



THE HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr J McDonald BEd (Hons) NPQH

The Diocese of Shrewsbury In Partnership with Halton Borough Council

Tuesday, 28 July 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

Assessment Without Levels

From September 2014, the Government changed the way that children in schools are assessed. This coincided with the introduction of the New National Curriculum. The changes mean that assessment will look very different from how it has looked for the past 20 years. The aim of this letter is to give you some information about the changes and the implications for the children here at The Holy Spirit.

Before considering assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum has brought to subjects that are traditionally assessed.

Curriculum 2014

The main changes to the key core subjects are as follows:

English - The new programme of study for English is knowledge-based; its focus is on knowing facts rather than developing skills and understanding. It is also characterised by an increased emphasis on the technical aspects of language and less emphasis on the creative aspects. English is set out year by year in Key Stage 1 and two-yearly in Key Stage 2. Appendices give specific content to be covered in the areas of spelling and vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. These are set out yearly across both key stages.

Mathematics - The main areas in the new programme of study for mathematics are called domains. These are number, measurement, geometry, statistics, ratio and proportion and algebra. Two of these, number and geometry, are further divided into subdomains. The way that the curriculum is organised varies across the primary age range – every year group has a unique combination of domains and subdomains. There is no longer a separate strand of objectives related to using and applying mathematics. Instead, there are problem-solving objectives within the other areas of study. Most of the changes to the mathematics curriculum involve content being brought forward into earlier years, e.g. Objectives from Y3 being brought into Y2 and so on.

The End of Curriculum Levels

The Department for Education (DfE) has decided that the children who are currently in Years 2 and 6 will be the last pupils to be awarded a level in their end of Key Stage tests (Summer 2015).

Assessing Without Levels

With the announcement that there would no longer be National Curriculum levels schools were told they would have to set up their own way of assessing pupils. At Hale, we researched a number of options. We felt it was important to use a reliable system so we have joined with a group of Halton Schools to work under the guidance of the Liverpool Assessment Project. Using this system, we will work alongside other schools to moderate and standardise assessment judgements. Data is collected and analysed for us by the project leaders.

This year, the end of year judgements on the children's performance have been made against the expectations set out in the new curriculum. They are as follows:

1. Below expected
2. Working towards expected standard
3. Expected standard
4. Above
5. Mastery

Under the old system children moved up the levels regardless of their year group. The DfE now want children who are "working above" to add more depth and breadth to their knowledge, and to have more opportunities to develop





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their using and applying skills. They are calling this phase of learning Mastery and Depth. Children who are significantly below age related expectations may work towards the expectations from the year below.

End of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

By the end of Key stage 1 it is anticipated that the majority of children will reach the assessment point of “expected”, a small number of children will reach “above” and a small number will be “working towards”, or possibly “Year 1 working towards, expected or above”.

End of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

You may have heard of the expression ‘Secondary Ready’ as the standard children must achieve by the end of Year 6. The DfE have slightly distanced themselves from this phrase and are talking about children reaching the assessment point of “Year 6 expected.” As in Key Stage 1 there will be some children who may be working “above” and some children who are “working towards”. There may also be a small number of children who are still working at a lower level e.g. Year 4/5 working towards, working at or working above.

With the old National Curriculum levels, each year children were given a target in school for the end of the year. For Example: A child could finish the year with a level 3a, and in the following year would be expected to achieve 4b, a rise of 2 sub levels. At Parent’s Evenings throughout the year you may be told that they have moved to a 4c and then on to a 4b. We could use the levels system this way because there was no correlation between a level and a child’s year group

However, the new National Curriculum sets out expectations for each year group and children will be assessed against those every year, so for example a child in Year 4 will always be judged in the first instance against the expectations for the end of Year 4.

The expectations for the new curriculum represent greater challenge. As mentioned before, some of the objectives from year groups higher up have been moved down and there is greater emphasis on using and applying knowledge and skills independently. Consequently, during the first couple of years of the new curriculum we expect a decrease in the proportion of children working at “expected” levels. This isn’t because the children are not working hard or achieving well, it is just a reflection of the increased expectation.

Each term, the teachers assess how the children are working against the objectives of the new curriculum. They look at a range of evidence, not just work in books and not just work in literacy or numeracy lessons. They soon get to know the children well and are able to make a judgement of whether they are at expected level, working towards/above etc. Under the Halton Assessment Project the teachers will have an opportunity to share their judgements with other teachers to “moderate” them. During the year, when we have conversations with you about your child’s progress you will be told whether your child is on track to maintain their achievements. Under the new system, children will be deemed to have made good progress by remaining in the same band. We also use these parent meetings to discuss ways to support your child.

This year the children in Y2 and Y6 have followed the old curriculum and have been assessed using levels. Next year every year group will follow the new curriculum and a new set of tests/assessments will be applied. Again, we expect the threshold for the new tests to be higher than in previous years.

The children in Reception (EYFS) will continue to be judged against early learning goals but a new baseline test will be applied in September 2015. The baseline test will be statutory in 2016.

This is a new way of assessing so it will take time for the system to become embedded. We don’t even know if it will be the final system as the government has now set up a commission on assessment which might recommend further changes. However, we are confident that the judgements we are making in Hale are firmly rooted in the new National Curriculum. We are adhering to sound assessment principles by ensuring the children are achieving objectives independently. Our evidence is robust and the judgements have been moderated by other professionals.





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The information we gather on the children is used by staff to plan teaching and learning carefully so that all children can make the progress they are capable of.

This year's Pupil Reports will reflect these new judgements using the new National Curriculum. I hope this sheds some light on the significant changes that have happened this year. If you have any questions feel free to contact school for an appointment. As in previous years, I would like to say thank you for all the support you give to the children and to the school throughout the year.

Many Thanks,

Mr J McDonald
Headteacher

