



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Assessment framework

Reception Baseline Assessment

February 2020

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Expiry

This assessment framework relates to the reception baseline assessment, which will become a statutory assessment for all maintained primary, first and infant schools in England from autumn 2020.

Who is this publication for?

The framework is for those who write assessment materials and to guide subsequent development and assessment construction. It is available to a wider audience for openness and transparency.

Overview

Introduction

This document details the assessment framework for the Department for Education reception baseline assessment. It specifies the purpose, format, content and cognitive demand of the assessment.

Purpose of the assessment

The purpose of the reception baseline assessment is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.

The reception baseline is not intended to:

- provide on-going formative information for practitioners
- be used in any way to measure performance in the early years, evaluate pre-school settings or hold early years practitioners to account
- provide detailed diagnostic information about pupils' areas for development

The assessment will fall under Ofqual's [regulatory framework](#) for national assessments¹.

Population to be assessed

The reception baseline is designed as a suitable assessment to be taken by pupils during their first half term in reception (the academic year in which they turn 5). All pupils should be assessed within the first 6 weeks of joining reception, regardless of when they join the class, unless they have been assessed previously.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-framework-for-national-assessments>

Assessment design and delivery

Timing

The time required to administer the reception baseline is up to 20 minutes per pupil. It is expected that this average will reduce over time as practitioners become more familiar with the materials and the administration instructions. The assessment can be paused and restarted as appropriate.

Administration

The assessment must be administered by a reception teacher, reception teaching assistant or suitably qualified practitioner (e.g. early years lead or SENCO) working one-to-one with each pupil. The practitioner should be familiar to the pupil. Those conducting the assessment should be fully trained and familiar with the materials.

The assessment consists of practical tasks, using physical resources, and an online scoring system for the practitioner to complete as the pupil engages with the tasks. Administration instructions for each task and the recording of the assessment are provided via an online system so that the assessment is delivered and scored consistently across all schools.

Digital technology is used to maximise the manageability of the administrative tasks, enabling quick, easy and automated recording.

Number of marks

The total number of marks available is 39.

The assessment is presented in a task format, with a number of activities per task. The relationship between activities and marks varies depending on the activity. The number of marks per task will therefore not be obvious.

As the assessment includes carefully designed routing, the number of marks presented will vary from pupil to pupil. Routing helps to prevent pupils from being presented with too many activities in which they are unlikely to be successful. It also helps to reduce the time required for the assessment and the possible loss of motivation that pupils may feel if they are unable to complete an activity. These routing rules are applied automatically by the online recording system. All pupils are presented with activities worth at least 22 marks.

Content domain

The reception baseline is an age-appropriate assessment of mathematics and literacy, communication and language (LCL), that is delivered in English. It is clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). However, due to the length and nature of the reception baseline, not all areas of learning and development in the EYFS are assessed².

The assessment consists of:

- mathematics tasks
 - early number
 - early calculation (early addition/subtraction)
 - mathematical language
 - early understanding of pattern

- LCL tasks
 - early vocabulary
 - phonological awareness
 - early comprehension

The components assessed in the reception baseline are listed below with the proportion of marks allocated to each.

Table 1: proportion of marks allocated to each assessment component

| Component | Proportion of marks |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Mathematics tasks | 45-55% |
| LCL tasks | 45-55% |
| Total | 100% |

² There are several differences between the reception baseline and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) as they are completed at different times in the year and have different purposes. The reception baseline is a short assessment designed to capture the wide range of attainment in mathematics and literacy, communication and language that is seen in reception classes at the start of the year. It also has clear links to the key stage 1 and key stage 2 curricula against which progress will be measured.

Cognitive domains

Cognitive processes refer to the thinking skills and intellectual processes that occur in response to a stimulus. The cognitive domain makes explicit the thinking skills and intellectual processes associated with the assessment.

Cognitive development during the early years encompasses a wide range of cognitive skills. Young children are generally active and engaged learners who learn through exploration and possess a natural curiosity.

The reception baseline is a task-based assessment designed to maximise the active interaction between the pupil and the resources. Manipulation of physical resources may also enable some pupils to better demonstrate their skills and level of understanding to the practitioner.

Early cognitive development is multifaceted and the reception baseline requires a range of cognitive processes to be used in responding to the variety of tasks included. A variety of cognitive domains enables an effective assessment of children of this age and taps into their unique experiences. In order to respond to the assessment, pupils may need to demonstrate linguistic skills such as blending sounds, or mathematical skills such as number sense. Some cognitive processes, such as memory or attention, are deployed in both the mathematics and LCL tasks.

Cognitive complexity

The activities in each reception baseline task have been designed to demonstrate a gradual increase in cognitive complexity.

The tasks involve a range of cognitive processes from recall/procedural understanding through to showing a greater understanding of concepts and the ability to apply this understanding within a context. As is appropriate for this age group, the cognitive complexity within and between tasks is increased by moving pupils from concrete to abstract ways of working. As would be expected, there are a greater number of tasks and activities that require the use of physical resources. The proportions of activities that require these different ways of working are listed below. However, due to the routing within the assessment, as stated above, not all pupils will be presented with all questions.

Table 2: proportions of activities requiring concrete and abstract thinking

| | Mathematics | LCL |
|----------|--------------------|------------|
| Concrete | 50-60% | 50-60% |
| Abstract | 40-50% | 40-50% |

Response formats

The response formats for the tasks include:

- oral response (30–40%)
- pointing (25–35%)
- ordering or moving objects (25–35%)

Due to the different approaches that pupils may adopt, some activities may have more than one response type. In addition, different proportions of response types will be used depending on how pupils are routed through the assessment.

Scoring

Each task is made up of a small number of activities or items. Each item requires a single objective yes/no decision to be made by the practitioner. Responses are recorded by the practitioner via an online scoring system. Scoring is automatically calculated by the system.

The tasks in each component are ordered according to developmental progression, where appropriate. Within each component, there are several places where routing rules may be applied based on how a pupil responds to each item they are presented with. The routing rules have been applied based on trialling data. The system routes the practitioner through the assessment automatically. Incorrect items and items that are not presented to the pupil due to routing will score 0 marks. As a result of routing, not all pupils will be asked to complete all activities in the assessment and some will finish the assessment sooner than others.

The assessment can be stopped at any point if the practitioner deems it is inappropriate for the pupil to continue. In such cases, the score will be based on partial administration.

Reporting

Schools will be provided with a series of narrative statements to describe how each pupil performed on the different content domains presented in the assessment.

At the end of the assessment, the reception baseline will record a single raw score out of 39 for each pupil. This score will not be made available to schools. Raw scores will be recorded in the national pupil database and used to create a cohort-level progress measure for schools at the end of key stage 2.

Desired psychometric properties

At the end of the assessment, a raw score is recorded for each pupil. The data is not age standardised and there is no pass mark/threshold. It should be noted that not all pupils will do exactly the same assessment due to the application of routing rules, which means that the demands of the assessment will be different for different pupils. However, the assessment pathway changes depending on pupils' responses and there will be a spread of activities of differing demand to match the different attainment of the pupils taking the assessment. Since the data will be used to create a school-level progress measure, with pupils grouped by prior attainment, the assessment is designed to avoid ceiling effects, with fewer than 2.5% of pupils achieving full marks. This will ensure that the attainment groups include pupils with similar prior attainment.

The assessment is designed to provide a sufficiently stable measure that is replicable, regardless of who administers the assessment. The internal consistency is high enough to ensure that confidence intervals around the observed scores can be minimised across the score distribution.

Diversity and inclusion – accessibility

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the principles by which the national curriculum assessments and associated development activities are conducted. During the development of the reception baseline, the Standards and Testing Agency made provision to overcome barriers to fair assessment for individuals and groups wherever possible.

Assessments are required to meet Ofqual's regulatory framework³ which states, 'An assessment should minimise bias, differentiating only on the basis of each pupil's level of attainment. A pupil should not be disadvantaged by factors that do not relate to what is being tested.'

The reception baseline should:

- use appropriate means to allow all pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, irrespective of gender, including pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds
- use materials that are familiar to pupils
- not be detrimental to pupils' self-esteem or confidence

The reception baseline has been designed to be an inclusive assessment, accessible to the majority of pupils on entry to school. This includes applying the principles of plain English and universal design wherever possible. It aims to assess pupils in a fair and comparable way, with as many pupils as possible able to access the tasks. It has been designed so that pupils with SEND and those learning English as an additional language can participate in the standard assessment format and has been subject to a SEND and cultural review.

Modified resources are available for pupils with a visual impairment. Practitioners can also make further adaptations, such as copying resources onto coloured backgrounds and enlarging or reducing some resources to a size which is appropriate for their pupils.

For pupils with a hearing impairment or who use sign language, the assessment can be conducted in British Sign Language or any sign-supported English, using signs familiar to the pupil.

All pupils are presented with at least 22 marks' worth of items (across a range of areas in mathematics and LCL) unless the practitioner chooses to discontinue the assessment.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-framework-for-national-assessments>

Tasks are presented based on the prior tasks or activities the pupil has completed. Pupils will see some tasks that they will find challenging so they have the opportunity to show the breadth of their abilities. However, routing rules will help to ensure that pupils are not faced with a significant number of activities that are too difficult for them.



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