ASSESSING CHILDREN'S PROGRESS:

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Smarter Scotland
Scottish Government

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK?

The National Improvement Framework has been introduced to provide better information about how children and young people are progressing and how well schools, councils and the Scottish Government are supporting their learning. That information will help teachers and others who work to support children and young people to understand where improvement is needed. It will also help schools, councils and national government to see which learning, teaching and assessment approaches are working well, and where changes need to be made.

As part of the National Improvement Framework, the Scottish Government will collect assessment information about children and young people: their health and wellbeing; their progress through the early years and with their learning; the national awards and qualifications they obtain; and their success on leaving school.

HOW IS CHILDREN'S LEARNING ASSESSED IN SCOTLAND?

Assessment is a central part of everyday learning and teaching for children and young people. Teachers gather evidence on an ongoing and informal basis through asking questions, observing children working together and making comments on their work. Children may assess their own work or that of their classmates. Some assessment is more formal, such as projects, investigations, case studies and tests.

The assessment of children's progress throughout primary school and in secondary S1–S3 is based on teachers' views: their "professional judgement". In making these judgements, teachers draw on their professional knowledge and understanding of the child; on the recently published benchmarks for literacy and numeracy, which provide clear information about what children and young people should be able to do and demonstrate by the end of a Curriculum for Excellence level; and on a wide range of assessment information.

Many teachers and schools across Scotland use standardised assessments, bought in from various different providers, as one of the ways of assessing children's progress.

WHAT'S NEW?

From June 2016, teachers of P1, P4, P7 and S3 classes are being asked at the end of every school year whether children have achieved the relevant Curriculum for Excellence level for their stage in reading, writing, talking and listening (literacy), and their ability to understand and work with numbers (numeracy). Most children are expected to have achieved the early level by the end of P1, first level by the end of P4, second level by the end of P7 and third and fourth level by the end of S3.

The Scottish Government will publish the information received from teachers, to show the percentage of children who have achieved Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy in individual schools, across councils and at a national level. No individual child will be identifiable from published information.

From August 2017, new, national standardised assessments will be introduced in all schools in Scotland. These assessments will provide an additional source of nationally consistent evidence for teachers to use when assessing children's progress.

WHAT WILL BE THE SAME?

Ongoing and informal assessment is, and will continue to be, a central part of everyday learning and teaching.

Teachers will continue to draw on all of the assessment information available to them, when considering children's progress and planning the next steps in their learning.

Teachers remain best placed to know how the children in their class are progressing. Their professional judgement will continue to be the most important way of assessing your child's progress at school.

WHAT WILL THE NEW NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS INVOLVE?

- Every child in P1, P4, P7 and S3 will undertake national standardised assessments covering some aspects of reading, writing and working with numbers.
- Assessments will be completed online and will be automatically marked by the online system, giving teachers immediate feedback to help children progress.
- The assessments will be used to help teachers understand how well your child is progressing with his or her learning and to plan next steps. There will be no pass or fail.
- The system will be designed so that if a child is struggling with the questions they will get easier, and if a child is doing well the questions will become more challenging.
- The standardised assessments will be as short as possible and will be age and stage appropriate. A time limit of 50 minutes for each assessment has been set. This is an absolute maximum, to ensure that no child feels an unnecessary time pressure when undertaking the assessments. We do not expect the majority of children to require the full 50 minutes.
- Your child will not be expected to take assessments covering reading, writing and working with numbers in one sitting.
- There will be no set day or period of time during which the national standardised assessments must be taken. Individual teachers and schools will decide the most appropriate time during the school year for your child to take the national standardised assessments.
- The assessments will, as far as possible, accommodate the needs of children who require additional support.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN FOR MY CHILD?

Teachers will judge whether children have achieved Curriculum for Excellence levels at the end of P1, P4, P7 and S3. This will help to ensure the next year's teacher knows how well children are progressing in their learning and can plan next steps and provide further support accordingly. Providing the right support at the right time will help to ensure your child can reach his or her potential.

As many teachers and schools across Scotland are already using a variety of standardised assessments, many children will already be familiar with taking this form of assessment. The Scottish Government is simply replacing the variety of existing standardised assessments that local authorities and schools currently buy in with a single, nationally consistent set of standardised assessments.

Your child will not have to revise or prepare for national standardised assessments. There will be no additional workload for your child and the assessments will offer no distraction from daily learning.

Teachers will discuss with children how they got on in their national standardised assessment, and will plan next steps with the individual child based on that information. Standardised assessment results will be considered alongside other evidence of your child's progress, from ongoing assessment and classroom activity.

The Scottish Government will ensure that the impact of the new standardised assessments on children is closely monitored.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR ME AS A PARENT?

The online assessment system will produce feedback information about where your child did well and where further support is required. Teachers will use this information, alongside a wide range of other assessment information, to discuss with you how your child is progressing with their learning.

Education Scotland – the national body supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education – will be working with teachers and parents to develop guidance on the best ways to report your child's progress.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD?

You have a key role to play in helping your child to learn. Your child's teacher will keep you informed about how your child is progressing. Talk to your child's school if you have any concerns about their learning or assessment. Ask for information on how you can support your child's learning at home.

The standardised assessments should be seen by your child as just another aspect of daily learning. There is no need to prepare your child for assessment or to practice any specific tasks or activities.

WHO CAN I TALK TO IF I'M CONCERNED?

In the first instance, you should always expect to be able to speak with your child's class teacher or with their headteacher.

If you have any more general comments, questions or concerns about the way in which children's progress is being assessed as part of the National Improvement Framework, please email nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Your child's class teacher or headteacher should always be on hand to discuss any questions that you may have about your child's progress and the role assessment plays in this.

Your Parent Council may be able to point you towards further advice or support.

Further information can also be found on the Scottish Government's website: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/NationalImprovementFramework/NatonalImprovementFramework

For further information about how to support your child's learning, their education and school life, visit: www.parentzonescotland.com