

A New Approach to Tracking Pupil Progress - developed by Herts for Learning

Introduction

The system of levels, that has been in place for over 20 years, will not fit the new National Curriculum. The new curriculum sets out what is to be taught within each year group or phase, but does not provide any system or structure for assessing pupils' progress.

The 'levels' system may have had its critics, and certainly some inappropriate practices regarding the use of levels may have developed over time, but they did provide a common vocabulary and a consistent set of criteria for describing children's achievement and evaluating the impact of teaching.

At Herts for Learning we have been working hard to develop a new set of detailed assessment criteria – matched to the expectations of the new National Curriculum – which teachers can use to assess children's understanding and determine the appropriate next steps. We have also explored various different ideas about how attainment and progress might be tracked in a management information system, such as SIMS Assessment Manager 7, to assist schools with self-evaluation and to inform discussions with Ofsted. This document sets out the new Herts for Learning approach.

Key principles

- The **criteria** we are developing across the curriculum will be useful for teachers to use in a formative way, and hence teachers may refer to these frequently throughout the year.
- However the **system of 'measuring' attainment**, which is set out below, is a summative assessment tool only – taking a step back to reflect on the 'big picture' of where a child is in their learning journey – and as such we advise that these judgements are made *no more frequently than once per term*.
- A wealth of educational research tells us that ongoing *formative* assessment is far more powerful than summative assessment in terms of enhancing learning and that there is a danger that summative assessment can undermine the benefits of formative assessment.
- To guard against the negative effects of summative assessment, such as effects on self-esteem and the creation of a 'fixed mindset' about one's ability, we do not recommend that the 'measurements' are used as part of a dialogue with pupils about their learning. The measurements proposed are intended purely as a means for recording attainment in a tracking system, as a management tool.
- 'Big picture' criteria can be useful for teachers when considering a pupil's next steps and giving feedback; however a good understanding of the success criteria for the specific focus of learning is the most useful basis for feedback to pupils.
- We believe that teacher assessment, based on a wide range of good quality learning experiences, is a better way to track progress than administering lots of tests throughout a child's school career.

Key aims of this system

- The system needs to be simple – so that it can easily be understood at a glance by internal and external users of the data
- The system needs to provide users with key performance indicators about the attainment and progress of children, which will inform self-evaluation and form a good starting point for demonstrating progress to Ofsted
- The system needs to enable users to determine with confidence whether or not children are on track to meet the expected standards in the statutory assessments which will take place at the ends of KS1 and KS2
- The terminology used needs to take account of the potentially harmful effects when describing the attainment of pupils who are working below the age-related expectation, e.g. pupils with SEN/D

Details of the new system

We are producing detailed criteria that relate to the skills and knowledge that children should be developing over time. These criteria will look familiar to teachers, as presentationally they are not unlike the APP assessment grids – however the content has been revised to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. The criteria (initially for English, maths, science and computing) for Key Stages 1 and 2 will be available by the 1st September 2014. KS3 criteria will follow.

The curriculum sets out content in terms of year groups and phases – it therefore seems logical to adopt this approach for assessment and tracking progress. However we have reservations about adopting language such as ‘working at/below the expected level for Year 3’ – see the 4th bullet point under ‘Key aims’ above.

We are therefore proposing the following approach based on **phases**, within which there are several **steps**.

Phase A relates to children working within the typical expectations of KS1 (Years 1 and 2).

Phase B relates to children working within the typical expectations of lower KS2 (Y3/4).

Phase C relates to children working within the typical expectations of upper KS2 (Y5/6).

Phase D relates to children working within the typical expectations of KS3 (Y7/8/9).

To determine the phase/step which best describes a child’s attainment:

We recommend that these summative judgements are based upon the extent to which a pupil is showing a secure grasp of those skills, using a ‘best fit’ approach. Teachers will therefore need to consider:

- the ‘NOFAN’ approach (which stands for Never, Occasionally, Frequently, Always, Naturally) – which represents the process of becoming secure in a new skill*
- the overall proportion of the criteria in which a child is showing a secure grasp

* for the purposes of this system, 'Frequently' showing evidence of understanding of a skill is taken to mean a secure grasp of that skill

Looking at the Year 1 criteria for a particular subject area, a Y1 teacher would then decide which of the following 4 descriptors is the best fit judgement:

Entering	Developing	Securing	Mastering
evidence of a few aspects of the criteria – up to about 20% of the criteria (may be occasional but not yet frequent)	Secure in many aspects of the criteria – up to about 50%	Secure in more than half of the criteria – up to about 80%	Secure in all, or almost all , of the criteria (and most likely showing 'glimmers' of the Y2 criteria)

(percentage figures shown are a guide only – a 'best fit' approach needs to be taken – further guidance to follow may indicate certain curriculum areas as having greater weighting than others)

From Year 2 onwards, it is assumed that **Entering** in that year group's criteria overlaps with **Mastering** the previous year's criteria, as follows:

Y1 - Entering	Y1 - Developing	Y1 - Securing	Y1 - Mastering						
			Y2 - Entering	Y2 - Developing	Y2 - Securing	Y2 - Mastering			
						Y3 - Entering	Y3 - Developing	Y3 - Securing	etc

which translate into the following phase/step codes:

A0	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2
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NB it is only Y1 that needs to have a separate code for Entering, hence this is labelled A0. Every other phase starts from step 1.

Children working below their chronological phase (except Phase A) can be assessed using the previous phase e.g. a child in Year 3 might be working at A5. We feel this language is preferable to saying they are 'working at the level of a typical Year 2 child'.

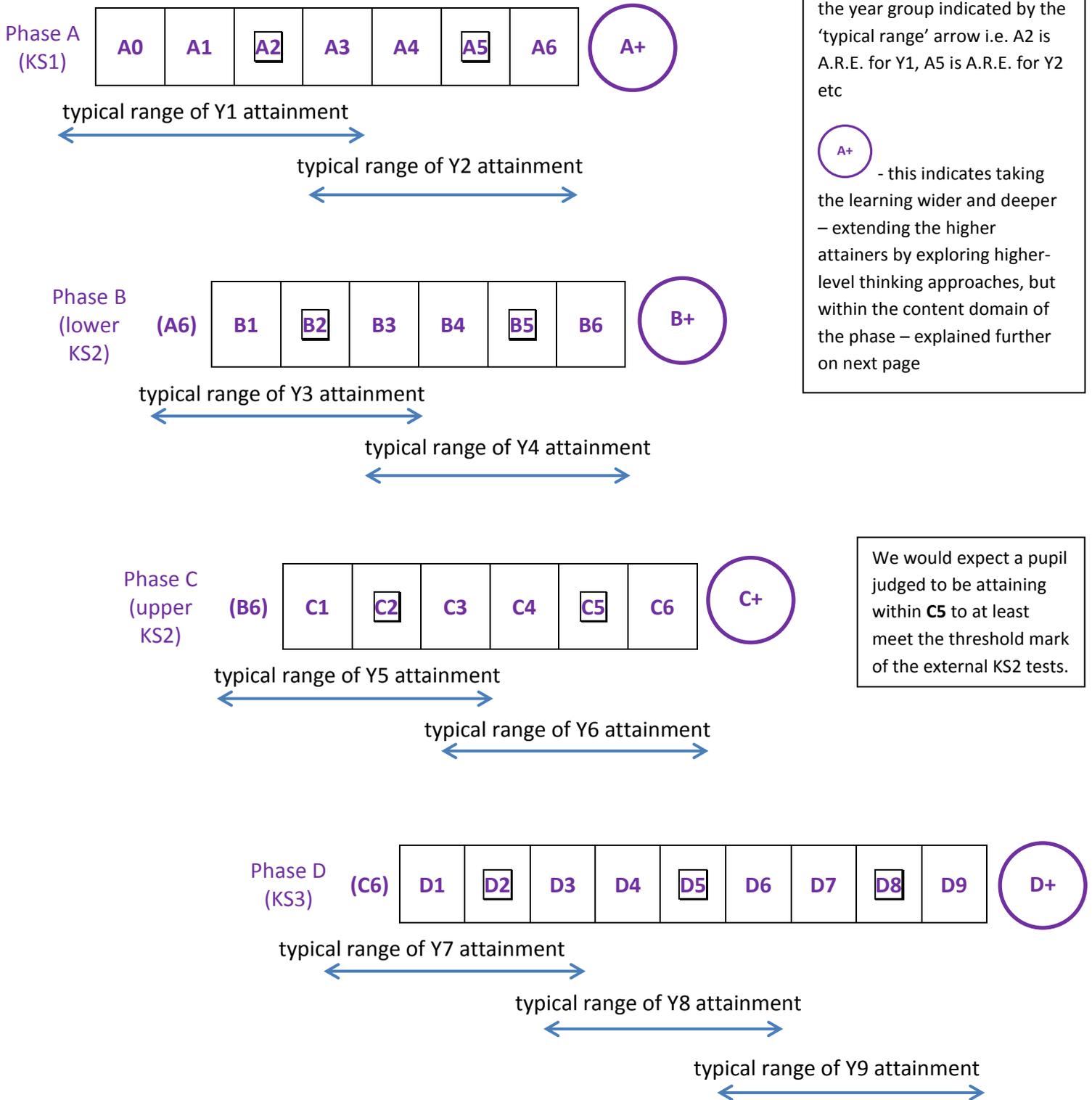
Children working below Phase A could be assessed using either:

- EYFS Outcomes statements (e.g. 40-60 month statements)
- P-scales (*SEND pupils only*)
- 'Language in common' scale (*EAL pupils only*)

depending on the context and the reasons why the child is working below this phase.

The 'big picture' of the HFL assessment tracking system:

4 key phases, each divided into steps.
 Expected progress is 1 step per term.



Further guidance around using the '+' assessment – going 'deeper and wider'

The purpose of this aspect of the system is to allow schools to further enrich a pupil's understanding by exploring higher-level skills, but within the content domain of the phase. This might include:

- applying the knowledge and skills learned within the context of more extended problem-solving
- applying the knowledge and skills in more challenging, unfamiliar contexts
- extended project work, with children conducting their own research and following their own lines of enquiry
- producing projects for different audiences
- using higher-order skills from Bloom's Taxonomy, e.g. synthesising different ideas and concepts, creating and innovating etc.

We aim to develop further examples to support teachers with this aspect.

It is hoped that this approach fits with the notion that this new curriculum is about **mastering** key concepts, and avoids the 'treadmill' effect that sometimes can occur when there is pressure to keep showing further progress and insufficient time to consolidate and master skills. We like to view progress as being more like a climbing frame than a ladder: it is not always about going up to the next rung; sometimes it is about moving sideways to gain more breadth of understanding.

This system therefore allows the choice to either record above average attainers using the '+' step or to use the criteria from the next phase. This choice would be based on the needs and best interests of the child. Either way, the system would recognise this as better than expected progress (e.g. progress from A3 to A+ or from A3 to B1 would both be counted as 4 steps of progress).

NB the '+' steps are only appropriate for pupils who are attaining above age-related expectation. If, for example, a Y3 child was working at A6 (below age-related expectation) the next step would be to B1, so that they may quickly catch up to age-related expectation. However this should not be interpreted as meaning that only children above age-related expectations get access to curriculum enrichment. We would hope that all children receive a rich curriculum as they make progress through their learning journey.

If a Y2/4/6 pupil finishes the year on A+/B+/C+, the next assessment step for them would be step 1 of the next phase. However, they might move quite quickly into step 2, as the extension activities of the '+' step may well overlap into some of the skills of step 1 of the next phase.

Reporting Attainment and Progress to Pupils and their Parents

These phases and steps are not designed to be used for discussion with pupils or parents, or in marking pupils' work, as this practice could lead to some of the same problems as the previous system of levels, such as the 'labelling' effect, development of fixed mindsets etc.

Discussion with pupils about their learning is most effective when it is based around specific success criteria for the current area of learning. See the wealth of literature on comment-only marking, such as that written by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, Shirley Clarke etc.

Phrases that could be used when reporting to parents include:

- Your child is working well within the expected range for their age (followed by examples of particular areas of success and current areas of focus)

- Your child is working slightly below the expected range (followed by examples of particular areas of success and current areas of focus)
- Your child has a strong understanding of the concepts taught this year and has been working on extension activities to further develop their problem-solving skills (followed by examples of particular areas of success and current areas of focus)

Using this system to produce data to demonstrate attainment and progress for self-evaluation, discussions with Ofsted etc.

Attainment – the key attainment measures will be:

- the proportion of children working at age-related expectation
- the proportion of children working beyond age-related expectation

It would also be possible to produce an ‘average attainment’ (phase/step) for a cohort or group of pupils.

Progress – this can be measured either in terms of:

- proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress, or
- average number of steps of progress made by a cohort or group.

We will develop reports within SIMS Assessment Manager 7 to produce this analysis, including exploring progress by gender, Pupil Premium groups, SEN/D etc.

‘Expected Progress’ would be 3 steps per year, eg:

Example 1: a pupil assessed at end of Y2 as working at A5 (age-related expectation)

3 steps of progress in Year 3: → A6 → B1 → B2

(NB ‘A+’ is not used as a step in this context)

Example 2: a pupil assessed at end of Y3 as working at B3 (above A.R.E.)

3 steps of progress in Year 4: → B4 → B5 → B6

Example 3: a pupil assessed on entry to Y1 as not yet accessing Phase A material, assessed at 40-60 Securing (using Herts EYFS Toolkit) at end of Reception

3 steps of progress across Year 1: → Early Learning Goal → A0 → A1

‘More than Expected Progress’ would be *either*:

- making more than 3 steps of progress in a year, *or*
- finishing the year in the ‘+’ step, ie curriculum content for that phase has been mastered and pupil is working on deeper extension work

Across the whole of Key Stage 2, expected progress would be 12 steps.

More than 12 steps, *or finishing in the C+ step*, would be **more than expected progress**.