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Statutory guidance

Key stage 2 teacher assessment guidance 2027

Updated 14 September 2026

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1. The purpose of this guidance

This guidance will help schools and local authorities understand the statutory requirements for key stage 2 (KS2) teacher assessment (TA), under [The Education \(National Curriculum\) \(Key Stage 2 Assessment Arrangements\) \(England\) Order 2003](#). It also provides guidance to support a rigorous and proportionate assessment and moderation process.

This guidance is produced by the [Standards and Testing Agency \(STA\)](#), an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE) and is relevant until the end of the academic year 2026 to 2027.

We encourage schools and local authorities to [sign up for STA's assessment updates](#). These are regular emails which include important information and dates in relation to primary assessments.

1.1 Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- headteachers, teachers, school staff and governing bodies in maintained schools, academies, free schools and special schools, alternative provisions, Service Children's Education schools and participating independent schools
- local authorities when supporting schools or delivering moderation

1.2 Legal status

This statutory guidance expands on the [KS2 assessment and reporting arrangements](#). It supports schools in making statutory TA judgements for pupils at the end of KS2, and schools and local authorities in undertaking statutory moderation of these judgements.

2. Changes in the academic year 2026 to 2027

2.1 Managing user accounts and contact details on the National Curriculum Assessments Portal

Local authorities are responsible for managing their own user accounts and keeping contact details up to date for relevant staff on the National Curriculum Assessments Portal (NCA Portal). This process replaces the previous 'local authorities contact details survey'.

STA uses the contact details on the NCA Portal for all tailored communications to local authorities. To receive all relevant communications, local authorities should regularly review user accounts and ensure all registered users are up to date, assigned the correct permissions and that accounts for any leavers are removed.

For full instructions and support, please refer to the guidance on [how to access the NCA Portal](#).

2.2 Ongoing use of large language models

We are using large language models to support the creation of standardisation exercises in the 2026 to 2027 academic year. This follows a successful [pilot](#) during the academic year 2025 to 2026 that explored whether large language models can help overcome ongoing challenges with standardisation exercise production, including sourcing sufficient scripts from schools and reducing associated costs. The pilot tested the approach in standardisation exercise 3 (February 2026) and we will be applying this approach for standardisation exercises 2 and 3 in the academic year 2026 to 2027.

We will only use the materials developed with the assistance of large language models to evaluate moderators' understanding of the [KS2 English writing teacher assessment framework](#).

2.3 Extension of time for local authorities to action moderation agreement requests on the NCA Portal

Following feedback received in the 2025 to 2026 academic year, we are extending the deadline for local authorities to confirm on the NCA Portal that they have written moderation agreements in place with academies and participating independent schools.

From the academic year 2026 to 2027, local authorities will have an additional 2 working days to review all agreement requests on the NCA Portal. This is to ensure that all nominations can be appropriately actioned and the data we hold is an accurate reflection of the written agreements put in place with:

- participating independent schools by Friday 4 December 2026
- academies and free schools by Friday 8 January 2027

3. Important dates for the academic year 2026 to 2027

These dates may be subject to change.

3.1 Important dates for 2026

Date	Activity
From Monday 21 September	Moderation managers can set up NCA Portal access for all moderators who will participate in a standardisation exercise
From Monday 21 September	Report available on the NCA Portal for local authorities to review the schools externally moderated from the academic year 2025 to 2026

Monday 12 October	'Submit local authority monitoring and moderation agreement requests' form available on the NCA Portal for academies and participating independent schools
Monday 12 October	'Approve monitoring and moderation agreement requests' form available on the NCA Portal for local authorities
Monday 2 November to Friday 13 November	Standardisation exercise 1 live on the NCA Portal for completion
Monday 16 November	Commentaries for standardisation exercise 1 and moderator results available for moderation managers on the NCA Portal
Wednesday 18 November	Participating moderators receive email notifications to access standardisation exercise 1 commentaries and results on the NCA Portal, including the 'approval to moderate' certificate, if successful
Friday 4 December	Deadline for participating independent schools to confirm on the NCA Portal that they have a written agreement in place with a local authority to monitor their KS2 tests and complete external moderation of their KS2 TA (as applicable)
Tuesday 8 December	Deadline for local authorities to approve all agreements in place with independent schools on the NCA Portal for monitoring of their KS2 tests and external moderation of their KS2 TA (as applicable)

3.2 Important dates for 2027

Date	Activity
Friday 8 January	Deadline for all academies to have a written agreement in place with a local authority to monitor their KS2 tests and complete external moderation of their KS2 TA – academies not using their geographic local authority must confirm their chosen local authority on the NCA Portal
Monday 11	Standardisation exercise 2 live on the NCA Portal for completion

January to
Friday 22
January

Tuesday 12
January Deadline for local authorities to approve all agreements in place with academies on the NCA Portal for monitoring of their KS2 tests and external moderation of their KS2 TA

Tuesday 12
January Report available on the NCA Portal for local authorities to review the academies and independent schools that have selected them for monitoring and moderation

Monday 25
January Commentaries for standardisation exercise 2 and moderator results available for moderation managers on the NCA Portal

Wednesday
27 January Participating moderators receive email notifications to access standardisation exercise 2 commentaries and results on the NCA Portal, including the 'approval to moderate' certificate, if successful

Monday 8
February to
Friday 26
February Standardisation exercise 3 live on the NCA Portal for completion

Monday 1
March Commentaries for standardisation exercise 3 and moderator results available for moderation managers on the NCA Portal

Wednesday
3 March Participating moderators receive email notifications to access standardisation exercise 3 commentaries and results on the NCA Portal, including the 'approval to moderate' certificate, if successful

Monday 22
March 'Confirm TA submission arrangements' form available on the NCA Portal for local authorities to confirm the schools they will be submitting TA data on behalf of

Monday 26
April Deadline for local authorities to confirm the schools they will be submitting TA data on behalf of on the NCA Portal – further information will be available later in the academic year, in the 2027 guidance on [submitting KS2 TA data](#)

Friday 14
May Local authorities begin informing schools if they will receive an external moderation visit for TA

Monday 17 May	'Submit TA data' form available on the NCA Portal
Monday 7 June to Tuesday 29 June	Local authorities undertake external moderation of KS2 English writing TA
Monday 7 June	'Confirm externally moderated schools' form available for local authorities on the NCA Portal
Monday 7 June	'Submit external moderation summary data' form available for local authorities on the NCA Portal
Tuesday 29 June	Deadline to submit KS2 TA data on the NCA Portal
Friday 30 July	Deadline for local authorities to submit external moderation data for KS2 English writing on the NCA Portal

For more important dates, please also refer to the [KS2 assessment and reporting arrangements](#).

4. The purpose of teacher assessment

4.1 Different forms of teacher assessment

There are 3 main forms of TA in schools:

- day-to-day formative assessment – to inform teaching on an ongoing basis
- in-school summative assessment – to understand pupil performance at the end of a period of teaching
- end of KS2 statutory summative assessment – to understand pupil performance in relation to national expectations and comparisons

A school's assessment policy forms the basis of a teacher's judgements about what

pupils know and can do. This will provide the evidence needed for teachers to make statutory judgements against the TA frameworks. These judgements are designed only to report an outcome to DfE at the end of the key stage.

TA at the end of KS2 is statutory and helps teachers and parents understand what a pupil can do in relation to national expectations. It also enables the government to hold schools to account for the education they provide. However, pupils will have a wider range of knowledge and skills than those covered by statutory assessment. This may be evident through other forms of assessment that take place at school and should also be reported to parents.

You can find more information about the principles and purposes of assessment in the [final report of the Commission on Assessment Without Levels](#).

4.2 Data and teacher workload

Evidence to inform statutory TA should come from the teaching of core subjects and skills specified in the national curriculum. Teachers should not track or record evidence solely to show that pupils have achieved the statements within the frameworks.

A school's assessment policy should outline when it is necessary to record assessment data. In developing their policies, schools should consider minimising teacher workload so that teachers can focus their efforts on teaching. When data needs to be recorded, this should follow the principles and practices outlined in [eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management](#).

5. Making teacher assessment judgements

5.1 Overview of teacher assessment

TA is based on a broad range of evidence from across the curriculum and knowledge of how a pupil has performed over time and in a variety of contexts. It is

carried out as part of teaching and learning. Teachers must consider the pupil's written, practical and oral classwork.

Teachers may not be able to provide a full TA judgement for some pupils – for example, if they have arrived from overseas within the last 12 weeks, or because of long periods of absence. Schools will still need to include these pupils when they submit their TA data, using a relevant code (see [Teacher assessment codes](#)).

5.2 What teachers must assess

Teachers must make their TA judgements using the:

- [KS2 TA frameworks](#) in English writing and science – for pupils who have completed the relevant KS2 programmes of study and are working at the standard of national curriculum assessments
- [pre-key stage 2 standards](#) in English reading, English writing and mathematics – for pupils who are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and are engaged in subject-specific study, or who have not completed the relevant programmes of study
- [engagement model](#) – for pupils who are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and are not yet engaged in subject-specific study

The table below shows which framework to use when making TA judgements, depending on the subject and standard at which the pupil is working. [Exemplification materials](#) are also available to help teachers make their judgements if they need additional guidance.

KS2 standard	Assessment framework	English reading	Maths	English writing	Science
Pupils working at the standard of the national curriculum assessments	Teacher assessment frameworks	Not applicable	Not applicable	Yes	Yes
Pupils working below the standard of the national	Pre-key stage 2 standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	No pre-key stage standards

curriculum
assessments and
engaged in subject-
specific study

(HNM –
has not
met the
expected
standard)

For details of how to assess pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not yet engaged in subject-specific study, see [The engagement model](#).

5.3 Teacher assessment frameworks

TA frameworks contain ‘pupil can’ statements. Teachers should follow the guidance for each subject in the frameworks when making their judgements.

Teachers should be confident that pupils have met the standards preceding the one at which they judge them to be working. However, they are not required to have specific evidence for the preceding standards. Pupils’ work that demonstrates they are meeting a standard is sufficient to show they are working above the preceding standards.

Framework for English writing

The KS2 English writing framework contains 3 standards:

- working towards the expected standard
- working at the expected standard
- working at greater depth

Pupils who have not completed the programme of study or who are not yet ‘working towards the expected standard’ should be assessed using the pre-key stage standards (see [Pre-key stage standards](#)).

Framework for science

The KS2 science framework contains one standard: working at the expected standard.

A pupil who has completed the programme of study will be judged as either ‘working at the expected standard’ or ‘has not met the expected standard’. If a pupil is working below the standard of the KS2 science framework, they will be judged as

‘has not met the standard’.

5.4 ‘Pupil can’ statements

‘Pupil can’ statements are performance indicators. They give a snapshot of a pupil’s attainment at the end of the key stage. Each statement describes what a pupil working at that standard should be able to do. Teachers should follow the guidance for each framework to reach their judgement about whether a pupil has met a standard.

Qualifiers are used in some statements to indicate the extent to which pupils demonstrate the required knowledge or skill. Where qualifiers are used, they have consistent meaning:

- ‘Most’ indicates that the statement is generally met, with only occasional errors.
- ‘Many’ indicates that the statement is met frequently, but not yet consistently.
- ‘Some’ indicates that the knowledge or skill is starting to be acquired and is demonstrated correctly on occasion but is not yet consistent or frequent.

Some of the statements also include examples to clarify the required knowledge or skill. These examples do not dictate the required evidence but illustrate how that statement might be met. Teachers should refer to the national curriculum to exemplify the statements and can use exemplification materials to support them if needed (see [Exemplification materials](#)).

5.5 Gathering evidence

While the teacher’s knowledge of pupils can help inform judgements, the judgements must be based on reliable and demonstrable evidence. This ensures that judgements are as objective as possible, and consistent between classes and schools.

Evidence should come from day-to-day work in the classroom and can be drawn from a variety of sources. The type of evidence may vary for different schools, classes and pupils. A pupil’s workbook will often have all the evidence a teacher needs, but evidence might also come from projects, assessment notes, classroom tests and assessments. The form of evidence supporting a teacher’s judgement is

entirely up to the teacher, providing it meets the requirements of the frameworks.

Teachers should avoid excessive evidence gathering.

The frameworks make it clear that:

- a pupil's work in the subject being assessed may provide sufficient evidence to support the judgement, although evidence from other curriculum subjects may further support the framework being assessed
- teachers will see multiple statements evidenced across a collection of work, but sometimes a single piece of work can provide evidence for multiple statements, depending on the statement and the nature of the evidence

In English writing:

- a single, comprehensive example of writing may be sufficient to show that a pupil can “describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action”
- pupils' work which demonstrates they have met a standard is sufficient to show they are working above preceding standards, but teachers should also be confident that a pupil has met all the standards preceding the one at which they judge them to be working at – this will help assure teachers that the pupil is working at the correct standard they are judging them against
- discrete test questions will only supplement evidence that pupils have met statements – for example, a spelling test or handwriting exercise can provide additional evidence for these statements in English writing – however, if pupils do not use any of the words from the statutory lists in their day-to-day writing, evidence from these tests and exercises alone is sufficient

In science:

- one piece of work might show that a pupil can “name, locate and describe the functions of the main parts of plants, while using the observable features of plants, animals and microorganisms to group, classify and identify them into broad groups, using keys or in other ways”
- there is no requirement to have evidence from the classroom showing that pupils have met statements relating to science before the final year of the key stage
- year 6 teachers are not expected to reassess the science content taught in years 3, 4 and 5 of the national curriculum – where possible, teachers should draw on assessment judgements that were made by year 3, 4 and 5 teachers in

determining whether the pupil has grasped that science content

- a single test question may be sufficient to show that a pupil has grasped the knowledge or skill – for example, a pupil's answer in a science test might show that they can “take accurate and precise measurements”

5.6 Pre-key stage standards

Schools must use the [pre-key stage 2 standards](#) for the statutory assessment of pupils at the end of KS2 who are working below the overall standard of the national curriculum assessments and are engaged in subject-specific study, including those who:

- have not completed the KS2 programmes of study but are still moving onto key stage 3 with their current year group
- cannot communicate in English

The pre-key stage 2 standards follow the same principles as the TA frameworks. They contain ‘pupil can’ statements for teachers to assess and provide evidence against, to show that pupils have met the standard they have been awarded. Teachers should follow the guidance for each subject in the pre-key stage standards when making their judgements.

The pre-key stage 2 standards for English reading, English writing and mathematics are:

- standard 6 (working at the KS1 expected standard)
- standard 5 (working towards the KS1 expected standard)
- standard 4
- standard 3
- standard 2
- standard 1

5.7 The engagement model

Schools must use the [engagement model](#) to assess pupils who are working below

the standard of the national curriculum assessments and are not engaged in subject-specific study at the end of KS2.

It is formed of 5 interrelated areas of engagement:

- exploration
- realisation
- anticipation
- persistence
- initiation

Schools should follow the published guidance for best practice on how to use the engagement model to support teachers and staff involved in assessing pupils.

Schools have autonomy over how they implement the engagement model but should ensure that the assessments are conducted regularly throughout the academic year. This approach will help schools demonstrate whether the pupil is able to sustain the new skills, concepts and knowledge over time, rather than reflecting a snapshot of one activity or observation.

Schools are required to report to DfE which pupils have been assessed using the engagement model at the end of KS2. This helps DfE understand how many pupils are not engaged in subject-specific study and where they are being educated. However, schools are not required to submit any other data about the progress of these pupils to DfE.

5.8 Exemplification materials

[Exemplification materials](#) may help teachers when they use the statutory assessment frameworks and have to make judgements. Teachers can use the materials to help make their own TA judgements or to validate other judgements across the school. If teachers are confident in their judgements, they do not need to refer to the exemplification materials.

Exemplification materials only illustrate how ‘pupil can’ statements in the frameworks might be met. They do not dictate a particular method of teaching, or the evidence expected from the classroom, which will vary from school to school.

Local authorities may find it useful to refer to exemplification materials to support

external moderation visits. The materials show what meeting the ‘pupil can’ statements might look like, but moderators should not expect or require teachers to provide specific evidence like the examples in the documents.

6. Assessing English writing

6.1 A more flexible approach

The approach to English writing TA is different from other subjects. This difference reflects the nature of the subject and that a degree of subjectivity is needed to assess it. Teachers are therefore given more flexibility in reaching a rounded judgement about a pupil’s overall attainment in writing.

A teacher must still assess a pupil against all ‘pupil can’ statements within the standard at which they are judged to be working. A pupil’s writing should meet all the statements within that standard, since they represent the key elements of English writing within the national curriculum.

However, teachers can use their discretion to ensure that a ‘particular weakness’ does not prevent an accurate judgement of a pupil’s overall attainment. If a pupil is judged to have a ‘particular weakness’, a teacher’s professional judgement about whether the pupil has met the standard overall takes precedence over the need for the pupil to meet all ‘pupil can’ statements. This does not mean that a teacher’s professional judgement takes precedence over that of a moderator. Teachers must be able to justify their decisions with evidence during moderation.

When a teacher deems that a pupil meets a standard despite a ‘particular weakness’, they must have good reason to judge that this is the most accurate standard to describe the pupil’s overall attainment. The reason for this is likely to vary from pupil to pupil but, in all instances, teachers must be confident that the weakness is an exception in terms of the pupil’s overall attainment.

A ‘particular weakness’ can relate to a part or the whole of a statement, or statements. A ‘particular weakness’ may relate to a learning difficulty, but it is not limited to this. Similarly, a learning difficulty does not automatically constitute a ‘particular weakness’ that would prevent an accurate judgement. The same overall standard must be applied equally to all pupils. This approach applies to English

writing only.

During moderation, the teacher should use the professional discussion to explain to the moderator where a 'particular weakness' has been applied to reach an accurate judgement of the pupil's overall attainment.

6.2 Independent writing

Teachers' judgements must only be based on writing that a pupil produced independently.

Teachers should keep in mind that the national curriculum states writing can also be produced through discussion with the teacher and peers. A piece of independent writing may therefore provide evidence of a pupil demonstrating some 'pupil can' statements independently, but not others – for example, a pupil may produce an independent piece of writing that meets many of the statements relating to composition and the use of grammar but does not demonstrate independent spelling. This could be because the teacher has provided the pupil with domain-specific words or corrected their spelling.

Teachers may use success criteria in lessons to help them judge whether a pupil has met the objectives for a piece of writing and to help pupils understand what they have learnt. Using success criteria does not mean that a pupil's writing is not independent, providing they are limited to describing the task and the intended overall purpose and effect of the writing, rather than modelling or over-scaffolding the expected outcome. Furthermore, using detailed success criteria as a teaching tool for one aspect of writing could still provide independent evidence of other 'pupil can' statements which have not been mentioned.

Writing is likely to be independent if it:

- emerges from a text, topic, visit or curriculum experience in which pupils have had opportunities to discuss and rehearse what is to be written about
- enables pupils to use their own ideas and provides them with an element of choice – for example, writing from the perspective of a character they have chosen themselves
- has been edited, if required, by the pupil without the support of the teacher, although this may be in response to self, peer or group evaluation
- is produced by pupils who have, if required, sought out classroom resources,

such as a dictionary or thesaurus, without being prompted to do so by the teacher

Writing is not independent if it has been:

- modelled or heavily scaffolded – as part of external moderation, local authority moderators can discuss where they find modelled or scaffolded writing, and they may ask for further examples of a pupil's work to support the standard and judgement
- copied or paraphrased, including producing work that demonstrates an over-reliance on a model text
- edited or rewritten because of direct intervention by a teacher or other adult – for example, when the pupil has been directed to change specific words for greater impact, where incorrect or omitted punctuation has been indicated, or when incorrectly spelt words have been identified by an adult for the pupil to correct
- edited or rewritten following feedback from large language models or other forms of artificial intelligence (AI) – teachers should make it clear to moderators where they have used AI programmes to provide feedback, so this work can be excluded from the pupil's collection of writing
- produced with the support of electronic aids that automatically provide correct spelling, synonyms, punctuation or predictive text – if the electronic aid is turned off, such as spell check and grammar in a word programme, this would be considered independent
- produced, either in full or in part, using large language models or other forms of AI – using this type of writing to reach TA judgements could result in the school being investigated for maladministration
- supported by detailed success criteria that specifically direct pupils what to include, or where to include it, in their writing – for example, directing them to include specific vocabulary, grammatical features or punctuation

Schools that subscribe to writing schemes or frameworks should ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to produce independent pieces of writing in line with the guidance above. Teachers should also ensure that they are able to provide evidence that writing is independent and fulfils the 'pupil can' statements.

6.3 Spelling

A pupil's standard in spelling should be evident throughout their writing. However,

spelling tests can provide additional evidence of pupils' independent spelling.

When assessing pupils' writing, phonetically plausible but incorrect spellings should be regarded as errors unless the statement makes it explicit that they can be accepted.

The TA frameworks refer to the word lists within the spelling appendix to the [national curriculum](#) to exemplify words that pupils should be able to spell. At KS2, the lists for years 3, 4, 5 and 6 within the national curriculum are statutory. These are a mixture of words pupils frequently use in their writing and words they often spell incorrectly. As these form part of the curriculum, and should be assessed on an ongoing basis, they should generally be evident in pupils' writing. However, if pupils do not use any of the words from the statutory lists in their day-to-day writing, evidence from tests and exercises alone is sufficient.

Teachers should be mindful of the guidance detailed in the [Teacher assessment frameworks](#) section when assessing spelling. They should be confident that pupils have met the standards preceding the one at which they judge them to be working. This includes ensuring pupils assessed as 'working towards the expected standard' meet the requirements at pre-key stage standard 6.

6.4 Handwriting

A pupil's standard of handwriting should be evident throughout their writing. When assessing it, teachers should consider evidence from a pupil's independent writing to judge whether the statements have been met. Handwriting books or handwriting exercises can provide additional evidence, but these would not be sufficient on their own. Although computers and digital devices can be used in day-to-day classroom practice, sufficient handwritten examples meeting the 'pupil can' statements should be available to support TA judgements.

Pupils who are physically unable to write may use a word processor. Pupils who are physically able to write may also choose to word process some of their writing or use another method of recording, where appropriate. However, when assessing a pupil's writing, teachers should still be mindful of the 'pupil can' statements relating to handwriting. When pupils are using a word processor, it is advised that the spelling and grammar check functions, as well as any access to large language models, are disabled. The teacher can then verify that the pupil is able to meet the relevant 'pupil can' statements independently.

7. Assessing pupils with disabilities

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. All schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities.

When teachers assess pupils against the 'pupil can' statements, they should base their judgements on what a pupil with a disability can do when reasonable adjustments are in place – for example, reducing anxiety by providing a quiet area or allowing more time to process instructions.

If a pupil has a disability that prevents them from demonstrating attainment in the way described in a 'pupil can' statement, their individual method of communication or learning applies – for example, using a visual phonics system for a pupil with a hearing impairment, or using a computer for a pupil with a visual impairment because they cannot read back their handwriting. Teachers should ensure that all pupils can demonstrate attainment with reasonable adjustments in place, but the standard of the assessment should not be compromised and must be met in an equivalent way.

If a pupil has a disability that physically prevents them from demonstrating a 'pupil can' statement altogether, even with reasonable adjustments in place, these statements can be excluded from the TA judgement – for example, handwriting if the pupil is physically restricted when writing, or phonics if a pupil is hearing impaired and unable to make use of a visual phonics system. Teachers should use their professional discretion in making such judgements for each pupil and be able to justify these during moderation.

8. Forms of moderation

Moderation allows teachers to benchmark judgements while ensuring consistent standards and reliable outcomes. In the context of TA, there are 3 forms of moderation:

- Internal moderation is a non-statutory but vital process conducted in schools. This should be a collaborative process, undertaken throughout the academic year, and normally with colleagues across key stages. This supports the quality assurance

of TA judgements and provides an opportunity for professional development. We strongly encourage moderation of TA outcomes internally, particularly where schools have more than one class containing year 6 pupils.

- Peer moderation is where schools moderate their TA judgements with other schools, either locally or across other networks, including within multi-academy trusts. Although non-statutory, this is something STA strongly favours, as it enables teachers to consider a wider range of professional perspectives, strengthens the consistency of TA judgements and provides valuable opportunities for professional discussion and development.
- Local authorities conduct statutory external moderation of English writing outcomes. This is to validate judgements and ensure they are consistent with national standards (see [External moderation](#)).

When moderating TA judgements internally or with other schools, schools should ensure that moderation is based on the statutory teacher assessment framework. All tools and comparative judgement approaches should not be relied upon to make or moderate TA judgements, as they are not a substitute for teachers' professional judgement against the framework.

9. External moderation

9.1 External moderation of teacher assessment

External moderation is statutory. It gives confidence that schools' TA judgements are accurate and consistent with national standards, as specified in the [TA frameworks](#) and [exemplification materials](#).

In the academic year 2026 to 2027, local authorities will:

- inform schools from Friday 14 May 2027 onwards if they are going to receive an external moderation visit
- carry out moderation visits from Monday 7 June to Tuesday 29 June 2027
- record the schools moderated, and the outcome of the moderation, on the NCA Portal by Friday 30 July 2027 (see [Submission of external moderation data](#))

Headteachers and local authorities must refer to the guidance to ensure that the essential requirements are met and robust moderation processes are followed. There will be in-system guidance available on the NCA Portal for all online moderation activities.

External moderation is a collaborative process between the local authority's moderator and the school. It offers the opportunity to discuss judgements on pupils' performance against the requirements of the TA frameworks.

9.2 Local authorities

Local authorities are required, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, to validate a sample of KS2 TA judgements in English writing. External moderation will confirm that KS2 English writing TA judgements are accurate and consistent with national standards. This ensures that schools are assessing accurately, and the system is fair to all pupils.

Each year, local authorities are required to externally moderate at least 25% of maintained schools and 25% of academies and participating independent schools that opt in to local authorities' external moderation provisions. However, this may fluctuate year by year depending on a number of factors, including planned revisits, revisits requested by STA, or late-notice school closures impacting scheduled moderation. Local authorities must also ensure that all schools they are responsible for are moderated at least once every 4 years or more frequently if required. You can find examples of when more frequent additional visits may be appropriate in [Local authority responsibilities](#).

Where a school selected for external moderation informs the local authority that it has no pupils assessed as working at the standards outlined in the KS2 English writing TA framework standards being moderated, there is no requirement for the local authority to carry out a moderation visit. However, if the selected school has any pupils whose attainment is borderline between the pre-key stage standards and working towards the expected standard, the local authority may decide that a moderation visit is appropriate. In scenarios where a school selected for moderation has no eligible pupils and no visit takes place, this should be recorded as an attempted moderation and may be included within the local authority's 25% moderation requirement.

Local authorities should maintain a record of moderated schools. Since the academic year 2025 to 2026, local authorities have been required to confirm on the

NCA Portal which schools they have moderated in the year. For all schools moderated, local authorities will be asked to submit summary data for each standard of attainment. Over time, this information will enable local authorities to use the NCA Portal to identify which schools are due for external moderation.

Where local authorities are not using a face-to-face model for external moderation, they should be careful not to impose additional burdens on schools and must comply with [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#) when pupils' work is shared.

If the moderator does not meet with the teacher in person, they must satisfy themselves that the teacher's judgements are accurate and consistent with national standards. This means the moderator must be able to:

- check pupils' work
- hold a professional discussion with the year 6 teacher
- expand the sample, if needed, until comfortable that judgements are representative of the standards the pupils have been awarded
- check that all required forms are signed

Confirming moderation agreements on the NCA Portal

Local authorities must use the NCA Portal to confirm which academies and participating independent schools they have agreements in place with to carry out external moderation. Maintained schools will automatically be assigned to their geographic local authority.

When an academy or independent school selects a local authority for moderation, the local authority will be notified by the NCA Portal and should approve or reject the selection. Approval should only be granted once there is a written agreement in place.

From the academic year 2026 to 2027, local authorities will have an additional 2 working days to review all agreement requests on the NCA Portal. This is to ensure that all nominations can be appropriately actioned and the data we hold is an accurate reflection of the written agreements put in place with:

- participating independent schools by Friday 4 December 2026
- academies and free schools by Friday 8 January 2027

If an academy or independent school has nominated the local authority within the deadline but is yet to put an agreement in place, the local authority must discuss this

with the academy as a matter of urgency. If a local authority ultimately rejects the selection on the NCA Portal, the local authority will need to provide a reason as to why an agreement could not be reached. Where the academy selection is reverted to the geographic local authority due to a failed agreement with a non-geographic local authority, the geographic local authority must ensure they implement an agreement and the academy is included within the schools considered for moderation.

In the scenario where a local authority rejects a request from a school outside of its geographic area after the respective deadlines for nominations, the school will be automatically assigned to its geographic local authority on the NCA Portal. That local authority will then be required to implement a written agreement with the affected school as soon as reasonably possible. Requests to update moderation agreement data after the deadline will only be permitted in the most exceptional circumstances.

As local authorities are required to deliver moderation, they must ensure that all academies within their geographic area have a moderation agreement in place with a local authority.

From Tuesday 12 January, local authorities will be able to access a report on the NCA Portal detailing:

- the academies and independent schools that have selected them for moderation
- the academies in their geographic area that have selected a non-geographic local authority for moderation

9.3 Academies (including free schools and special schools with a relevant cohort)

Academies must choose a local authority for external moderation of their KS2 TA. They must have a written agreement in place with their chosen local authority and confirm on the NCA Portal if they intend to use a non-geographic local authority by Friday 8 January 2027.

Academies must only nominate their chosen local authority on the NCA Portal once a written agreement has been put in place. Academies using their geographic local authority for external moderation do not need to confirm this on the NCA Portal but must ensure a written agreement is in place with the local authority by the deadline.

The chosen local authority will be notified and should provide approval on the NCA Portal if a written agreement is in place. An academy must not nominate a local authority until they have an agreement in place. However, if an academy has nominated a local authority within the deadline but is yet to put an agreement in place, the local authority will discuss this with the academy before deciding whether to reject the selection on the NCA Portal.

Academies should also inform their geographic local authority if they intend to use, and put in place an agreement with, an alternative local authority for moderation.

After Friday 8 January, academies will no longer be able to choose a non-geographic local authority and must put an agreement in place with their geographic local authority. Academies that do not reach an agreement with a non-geographic local authority by the deadline will remain assigned to their geographic local authority on the NCA Portal.

If a school became an academy on or after 1 September 2026, it will be part of its geographic local authority's arrangements for external moderation in the academic year 2026 to 2027. It cannot select an alternative local authority until the academic year 2027 to 2028.

Academies may be charged for the local authority's moderation services and should ensure costs for all moderation activities, including potential remoderation, are agreed with the moderating local authority in advance. DfE provides funding to support academies with these costs (see [Funding for external moderation](#)).

Academies must also give the local authority the record and outcome of their most recent external moderation visit.

9.4 Independent schools (including special schools with a relevant cohort)

Participating independent schools that wish to compare their KS2 TA in English writing with local or national data must:

- have a written agreement in place with their chosen local authority to undertake external moderation of TA
- confirm their arrangements on the NCA Portal by Friday 4 December

Independent schools must only nominate their chosen local authority on the NCA

Portal once a written agreement has been put in place. The selected local authority will be notified and should provide approval on the NCA Portal if a written agreement is in place. If an agreement is not in place, the local authority will reject the selection on the NCA Portal, providing an appropriate reason.

An independent school can only claim that its results are comparable with national or local results if it has taken part in the local authority external moderation process and has been moderated in the subsequent years of its participation.

Participating independent schools must also follow the same guidance, quality assurance and processes as maintained schools and academies if they wish to make these comparisons. Where a moderation agreement is not in place, KS2 data and results may be annulled.

9.5 Funding for external moderation

Each local authority receives direct funding from DfE to moderate maintained schools.

Local authorities should factor in the costs of remoderation and appeals at the beginning of the year as part of the funding they retain centrally for maintained schools. They should not charge maintained schools an additional fee if the school:

- requests remoderation for pupils who have the potential to meet the next standard of attainment
- submits an appeal following changes to judgements during an external moderation visit

You can find more information about:

- retaining funding in the [pre-16 schools funding guidance for local authorities](#)
- the provision of services and facilities by local authorities in the [schemes for financing schools](#)

Academies also receive direct funding from DfE for KS2 statutory external moderation. However, in the first year following a maintained school's conversion to an academy, the geographic local authority still receives the funding. Subsequent payments are made to the academy every 4 years.

Costs for appeals submitted by academies and participating independent schools

should be confirmed as part of the initial agreement between the school and local authority.

9.6 Local agreements

Where local authorities inform schools of external moderation arrangements that lie outside the scope of this guidance, these are by local agreement only and must be clearly defined as non-statutory. Local agreements are in addition to, and do not replace, statutory guidance.

Local agreements should be drawn up in consultation with, and with the agreement of, all stakeholders and revised annually. A local agreement should be signed by both the local authority and school. Schools that do not want to enter into a local agreement can instead ask the local authority to revert to the statutory moderation arrangements. All schools with a local agreement should have a written copy of this agreement from the local authority.

9.7 Preparing for an external moderation visit

Moderation visits will take place between Monday 7 June and Tuesday 29 June 2027. They should not involve any teachers working outside normal school hours.

Local authorities

Local authorities must tell schools from Friday 14 May 2027 onwards if they are going to be moderated. Local authorities must give at least 2 school days' notice of an external moderation visit and let the school know who will be attending. In most cases, we would expect only one local authority moderator per visit. However, there may be additional local authority moderators conducting the visit if the:

- school has a large cohort
- local authority moderator is being quality assured
- visit forms part of moderator induction

Local authorities must make the school aware of this in advance.

Local authorities are not required to ask schools for pupil data in advance of an external moderation visit, but they may ask for this as part of their local agreement.

During the visit, we would expect schools to provide details of pupils within the cohort, categorised by the standard awarded.

Local authorities must:

- confirm arrangements with schools including the process, date of the visit, and the location if moderation is held at a venue other than the school – we strongly encourage local authorities to outline the pupils they plan to moderate with schools at the earliest opportunity
- ensure that, if external moderation takes place at a venue other than the school or is not conducted face to face, all statutory requirements for a school visit are in place
- conduct any school visits in accordance with government advice and [UK Health Security Agency](#) guidance
- ensure that any additional local authority arrangements are defined as non-statutory, in the form of a written local agreement
- ensure that the school is aware of the appeals process

Schools

The best way for a school to prepare for an external moderation visit is to have robust internal assessment processes. These should be based on teachers' understanding of the TA frameworks and collaboration with other schools, where possible.

Schools must ensure that:

- judgements against the TA frameworks for the cohort are available for external moderation, categorised by standard, and subjected to internal moderation before a local authority external moderation visit
- evidence of pupils' work is available for external moderation, to demonstrate attainment of the 'pupil can' statements at the standard the pupil has been judged to have met – this should be in the form of day-to-day work

9.8 During an external moderation visit

The local authority moderator will review work from a representative sample of pupils from the cohort. The sample, chosen by the local authority, must include a selection of pupils assessed at all standards within the KS2 TA frameworks. This does not

include pupils assessed using the pre-key stage standards or the engagement model.

Local authorities

Local authority moderators must:

- ensure that all individuals present at the external moderation visit are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities, especially when more than one local authority moderator is present
- ensure that a clear timetable is agreed before the visit, including when teachers are required and when they can be released
- select an initial representative sample of 15% of pupils from those working above pre-key stage standards across the cohort, ensuring pupils are chosen proportionately from all classes – select a minimum of 5 pupils if there is a single class, and moderate all pupils if the entire cohort is less than the minimum
- ensure the school receives moderation as per the required moderation cycle
- review evidence for each pupil in the sample against the 'pupil can' statements from the TA frameworks within the standard they have met
- not dictate what schools' evidence should look like or how it is presented – in particular, local authorities should not expect portfolios or checklists of evidence
- hold a professional discussion with year 6 teachers to understand how the TA judgements have been reached and to discuss any gaps in evidence against the TA frameworks
- provide the opportunity for year 6 teachers to articulate their understanding of the standards as set out in the TA frameworks
- be satisfied that pupils' work is independent by using the criteria in [Making teacher assessment judgements](#) and [Assessing English writing](#) – if a pupil has received additional support, this should be clarified by the school
- ensure they refer the school to the local authority's appeals process if any judgements have been amended

If local authorities need further guidance when reviewing evidence, they can refer to the [KS2 exemplification materials](#).

If the evidence from pupils' work is not sufficient to support the teachers' judgements, the local authority moderator should request to see other examples and expand the sample, as needed, until they are comfortable that judgements are representative of the standards pupils have been awarded. If the lack of evidence to

support TA judgements is systematic, the local authority moderator must discuss this with their moderation manager to decide on whether to report this to sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk.

Schools

Schools must:

- ensure that local authority moderators have a quiet area to conduct the external moderation visit
- provide moderators with a breakdown of TA judgements against the TA frameworks for the cohort, categorised by standard
- meet requests from local authority moderators for samples of pupils' day-to-day classwork or any other information reasonably required
- ensure that evidence demonstrates each of the 'pupil can' statements within the standard at which pupils have been judged
- ensure that year 6 teachers are released for all or part of the visit for a professional discussion of the evidence presented
- prioritise and limit the number of school representatives who attend the professional discussion to those who have immediate understanding of the pupil's ability and judgement awarded, to help maintain an effective discussion
- encourage teachers to draw on examples of pupils' work from across the curriculum to support their judgements, although work in the subject being assessed alone may produce the depth of evidence required
- identify independent work, and clarify the degree of support a pupil has received

9.9 The professional discussion

To confirm that a pupil within the sample has met the specified standards within the TA frameworks, the local authority moderator must review the pupil's work and hold a professional discussion with the year 6 teacher. This professional discussion is essential and should be central to the process. It should be a positive discussion, allowing teachers to talk through their judgements, using evidence to support their decisions and articulate their understanding of the standards. It should establish a shared understanding of how judgements have been reached and give the opportunity to discuss any gaps in evidence against the TA frameworks.

The pupil's work must show that they consistently demonstrate attainment in line with

the wording of the 'pupil can' statements within the standard they have met, taking account of any qualifiers. This does not mean that the pupil must demonstrate the 'pupil can' statement all the time. Pupils are likely to have improved over the course of the year and may make occasional mistakes with something the teacher knows they are secure in.

While teachers must assess their pupils against all aspects of the English writing frameworks, they can exercise professional judgement to determine that a pupil has met a standard overall. When a teacher deems that a pupil meets a standard in English writing despite a 'particular weakness', the moderator should scrutinise whether there was good reason to reach this judgement. This simply means that, through a professional discussion, it is clear that the pupil's weakness is an exception to their overall attainment, and that the standard at which they are being judged has been convincingly met.

9.10 At the end of an external moderation visit

Local authority moderators must provide the school with the local authority's completed record of the visit, which includes:

- formal feedback to the headteacher or a representative of the senior leadership team
- the agreed, validated judgements for all moderated pupils
- any revised judgements, if the local authority moderator deemed that evidence for the standard a pupil was judged to have met was insufficient, including the implications for similar judgements made for pupils outside the sample
- any revised judgements, if the local authority moderator considered the pupil to be working at a higher standard, including the implications for similar judgements made for pupils outside the sample
- any decisions that the school intends to appeal
- any concerns that require further action by the school or local authority, such as a remoderation
- details of next steps for any pupils who will be remoderated (see [Remoderation](#))

Where the school submits TA data that does not match the agreed judgements, local authorities should consider the impact of this and the steps they have taken to resolve the issue with the school. Following this, if the school does not submit the

data as agreed during moderation, the local authority should raise this with sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk.

The record of the visit must be signed by the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, and the local authority moderator. At the end of the moderation visit, schools must:

- ensure that the headteacher, or delegated member of staff, is available to meet with the local authority moderator to receive formal feedback and to sign the record of the visit
- ensure that any changes to TA judgements because of an external moderation visit are accurately reflected in their final submitted TA data, including where local authorities have requested amendments to TA judgements

10. Remoderation

Remoderation only applies where pupils have the potential to meet the next standard before the deadline for data submission. It is not a method of further moderation to avoid appeals, nor is it part of the appeals process.

At the time of the external moderation visit, there may be pupils who have not yet demonstrated a small number of the 'pupil can' statements for the next standard and have the potential to meet it. If the school and the local authority moderator agree that these pupils will be able to consistently demonstrate the relevant knowledge or skills after the external moderation visit, but before the deadline for TA data submission on Tuesday 29 June 2027, then remoderation can be undertaken. The local authority's record of the initial visit should clearly set out the next steps for these pupils.

If a school's TA judgements are accepted in full by the local authority moderator, any pupils who the school and the moderator agree will be remoderated can have evidence internally moderated by the school without the need for a local authority review of evidence. This also applies to pupils outside of the representative sample.

If the school's TA judgements are not fully accepted by the local authority moderator, any pupils who the school and the local authority moderator agree will be remoderated must have their evidence reviewed by the local authority before submission of the TA data. This also applies to pupils outside of the representative sample.

Local authorities must agree remoderation dates with schools in advance, so that they can make plans for teachers who need to be involved to be out of school, as needed.

11. Pupils outside the moderation sample

When moderating, the focus is on pupils who are part of the representative sample. The sample is indicative of the rest of the cohort's judgements. Moderation is about ensuring the accuracy of the teachers' judgements and understanding of the standards. Therefore, judgements made for the pupils in the moderation sample will always have implications for similar judgements made for pupils outside that sample.

Where issues with the application of the standards are identified, the moderator will make changes to the standards awarded to the pupils in the sample. The moderator and teacher will need to expand the sample to discuss, but not necessarily review in detail, the evidence for any similar pupils in the cohort.

Any potential changes to judgements between external moderation and the TA data submission, including remoderation, must be noted on the local authority's record of their visit.

Local authorities should consider and minimise the recording of pupil identifiable data, taking UK GDPR into account, without impacting their ability to track judgement reviews or changes.

12. Appeals

The local authority should have a clearly defined process for undertaking the external moderation visit, including addressing any disagreement about the standards awarded. Where the local authority and school cannot reach consensus on the accuracy of an assessment, the local authority must have appeal arrangements in place for schools. These should include escalation within the local authority, followed by a second external moderation visit or review by a different local authority.

Local authorities must:

- make schools aware of their appeal arrangements

- ensure local authority moderators refer to the appeals process during the external moderation visit, if any judgements have been amended
- not charge schools for any appeals submitted
- ensure that any appeal is conducted confidentially and by staff who have been approved by STA to moderate
- notify STA of any appeals that cannot be resolved before the TA data submission deadline

Schools must provide evidence to the local authority to support any appeal before it is processed. This can only be based on pupils' work seen by the local authority moderator during the external moderation visit.

13. Data submission

13.1 Data submission dates and responsibilities

Maintained schools, academies, special schools and participating independent schools must [submit TA data](#) for all pupils at the end of KS2, including those assessed using the pre-key stage standards and the engagement model, by Tuesday 29 June 2027.

Schools must:

- submit accurate TA data on the NCA Portal by Tuesday 29 June 2027, unless their local authority has agreed to submit it on their behalf
- not submit their data until the external moderation visit has taken place, if they were selected
- not resubmit data after Tuesday 29 June 2027, unless the original submission failed due to outstanding errors, or unless STA or the local authority requests this – any resubmission without authorisation must be reported to sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk
- include TA data for every pupil registered by the school to take a KS2 national curriculum test, even if they did not subsequently take it
- include TA data for every pupil registered as working below the overall standard of

one or more of the KS2 tests

Local authorities must:

- have a defined data validation process, using local intelligence to investigate any unexpected patterns of attainment
- have a process which ensures that all pupil evidence provided for external remoderation is reviewed by the local authority and that only the local authority can confirm the final TA judgement for that pupil
- have a process to analyse schools' submitted TA data to check that it matches external moderation decisions – this should be carried out by the local authority responsible for moderation, including any nominated non-geographic local authority (this process should not be used if the school has permission to remoderate without local authority review)
- not request TA data from schools before midday on Thursday 17 June 2027, to allow sufficient time to complete all moderation activities ahead of data submission
- escalate any concerns about the integrity of the assessment and the validity of the assessment outcomes to sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk
- submit TA data on the NCA Portal by Tuesday 29 June 2027, where they have agreed to submit this on behalf of their schools
- record the schools externally moderated within the academic year, and submit moderation summary data for all moderation visits, including data where the sample has been expanded, on the NCA Portal by Friday 30 July 2027 (see [Submission of external moderation data](#))

Academies

Academies must report TA data in line with the arrangements in their funding agreements.

Independent schools and non-maintained special schools

Independent schools that wish to publish and compare their national curriculum assessment results with local or national data, and non-maintained special schools participating in the assessment and reporting arrangements, should submit TA data on the NCA Portal in the same way as maintained schools.

13.2 Pupils who change schools

TA data for a pupil must be submitted by the school that the pupil was enrolled at on Monday 10 May 2027 (the start of KS2 test week). This means that, if a pupil:

- joins your school on or after Monday 10 May 2027, your school is required to submit TA data for them
- leaves your school before Monday 10 May 2027, your school is not required to submit TA data for them

If a pupil previously attended a non-participating school, or was electively home educated (EHE), and changes school:

- during KS2 test week, the receiving school must submit the TA data for them
- after KS2 test week, they can no longer be registered for the tests or TA, and no data will be expected

13.3 How teacher assessment data will be used

DfE will use TA data to calculate KS2 school performance measures for the academic year 2026 to 2027. DfE intends to publish the normal suite of KS2 accountability measures at school level in performance tables. Primary progress and attainment measures will be published as usual. You can find more information in the [primary school accountability guidance](#).

KS2 school performance data for the academic year 2026 to 2027 will be shared securely with primary schools, academy trusts and local authorities for school improvement purposes, and with Ofsted to inform inspection.

14. Maladministration

In relation to KS2 TA, the term 'maladministration' refers to any act that:

- affects the integrity, security or confidentiality of the statutory TAs

- could lead to assessment outcomes that do not reflect pupils' unaided work

STA has a statutory duty to investigate any matter brought to its attention relating to the accuracy or correctness of any pupil's TA outcomes. For further information on what specific activities are considered maladministration of KS2 TA and the process that STA follows when investigating allegations, refer to the [maladministration investigation procedures](#).

As part of an investigation into maladministration of KS2 TA, STA may ask local authorities to undertake a school visit. This is outlined in the guidance for local authorities [carrying out maladministration visits](#) on behalf of STA.

You should report concerns about the integrity of the KS2 TA outcomes, including allegations of maladministration, to sta.maladministration@education.gov.uk or the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

15. Teacher assessment codes

Schools must assess all pupils in English writing and science and provide a valid code for them when submitting TA data.

Schools must also assess pupils in English reading and mathematics where they are working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and provide a valid code for them when submitting TA data.

The table below outlines which codes to use when submitting TA data, followed by the descriptions of each code in a separate table:

KS2 subject assessed	Pupils working at the standard of the national curriculum assessments	Pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and engaged in subject-specific study	Pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum assessments and not yet engaged in subject-specific study	Pupils not assessed this academic year
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English reading	Not applicable	PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK6	EM	A
Mathematics	Not applicable	PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK6	EM	A
English writing	GDS, EXS, WTS	PK1, PK2, PK3, PK4, PK5, PK6	EM	A, L, F, P
Science	EXS, HNM	HNM	HNM	A, L, F, P

The table below includes a description of each code:

Code Description

GDS Working at greater depth

EXS Working at the expected standard

WTS Working towards the expected standard

HNM Has not met the expected standard

PK6 Pre-key stage standard 6

PK5 Pre-key stage standard 5

PK4 Pre-key stage standard 4

PK3 Pre-key stage standard 3

PK2 Pre-key stage standard 2

PK1 Pre-key stage standard 1

EM Working below the level of the national curriculum and not yet engaged in subject-specific study

A Absent for long periods, recently arrived, or not enough information to provide a TA judgement

L Pupil has left the school

F Pupil will reach the end of the programme of study and complete the key

stage in a future year

- P Pupil completed the key stage in a previous year and a TA judgement has already been submitted

16. Additional moderation management guidance for local authorities

16.1 Local authority responsibilities

Local authorities must:

- be accountable to STA, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, for the delivery of their statutory duties in relation to external moderation of KS2 English writing TA
- have a named, accountable local authority officer who is strategically responsible for planning, implementing and quality assuring external moderation of KS2 English writing TA
- keep the contact details of their senior manager (accountable officer) and external moderation team (including moderation managers and moderators) up to date on the NCA Portal
- have a full internal plan that details how the local authority will deliver its statutory duties for external moderation of KS2 English writing TA – the plan must address any previously identified areas for development, either through a lessons learned process or from an external moderation visit
- base their sample of schools for external moderation on their own local intelligence
- respond to STA's request to conduct a school visit as part of a maladministration investigation to gather relevant information on TA processes

Local authorities should be mindful of selecting schools repeatedly. A 4-year cycle should be in place, but additional external moderation may take place more frequently if needed. Non-exhaustive examples for this include:

- teachers who are new to year 6 teaching, such as newly qualified teachers or experienced teachers who are new to year 6 teaching
- a new senior leadership team, such as a new headteacher
- schools who have a year 6 cohort where in previous years they did not, particularly within the 4-year moderation cycle
- concerns from previous local authority visits
- concerns from previously submitted data or test outcome comparisons
- newly converted academies
- Ofsted concerns
- STA notification of concerns

Local authorities must also:

- ensure academies and participating independent schools that have opted in to their externally moderated provision are included at least once every 4 years or more frequently if required – any school changing local authority providers must give the new provider a copy of the outcomes of their most recent external moderation visit
- maintain an accurate record of external moderation visits, including the reasons for each visit and frequency of visits
- record external moderation data on the NCA Portal (see [Submission of external moderation data](#))
- ensure their external moderators do not visit schools where they have a potential or perceived conflict of interest

16.2 Recruitment of local authority moderators

Local authorities must recruit an external moderation team with appropriate and recent experience of KS2 English writing. They must also train and quality assure moderators, so that external moderation is delivered consistently and accurately against the standards within the TA frameworks. Moderation visits must be conducted impartially, and any conflicts of interest must be managed.

All local authority moderators must:

- be qualified teachers, with recent and relevant experience of KS2 English writing

assessment and internal or external moderation

- successfully complete STA's [standardisation process](#) for moderation of KS2 English writing

They must also be able to:

- systematically review evidence against the TA frameworks and adhere to STA's guidance
- manage a professional discussion with teachers about the evidence presented and how a pupil's work meets the standard
- discuss and explain why a school's TA judgements cannot be validated, where appropriate
- provide accurate written and verbal feedback to the teacher and headteacher

16.3 Standardisation and approval to moderate

All moderators who wish to undertake moderation activities in the academic year 2026 to 2027 must pass a standardisation exercise to gain STA's approval to moderate. Since the 2025 to 2026 academic year, all standardisation activities take place on the NCA Portal.

Moderation managers are responsible for ensuring all participating moderators:

- are set up with an account on the NCA Portal
- are invited to complete a standardisation exercise on the NCA Portal

Local authorities should ensure that all standardisation exercises are conducted in a controlled environment at a date and time specified by the local authority.

There are 3 standardisation exercises in total, available to moderation managers and prospective moderators. Each moderator is allowed a maximum of 2 attempts across the 3 exercises. The NCA Portal will track these attempts, to ensure the limit is not exceeded.

When completing a standardisation exercise, moderators should not assume that the exercise includes one collection from each of the standards. Each collection should be judged individually.

Once the standardisation process opens, local authorities will be able to access a report on the NCA Portal showing moderator participation, pass rates and fail rates for their area. This will help local authorities confirm whether they have recruited enough moderators for the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

After completion of a standardisation exercise, the system will automatically mark the exercise, return results and issue 'approval to moderate' certificates to successful moderators. Results will be released to moderation managers first, to give them time to review and discuss outcomes before the results are released directly to moderators 2 days later.

In the academic year 2026 to 2027, we will be continuing to use large language models to assist with the creation of standardisation material and using this in exercises 2 and 3. The materials developed with the assistance of large language models will solely be used for the purpose of evaluating moderators' understanding of the KS2 English writing TA framework.

Local authorities must have a robust recruitment, training and quality-assurance process to support all moderators. They must ensure they recruit an adequate number of moderators to meet their external moderation requirements. In doing so, they should consider the pass rates of moderators and have a contingency plan in place to offset against the average exercise failure rates observed in previous years.

Self-guided training materials from 2021, 2022 and 2023, as well as guidance on navigating the new system, are available on the NCA Portal. Local authorities can download the materials and incorporate them in their own training, or individual moderators can access them for self-guided learning. Additional training videos are available on [STA's YouTube playlist](#). The training materials produced by STA are extensive, and local authorities should use them in a way that best suits their training needs.

We will not publish any further training materials or hold face-to-face training events in the academic year 2026 to 2027.

You can find more information in the [teacher assessment moderation: standardisation and training process](#).

16.4 Submission of external moderation data

From the academic year 2026 to 2027, all local authorities will be required to record

the schools they have externally moderated and submit moderation summary data for KS2 English writing on the NCA Portal.

For all schools moderated in the academic year, local authorities will be asked to submit summary data for each standard of attainment, for all pupils moderated, including where the sample has been expanded, indicating how many judgements were:

- agreed with
- downgraded to EXS, WTS or PKS
- upgraded to WTS, EXS or GDS

In accordance with the statutory requirements, we expect local authorities to record this data for at least 25% of maintained schools, and 25% of academies and participating independent schools that opt in to the local authorities' external moderation provisions. Over time, this data will enable local authorities to use the NCA Portal to identify which schools are due for external moderation in the relevant 4-year cycle.

The collection of this summary data will enable STA to better understand the impact of external moderation at a national level and to inform future research. The data will be used to identify national trends and patterns in moderation outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness and consistency of the moderation process over time. It is not collected to scrutinise the performance of individual local authorities, moderators, schools or teachers, and it will not be used to monitor or compare individual moderation decisions.

This data will however provide assurance to STA that schools are moderated at appropriate intervals as well as evidence for any audit of the grants paid to academies and local authorities for external moderation activities.

17. Contact us

If you have any questions about this guidance, you can contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or at assessments@education.gov.uk.

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