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Dear Principal

STATUTORY KEY STAGE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS 2024-25

As you know, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, End of Key Stage Assessment arrangements were formally disapplied in 2020 and continued to be so during the period of the pandemic to reduce the burden on teaching staff during this difficult time.

The Department is currently progressing a Review of Statutory Key Stage Assessment (the “Review”). The Review was a commitment under The Pay and Workload Agreement in April 2020 (TNC 2020/01) and had also been paused in 2020 owing to the pandemic. The Review will consider in detail the arrangements for Statutory Key Stage Assessment going forward and we look forward to engaging with you as it progresses.

As an interim measure in 2024-25, the Department wishes to begin again to gather information at a system level on our children’s performance in literacy and numeracy. You will appreciate how important this is following the period of disruption during the pandemic and given the time lapse since information has been available at a whole system level. The data will give us a key comparison of performance at system level before and after COVID. Northern Ireland is currently one of very few jurisdictions that does not have this type of information about our education system.

Assessment Arrangements 2024-25

In 2024-25, as an interim measure whilst the Review is ongoing and following the agreement which ended the industrial action short of strike, schools should report to

the Department Levels of Progression for Years 4, 7 and 10 for Communication and Using Mathematics only. These Levels of Progression should be reported through C2k by 30 May 2025.

In order to minimise workload for teachers, there will be no Agreement Trials and no requirement to submit samples of the children's work to CCEA for moderation. This will ensure limited bureaucracy and burden for schools. CCEA will provide support materials to help teachers assess Levels of Progression. School Development Days may be also utilised for the purpose of Statutory Key Stage Assessment if required. Teachers know their pupils well, including their strengths, weaknesses and this insight provides a strong basis for accurate assessment.

The number of areas to be assessed in Communication and Using Mathematics has also been reduced for 2024-25. The assessment of **Communication will be for the area of reading and Using Mathematics for the area of number only**. Specific guidance on the application of the assessment criteria and support materials will be provided by CCEA to aid teacher judgement. The CCEA resources will be available from 31 October at www.ccea.org.uk.

Please be absolutely assured the data on Levels of Progression reported to the Department will be analysed at system level only and will not be used for school accountability nor published at school level. This is not, therefore, a return to the previous arrangements for statutory assessment which were produced at school level but rather an important measure to gather information on our children's performance in literacy and numeracy across the system. The data will inform policy development by identifying strengths and areas for development at a system level and inform the production of resources and curriculum support in key areas. As you know, such information is crucial to support a high-performing education system.

Computer Adaptive Testing Pilot

You will note that 2024-25 will be the seventh year of CCEA's Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) pilot. Last year 311 schools including primary, post-primary, Irish medium and special registered for the pilot of CCEA Adaptive Literacy and Numeracy Assessments with just under 38,300 assessments completed. School feedback has remained very positive throughout the pilot and suggests that schools believe there is value in providing adaptive educational tools to support and inform teaching and learning.

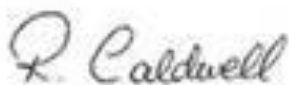
Teachers considered the key benefits of these assessments to be: cohesion with the Northern Ireland Curriculum; an assessment that adapts the question pathway based on children's responses therefore providing inclusivity (including children with SEN and those who are gifted and talented); the provision of automated outcomes and reports; and limited impact on teacher workload.

CCEA's CAT pilot is a freely available assessment tool bespoke to the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The Department would like to thank the high number of schools currently involved in the pilot and encourage your school to continue to participate. If you are not already participating and you wish to find out more about the CAT pilot this year, please contact assessments@ccea.org.uk.

CCEA will be also extending the pilot to include developing the use of raw CAT data to provide system level analysis on key aspects of literacy and numeracy to the Department. The purpose of this analysis will be to provide information on trends and patterns in numeracy and literacy to inform policy development and help school improvement. The benefits and use of the CAT will be considered as part of the Review. Once again this information will be used at system level only and will not be used for school accountability nor published at school level.

I appreciate that you may have some queries on the above information and I have attached a list of Frequently Asked Questions which may be helpful. If you have any further queries please contact keystage.assessment@education-ni.gov.uk.

Thank you for your continued work to support our children and young people.



Ray Caldwell

DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Statutory Assessment Arrangements for 2024-25

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS Statutory Key Stage Arrangements for 2024-25

Is the Department still reviewing Statutory Assessment?

Yes, the Review of Statutory Key Stage Assessment (the “Review”) has commenced by the Department of Education (the “Department”) which will make policy recommendations regarding the purpose, nature and design of Key Stage Assessment. The Review will seek to benchmark against best practice approaches followed nationally and internationally drawing on views from practitioners and academics to undertake a strategic assessment of current arrangements and produce proposals and recommendations to support the development of fit for purpose arrangements for Key Stage Assessment.

Why conduct Statutory Key Stage Assessments when assessment is being reviewed?

End of Key Stage Assessment arrangements have been formally disapplied since 2020, initially due to the COVID pandemic. However, disapplication of assessment arrangements still required schools to monitor and report pupils’ progress against the areas of learning and ‘other skills’ in the curriculum and in the three cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT to parents but not to report levels to CCEA.

Gathering Statutory Key Stage Assessment information is crucial to informing the Department’s policies and approaches to supporting children’s learning and providing a baseline to identify where there are areas for improvement at system level.

In 2024-25 teachers will continue their ongoing practice of assessing Communication and Using Mathematics in years 4, 7 and 10 and will upload these levels to C2k for the benefit of the wider Review. This will be an indicator of the status of assessment and can help identify support requirements.

Do I have to participate in CCEA moderation of Statutory Key Stage Assessments for 2024-25?

No, there will be no moderation of the Statutory Key Stage Assessments conducted; however, internal discussion of levels within a school is considered to be good practice and will be a consideration of the Review.

Will I get substitute teacher cover?

Substitute teacher cover was provided for the previous End of Key Stage Assessments before 2019 as they included internal and external moderation, selecting of samples and school portfolios for the three cross curricular skills. The Statutory Key Stage

Assessment Arrangements for 2024-25 are a continuation of the existing assessments for Communication and Using Mathematics that are occurring in the classroom and **do not** require any moderation or samples submitted therefore omitting the necessity for substitute cover.

Do I have to create my own assessment tasks?

No. CCEA have produced 'pick up and use' assessment tasks with examples of marked levels to assist this process. The CCEA resources will be available on 31 October. Teachers are also welcome to create their own tasks if preferred.

What areas do I have to assess?

The Statutory Key Stage Assessments for 2024-25 require teachers to continue their ongoing practice of assessing Communication and Using Mathematics in years 4, 7 and 10 and will upload these levels to C2K. Not all areas within the cross curricular skill are required either, a reduced number of areas within Communication and Using Mathematics are required to be assessed for the purpose of End of Key Stage Assessment in 2024-25. The assessment of Communication will be for the area of **reading** and Using Mathematics for the area of **number only**. CCEA have produced 'pick up and use' assessment tasks with examples of marked levels to assist this process. The CCEA resources will be available on 31 October.

When do I have to do this by?

Teachers can continue assessing Communication and Using Mathematics in years 4, 7 and 10 at a time throughout the school year that is in line with their usual practice. The Department requests the levels are uploaded to C2k by 30 May 2025.

Will the Level of Progression data be used to produce school level analysis?

No. Analysis will be at system level only.