial.

281 (8%) respondents said that external testing tests, and in particular the use of external markers, undermined the trust and professional judgment of teachers. Respondents again noted that there were many problems with the external marking and questioned why markers could be trusted to mark the papers but teachers apparently could not.

### Q3 a) What are the most important purposes for externally-marked tests at the end of Key Stage 2?

There were **3,725** responses to this question.

To help teachers to set expectations and inform them about the performance of their pupils:	1,687	45%
To provide information about pupils' achievement at the time of transfer between teachers and schools:	1,515	41%
Other (please specify):	1,303	35%

For government to measure the national performance and to compare England's performance against the rest of the world:	798	21%
To enable parents and the public to compare levels of achievement across schools:	530	14%

622 (17%) respondents said that the tests could not be seen as a reliable indicator of school performance. They believed that the current system only reported attainment and not achievement, and that this did not represent a robust measure of school performance to inform comparisons, for example by parents. Others said they felt tests simply served as a way of comparing which teachers had the best techniques for drilling children. Respondents stated that individual schools had their own character, and that it was unfair to compare schools purely on the results of a few tests on a limited area of the curriculum. They believed that comparisons based on end of Key Stage 2 results did not present a true picture of the school and its achievements, and that a school needed to be judged on all of its attributes.

591 (16%) respondents suggested that none of the suggested statements in question three were important purposes for externally-marked tests. They noted that:

- the poor marking of the papers undermined the accuracy of the data received;
- teachers were professionals and should be trusted to mark the tests;
- teacher assessment would provide the same information and give a more accurate reflection of ability; and
- many children were retested in Year 7, and so the test results were not used by their new schools.

554 (15%) respondents said that they did not believe that the tests should be externally marked. Respondents said that due to the inconsistent quality of the marking the results could not always be trusted. They were also concerned about the cost of the tests in general, but in particular about the cost of external marking. They believed the money saved by abolishing external marking could be used to improve or enrich the curriculum with more motivating experiences.

227 (6%) respondents were concerned that the tests did not take into account the inequalities of a school or a pupil's background. Respondents commented that:

- in a small school one child might represent up to 10% or more of the total cohort, as opposed to just 1% in a large school;
- parents might assume a school with a higher standing in the league tables is a better school, when the results might simply be reflecting the local catchment area; and
- many schools with good provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs attract a disproportionate amount of children with additional needs.

Schools with intakes of children from affluent backgrounds often had very little to do to help their children achieve national targets, whereas schools that take children from poor socio-economic backgrounds might never meet national targets. The

tables did not reflect the often significant progress of those children from poorer backgrounds.

### Q3 b) Do you think one of these purposes is more important than the others?

There were **2,964** responses to this question.

Yes 1,688 (57%)      No 1,147 (39%)      Don't Know 129 (4%)

607 (20%) respondents said that the most important purpose was to set expectations and inform performance. They noted that the key element of any testing system should be to inform teachers of pupil progress and learning, and help to set future expectations of performance and develop next steps. They believed that this was the essential core of teaching and learning, and the key purpose of the school.

237 (8%) respondents said that the most important purpose was to provide pupil achievement data at the time of transfer to secondary school. However, many respondents felt that teacher assessment would provide more accurate information than test results.

### Q4 Do you agree that the current system achieves the most important purpose effectively?

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Disagree Strongly	2,614	71%
Agree Slightly	372	10%
Disagree Slightly	333	9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	176	5%
Agree Strongly	120	3%
Don't Know	41	1%

The majority of respondents either disagreed strongly or disagreed slightly that the current system achieved the most important purposes effectively.

557 (15%) respondents said that the current system only gave a snapshot of what a pupil could do and did not give any indication of his or her true ability. They said that the tests only measured a pupil's performance during a specific test on a specific day, and that ongoing teacher assessment provided a more effective measure of how children were performing.

517 (14%) respondents said the current system was more concerned with league tables and less with individual children. Respondents noted that, because the test results provided information for league tables and could be used by Ofsted to initiate an inspection, schools might be under pressure to 'teach to the test' to avoid this happening. Respondents suggested that the publication of league tables had led to a situation where English and maths were the only subjects that mattered, with a focus on the overall result of the school rather than individual children.

Respondents also noted that publication of the test results created an unhealthy competitiveness between schools, as some parents might view a school's standing in the tables as the main indicator of the quality of its teaching.

## Q5 We need to consider how to make administration of the system as simple and cost-effective as possible, with minimal bureaucracy. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?

There were **2,799** responses to this question.

1,916 (68%) respondents suggested that schools should use externally moderated teacher assessment, specifically noting that they would like the Key Stage 1 system replicated at Key Stage 2. They suggested that internal marking of teacher assessment would remove much of the bureaucracy and the costs associated with external marking. Respondents were not completely averse to moderation, but suggested that this could be carried out between local schools or local moderation groups.

857 (31%) wanted the tests replaced with teacher assessment, but did not necessarily want the assessment to be scrutinised or moderated. They said that teacher assessment had progressed greatly due to Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), and that teacher assessment should be trusted. Respondents noted that, since APP was completed by teachers, there were no additional costs, but it still gave an accurate picture of every child's progress.

657 (23%) wanted the tests to be marked internally. Respondents said there were issues with external marking such as the costs, the fact that the marking was sometimes inaccurate, and the fact that there was no guarantee that the results would be sent back on time. There were again suggestions that internal marking of the tests could be moderated, or a random sample of tests could be externally marked to check the school's judgment.

380 (14%) respondents were happy for the tests to take place, but only wanted them to be used to help inform the overall teacher assessment. They felt that teacher assessment was the most important part of the process.

162 (6%) respondents said that less or no emphasis should be placed on the tables as this was one of the reasons that schools 'taught to the test', putting children and staff under pressure to do well.

## Q6 When would be the best time or times for external Key Stage 2 tests to take place?

There were **3,822** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Shorter tests at more than one point:	1,168	31%
Other (please specify)	1,150	30%
At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)	1,032	27%
At the start of secondary education (Year 7)	693	18%
Don't know	134	4%
Earlier in Key Stage 2 (e.g. Year 4, Year 5)	104	3%



954 (25%) said that there should be no external tests at all. Respondents again noted that the tests were stressful for children and teachers, and that children were simply being taught to pass the tests and were being denied a rich and varied curriculum. Respondents again believed that, as professionals, teachers should be trusted to assess their own pupils.

378 (10%) respondents felt that the tests should be spread across a longer period of time. They suggested that there should be more and shorter tests, to help build up a valid picture of pupils' progression. Respondents believed that these shorter tests would help to reduce stress and pressure on children and staff. Respondents felt that no more than one test should take place on any day.

352 (9%) respondents said that tests were irrelevant as children were retested on entering secondary school. Many secondary schools did not have faith in the Key Stage 2 test results, as they felt children had just been taught how to pass the test. Many secondary schools retested pupils in Year 7 in order to gain an accurate picture of their ability.

227 (6%) suggested that there should be sample testing only, which could be used to measure standards nationally. This would mean that not all children would need to take the tests every year.

## Q7 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in English reading are?

There were **3,775** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Reasonably effective	1,188	31%
Not very effective	1,054	28%
Inadequate	785	21%
Neither effective nor ineffective	516	14%
Don't know	121	3%
Very effective	111	3%

535 (14%) respondents again noted that the tests only gave a snapshot of a pupil's ability. They did not think that they measured a pupil's deeper understanding or enthusiasm for reading.

286 (8%) respondents said that the tests did not take into account cultural factors or a child's life experiences. They noted that many of the subjects covered in the test did not relate to day-to-day life, or covered subjects that the child had never experienced. They said the nature of the reading material in the tests had an impact on a child's performance as, for example, some subjects were more interesting to boys, or had more relevance to particular socio-economic groups.

A number of respondents were concerned that the quality of the papers varied from year to year, and that the texts were often not "child-friendly".

## Q7 b) What could be changed or improved in the assessment of reading?



There were **1,894** responses to this question.

1,212 (64%) respondents said that the tests should be replaced with teacher assessment, suggesting that there should be ongoing assessment through regular one-to-one reading with the class teacher. It was again noted that ongoing teacher assessment formed a much more accurate picture of a child's reading level than a single test.

512 (27%) respondents believed that it was important to include a wider choice of topics. For example, as a choice of reading topics it was suggested that boys might prefer non-fiction. Respondents said that pupils should be able to choose from a range of topics, as their interest in the subject could influence their comprehension.

413 (22%) respondents wanted more time for the tests to be completed, or for the time limits to be removed altogether. Respondents said that children often rushed through the answers so they could complete the paper.

102 (5%) respondents said sometimes the texts chosen for the assessment of reading were "obscure", giving children limited chances of understanding. Respondents suggested that the text chosen for the assessment must be of a higher quality.

Respondents also questioned if it was appropriate for a reading test to have a written response, or whether comprehension of reading could be assessed verbally.

## Q7 c) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in English writing are?

There were **3,792** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Inadequate	1,631	43%
Not very effective	1,236	33%
Reasonably effective	447	12%
Neither effective nor ineffective	353	9%
Don't know	98	3%
Very effective	27	1%

1,309 (35%) respondents said that the tests allowed no scope for freedom of expression. They said that the writing tasks were not particularly inspiring and did not reflect the current practice in classrooms, whereby children are encouraged to take time with their writing and put thought into spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Respondents also noted that many children produced their best work as part of a structured lesson following an inspired discussion or school trip. They believed that approaching a test without knowing what they would have to write about prevented many pupils from performing at their best. It was felt that many adults would struggle with the test, which gave no scope for planning or redrafting within the tight time frame.

400 (11%) respondents noted that the writing test narrowed the curriculum as children were taught to pass the test rather than to write well. This was partly due to the wide variety of possible genres and the uncertainty about which would appear in the test.

249 (7%) respondents again said that the test led to pupils feeling under pressure or stress, particularly as they had only 45 minutes to write persuasively, clearly and to the best of their ability on an unknown topic.

Respondents noted that the tests created barriers for children from deprived backgrounds, again stating that they very often had not had a variety of experiences, such as foreign holidays, and therefore could not use these experiences to help inform their writing.

## Q7 d) What could be changed or improved in the assessment of writing?

There were **2,732** responses to this question.

1,273 (47%) respondents again suggested that the tests should be replaced with teacher assessment, suggesting that:

- continuous assessment over time should be the main determinant of a child's level;
- it would be useful to use teacher assessment of writing that had been based on the children's own experiences;
- the current Assessing Pupils' Progress materials which many schools use was effective, robust and measurable; and
- writing for eleven year olds could not be effectively assessed based on two timed pieces of work, as the children's strengths in writing might lie in a different genre than that which was tested on the day.

Respondents again suggested that the assessment of children's work could be moderated externally, in school or in a local or regional cluster of schools.

867 (32%) respondents suggested that there should be more choice of genre, as children learned to write across a range of genres and had strengths in different areas. Respondents also suggested that schools could be notified of the genre to be assessed in advance, in order to remove the element of guesswork and help to remove any stress for the children. Respondents noted that in school children were encouraged to use a dictionary and thesaurus but were not permitted to do so in the tests.

852 (31%) respondents wanted teacher assessment to be taken into account more fully, and suggested creating a portfolio of work, completed over the year, which could be used to assess the overall level. Respondents felt that being assessed against evidence in a portfolio based on their year's work would mean that children would not be penalised if they performed less well in one genre, as there would be other examples of work that showed their true ability.

537 (20%) believed it was important to improve the quality of the marking, as there were frequent inconsistencies and the marking was seen as poor or inadequate. There were concerns that the consistent marking of the written tests was difficult, as there were so many variables and the written work was open to interpretation.

421 (15%) respondents said that more time should be allowed for the children to complete the tests. They said that writing needed preparation time, planning and the opportunity to draft and redraft. Many respondents commented that if they (as adults) had to draft work it often went through a series of re-drafts in order to get the best piece possible.

## Q7 e) Are there aspects of English which you think should only be assessed by teachers (for example speaking and listening)? If so, which?

There were **3,538** responses to this question.

Yes 3,204 (90%)      No 169 (5%)      Don't Know 165 (5%)

The majority of respondents (90%) said there were examples of English that should only be assessed by teachers.

1,580 (45%) respondents suggested that all aspects of English should be assessed by teachers, noting that this currently works well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. There were again suggestions that assessment could be moderated, either in-house or externally via local schools or moderation groups.

1,092 (31%) said that speaking and listening could be assessed by teachers. These are assessed as part of day-to-day practice, and children would feel more comfortable if assessed by a familiar adult. It was noted that external examiners undertaking this task could be extremely costly.

577 (16%) respondents reiterated that writing should only be assessed by teachers.

245 (7%) suggested that reading should only be assessed by teachers.

## Q8 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics are?

There were **3,785** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Reasonably effective	1,445	38%
Not very effective	896	24%
Inadequate	610	16%
Neither effective nor ineffective	553	15%
Very effective	185	5%
Don't know	96	3%

A large proportion (43%) of respondents felt that the current Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics were reasonably or very effective. Respondents said that in mathematics answers were generally right or wrong so there was less room for interpretation.

However, 40% felt that the mathematics tests were not very effective or inadequate. They noted that:

- they were totally ineffective and demoralising for the less able pupils;
- the mental mathematics test caused stress for pupils and panicked those with lower ability; and
- questions were often confusing and/or misleading, and sometimes appeared as if they were designed to catch children out.

503 (13%) respondents said that a one-off test only gave a snapshot of ability; continual assessment would give far better results. Respondents asked if a short test was the best way to assess how mathematically able a child was. Respondents noted that children could be feeling ill on the day, or might be so stressed they could not do their best.

174 (5%) respondents did however feel that the mathematics tests were a fairly accurate snapshot of children's abilities, again noting that the test was generally accurate as the answers were either right or wrong and not open to interpretation.

## Q8 b) What could be changed or improved in mathematics assessment?

There were **1,916** responses to this question.

1,345 (70%) respondents suggested that teacher assessment, possibly using Assessing Pupils' Progress, was the way forward. They suggested a thorough system of moderated teacher assessment in mathematics, and that teachers should track the progress of every child based on moderated assessed work. Some respondents noted that, as many teachers were using Assessing Pupils' Progress anyway, this was not a big step. Respondents suggested that this could be supported by moderated tests (possibly Single Level Tests), administered when the teacher thought the children were ready.

361 (19%) respondents said that the tests were more a test of reading or literacy than mathematics. It was said that the language used in the questions sometimes detracted from the subject being tested. Respondents suggested taking away the emphasis on long worded questions that prevented children who were good at mathematics, but not reading, from performing well.

252 (13%) respondents again said that additional time should be allowed for the tests, as they believed that more children would achieve their potential if this test was not time-limited.

211 (11%) respondents said that there should be internal tests only, and the results of these should not be published in a league table.

107 (6%) respondents suggested the introduction of online testing for mathematics, as the right or wrong nature of the answers would lend itself to marking in this way. It was suggested that this could be a cheaper way of testing and could offer results much more quickly.

## Q8 c) Are there aspects of mathematics which you think should only be assessed by teachers? If so, which?

There were **3,133** responses to this question.

Yes 2,324 (74%)      No 522 (17%) Don't Know 287 (9%)

Response	Numbers	Percentage
All	1,482	47%
Using and applying	162	5%
Problem solving	135	4%
Mental maths	103	3%
Investigation	73	2%
Practical	36	1%
Reasoning	33	1%

### Q9 a) How effective do you think the current end of Key Stage 2 teacher assessment in science is?

There were **3,663** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Reasonably effective	1,138	31%
Very effective	738	20%
Not very effective	629	17%
Inadequate	522	14%
Neither effective nor ineffective	408	11%
Don't know	228	6%

675 (18%) respondents said that removing the external tests and using teacher assessment was a good idea and saw it as the way forward. Respondents said that assessing children over a longer period gave a more informed and accurate view. Some respondents noted that since the formal test was abolished, children still learned science but what they were taught was more relevant and more fun. Respondents did however feel that, since the tests were discontinued, science teaching had lost some impetus and generally was seen to be of less importance. There was some support for the reintroduction of science tests.

Respondents said that since the science tests were abolished there had been little to replace them, and that schools were using their own assessment materials. They felt that there needed to be some standard way of assessing science that all schools could use.

### Q9 b) What could be changed or improved in science assessment?

There were **1,106** responses to this question.

809 (73%) respondents said that teacher assessment should be used to assess science. They again suggested that the assessments could be moderated and that moderation could take place locally between schools.

373 (34%) respondents said that science needed to be more practical and the assessments should be based on practical application of science, so that children were tested on their science knowledge and not on their reading and writing skills.

### Q9 c) Are there aspects of science which you think should only be assessed by teachers? If so, which?

There were **3,010** responses to this question

Yes 2,548 (85%)      No 235 (8%)      Don't Know 227 (7%)

1,517 (50%) respondents said that all parts of science should be assessed by teachers, which would give a truly representative view gained over time.

214 (7%) respondents suggested that Attainment Target 1 (scientific enquiry) should be assessed by teachers as it was difficult to assess practical science in a written test.

### Q10 We need to ensure that the system of assessment in primary schools can promote improved standards of attainment and progress of pupils. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?

There were **2,432** responses to this question.

1,656 (68%) respondents said that teacher assessment could be used to promote improved standards of attainment and progress. They suggested that teachers could use Assessing Pupils' Progress materials as the basis for assessing pupils, with moderation of teacher assessments ensuring consistency. It was again noted that, if the main focus was on teacher assessment and not on the tests, then the need for rehearsal and teaching to the tests would be removed, allowing children to benefit from a richer and more varied curriculum.

911 (37%) respondents said that less emphasis should be placed on the tests. They noted that, where there was a heavy emphasis on a small data set such as the test results, there would always be a temptation for a school to concentrate its efforts on that data set. Respondents believed that the problem lay in the fact that, while schools used the data to assess pupils, Ofsted used the data to assess schools. It was suggested that Ofsted should make their inspections without access to any of the test data as this would make the report more realistic. Finally, a number of teacher respondents said they worried about the test results as they knew that, if they were not as good as expected, their teaching would come into question and their hard work would not be recognised.

193 (8%) respondents said that there was a need to introduce comprehensive training for teachers so that assessment skills were improved and all teachers worked to the same standards.

### Q11 We must also ensure that parents have good quality information on the progress of their children and the

## success of schools. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?

There were **2,243** responses to this question.

1,332 (59%) respondents said that more weight should be given to teacher assessment. They said that rather than being provided with a snapshot test result, parents would welcome the more comprehensive information that could be provided from teacher assessment. Respondents believed that accurate information based on teacher assessment should be given throughout the child's education, not just at the end of Key Stage 2. They proposed that this should be given with a clear indication of how individual children were progressing against age-related expectations.

1,286 (57%) respondents said it was important that parents were informed of their children's progress, and the majority of those (teacher/head teacher) respondents said that they provided information to their parents regularly. Some teachers and head teachers felt that, despite the best efforts of schools, many parents did not fully understand the issues of levels and sub-levels of progress. They said that end of year reports had become too technical, often generated by computer programmes, and meant very little to parents. They believed that the publication of basic expectations at the end of Key Stages would be useful. Respondents did not believe publishing a league table told a parent anything about how their own child was progressing.

146 (7%) respondents suggested using internally marked tests.

## Q12 What information should be used to compare schools and hold them accountable?

There were **3,859** responses to this question.

Response	Numbers	Percentage
Schools' own teacher assessment	3,203	83%
Surveys and feedback from parents and pupils	2,560	66%
Ofsted's inspection reports	2,370	61%
Other	586	15%
External test results	539	14%
Don't know	61	2%

389 (10%) respondents said that it was important to include progress measures and not simply test results. They believed that these progress measures, for example the percentage of children making two levels of progress across Key Stage 2 from their relative starting points, was more valuable than the end of Key Stage 2 test results.

Some respondents believed that, as Ofsted reports were primarily about test results rather than about progress, schools with a good catchment area would always receive a good grade as it was much easier for such schools to reach national standards. They said that schools who worked incredibly hard with disadvantaged children were given little credit for the progress they made with those pupils.



263 (7%) respondents said that a wider suite of measures needed to be used to compare schools and hold them accountable, including:

- outside accreditation such as Investor in People, Healthy Schools, Arts Mark etc;
- exit surveys from parents on transfer to secondary school;
- the ethos of the school, the degree of pupil satisfaction and the standards of pupil behaviour; and
- the number of children leaving the school before reaching the end of Year 6, together with the reason given for leaving.

178 (5%) respondents said that value added or contextual information including mobility, Special Educational Needs, free school meal take up and pupils with English as an additional language needed to be used when comparing schools or holding them to account.

### Q13 We must consider how best to ensure that the assessment system allows us to make comparisons with education systems internationally. What could be changed or improved to achieve this?

There were **1,603** responses to this question.

756 (47%) respondents again said that teacher assessment was the way forward and that teachers needed to be trusted to make the assessments. Respondents noted that the current testing system did not allow international comparisons since few other countries tested their children at this age in a similar way.

542 (34%) respondents said that, for any international comparisons to be meaningful, they must compare like for like. The only comparisons which respondents felt would compare like for like were the PISA tests. A number of parents said that they were only interested in how their child was doing and not interested in comparing him or her with children in other countries.

488 (30%) respondents commented that there was no need to make international comparisons as the results may be flawed. Respondents noted that the differences in education systems across the world meant that comparisons would be meaningless, for example in some countries formal education did not start until children were 7 years old.

104 (6%) respondents said that if international comparisons had to be made, then an international test needed to be devised and that a random sample of pupils should be chosen to sit the test.

### Q14 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make.

There were **1,694** responses to this question.



1,047 (62%) respondents had concerns about the way in which the data from tests was used. They were concerned that the data was seen by many as determining how successful a school was. It was noted that, whilst the perceived success of schools (and effectiveness of head teachers) was based almost entirely on the results of Ofsted inspections, it was not surprising that schools continued to 'teach to the test' and narrow the Year 6 curriculum towards English and mathematics. Respondents also believed that wider publication of results was not useful as this forced schools to work in competition rather than in collaboration to maintain their position in the league tables.

922 (54%) said that the tests were flawed and that they damaged primary education. Respondents again noted how many children found the tests stressful and that the time in Year 6 leading up to the test was simply used to practise passing the tests. The time after the tests was often seen as 'lost' time waiting for children to finish school.

The current testing system was seen by respondents as no longer fit for purpose. They wanted to move to a teacher assessment system where it was not possible to 'waste' time preparing and coaching children just to get a better test score. They believed that replacing the tests would have a huge boost in standards, and would gain support from the majority of teachers and parents. Respondents also noted that Key Stage 1 assessment was no longer carried out in the same way as Key Stage 2, and that Wales and Scotland no longer tested their children. Respondents asked why Year 6 teachers were not seen as able or professional enough to assess their own pupils.

248 (15%) respondents suggested that there should be more single level tests as these could help children who did not have the capacity to achieve particular levels and felt pressurised by questions that they did not understand.

120 (7%) respondents had concerns about children with English as an additional language (EAL), as the tests were too language dependent. Respondents also felt it unfair that children who had been in the UK for less than two years would be included in the results, as they could still be developing their language skills.

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