



# Reception baseline assessment framework: supporting document

## Introduction

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) has recently published the assessment framework for the reception baseline national pilot that will take place from September 2019. The framework sets out the purpose, format, content and cognitive demand of the assessment.

This document provides some general information about how the framework was developed and the rationale for the framework content. More information can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

## Background

The government response to the 2017 public consultation on the future of the primary assessment system in England stated that the assessment would consist of 'skills which can be reliably assessed and which correlate with attainment in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2, most noticeably early literacy and numeracy.' The response also included a commitment to explore the ways in which it might be possible to assess some form of self-regulation in the assessment.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was appointed as the supplier of the assessment in April 2018 and has worked with STA to finalise the framework and the assessment.

## Development process

The development of the assessment has been aligned with the processes used for other national curriculum assessments. It has included:

- expert review processes, including consultation with early years practitioners, via a teacher panel, and other assessment and inclusion experts
- informal trialling in schools to ensure the clarity of the tasks and instructions
- a large-scale trial involving more than 300 schools and 3,000 pupils and full analysis of the trialling data
- practitioner feedback from a questionnaire sent to all schools involved in the trial

This process was used to ensure that the resources and task activities are engaging, accessible and age-appropriate.

## Content

The assessment content was developed based on research, as set out in NFER's publication, [The Reception Baseline Assessment](#). This led to the inclusion of the content areas set out in the framework:

- mathematics tasks

- early number
- early calculation (early addition/subtraction)
- mathematical language
- early understanding of shape
- early literacy, communication and language tasks
  - early vocabulary
  - phonological awareness
  - early reading
  - early comprehension

These areas were validated through the expert review process and feedback from the trial suggested that practitioners were generally satisfied with the proposed content. Data analysis of pupil performance on the tasks suggests that they are appropriate for the cohort of pupils.

## Self-regulation

The proposed self-regulation tasks followed a similar process. However, the nature of the assessment (a set of tasks delivered one-to-one with a pupil where the total time for the whole assessment, not just for the self-regulation component, is 20 minutes) provided some limitations on what could be assessed. The following content areas were determined to be the most likely to be successful in the assessment: working memory; inhibitory control; and attentional flexibility.

These areas focus on the cognitive aspects of self-regulation and may be referred to as executive function. Although this was understood not to cover the full range of self-regulation that will form part of the proposed new Early Learning Goals, it was still considered to be sufficient to trial items to determine how they functioned and whether they could be used as a proxy for self-regulation as a whole.

Analysis of the trial data suggested that, in the proposed tasks, it was not possible to measure each content area independently thus reducing the usefulness of the information that would be provided about the domain. Practitioners involved in the trial also indicated that they were unsure of the purpose and value of the self-regulation tasks, which took longer to administer on average than other tasks.

As a result, the Department for Education has decided not to include self-regulation in the assessment to enable greater coverage and reliability of the other content areas in the time available. The assessment of self-regulation will form part of the reformed Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, which is an observational assessment more suited to this content area.

## The final assessment

The reception baseline is a task-based assessment, delivered in English, using physical resources. All tasks have been reviewed as part of the expert review process and, where appropriate, have been subject to informal trialling during the initial development phase. Any suggested amendments were considered by NFER and STA and agreed changes were made to the materials. A greater number of tasks were trialled than would be included in the final assessment. Evidence from the qualitative and quantitative data from the trial was used to select the final assessment.

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