

A New Approach to Tracking Pupil Progress (Primary) - 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, because the curriculum content has changed or moved around. 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 the ongoing assessment of 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.

Herts for Learning has developed a new set of detailed assessment criteria – matched to the expectations of the new primary 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 this new HfL 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 have produced detailed criteria that relate to the skills and knowledge that children should be acquiring and 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 reading, writing, maths and science) for Key Stages 1 and 2 are now available via the HfL Subscription website – see <http://bit.ly/HFLprimary>. Criteria for Computing are also available as part of the HfL Computing Scheme – see www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/ict/ks1-2/scheme.

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 have therefore developed 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).

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

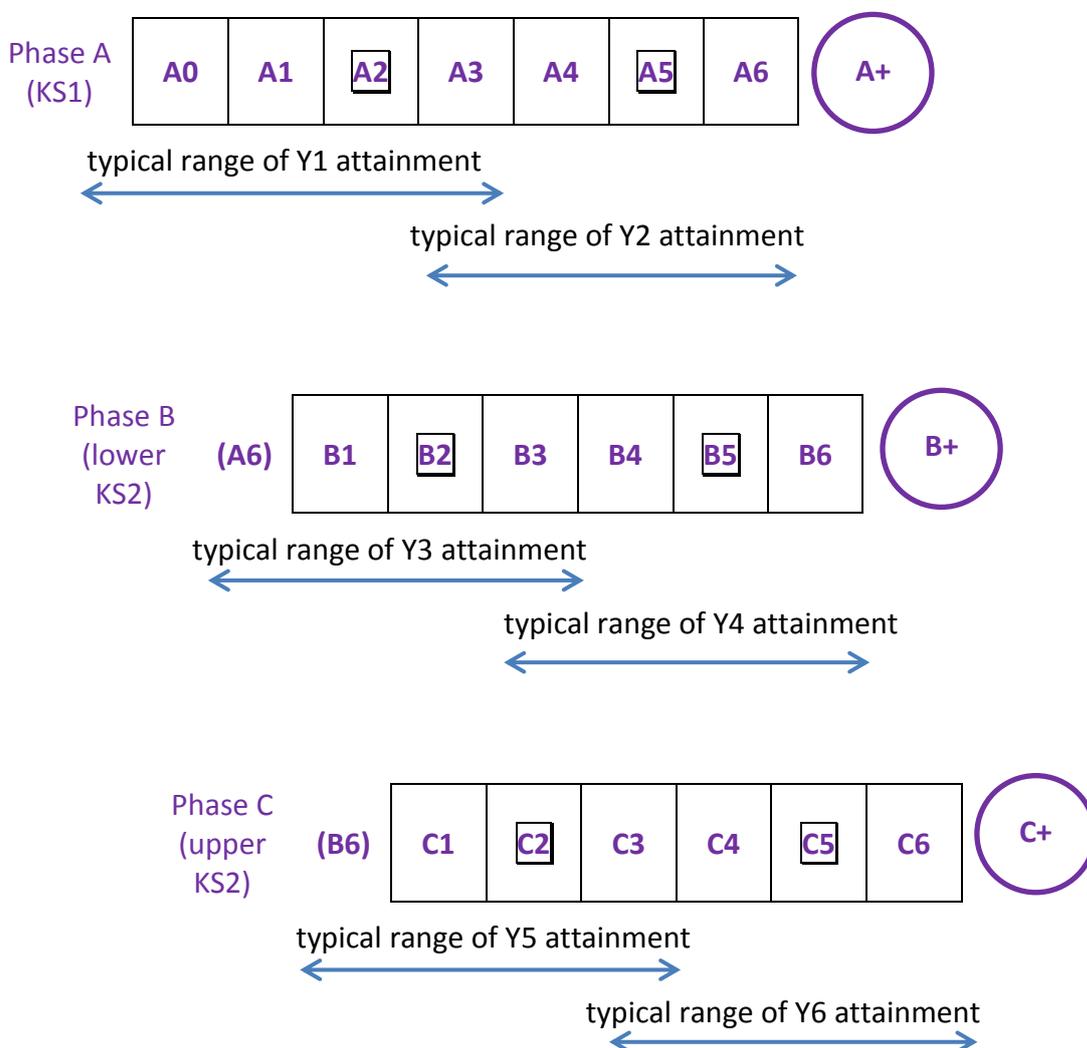
We recommend that these summative judgements are based upon the extent to which a pupil is showing a secure grasp of those skills, using a ‘best fit’ approach. Teachers will therefore need to consider:

- 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

The 'big picture' of the HFL assessment tracking system for primary schools:

3 key phases, each divided into steps.

Expected progress is 1 step per term.



Key:

A2 – the border around this indicates working within the **Age-Related Expectation** (A.R.E.) for the year group indicated by the 'typical range' arrow i.e. A2 is within A.R.E. for Y1, A5 is within A.R.E. for Y2 etc

A+ – this indicates taking the learning wider and deeper – extending the higher attainers by exploring higher-level thinking approaches, but within the content domain of the phase – explained further on next page

We would expect a pupil judged to be attaining within **C5** to at least meet the threshold mark of the external KS2 tests.

Key - A2 – the border around this step indicates that a Y1 pupil working within this step is **working within the Age-Related Expectation** (A.R.E.) for their year group and can therefore be considered to be 'on track' to at least meet the key threshold in the end of KS2 tests (score of 100 on the scaled scores) i.e.:

- A2 – working within age-related expectation for Y1
- A5 – working within age-related expectation for Y2
- B2 – working within age-related expectation for Y3
- B5 – working within age-related expectation for Y4
- C2 – working within age-related expectation for Y5
- C5 – working within age-related expectation for Y6

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, comparison of level with peers etc. The codes (A1) etc are merely a tool for data analysis; the key to talking to a child or their parent about their learning is to focus on the criteria, not the code. This allows for discussion around what has been achieved well and what the next steps for learning are. 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 governors, Ofsted etc.

We are producing reports that will be generated through SIMS Assessment Manager 7, to support schools with demonstrating attainment and progress to Ofsted. These resources will be included as part of the HfL primary teaching, learning and assessment subscription package.

Attainment – the key attainment measures in the SIMS AM7 reports will be:

- the proportion of children working within age-related expectations
- the proportion of children working beyond age-related expectations
- the ‘average attainment’ (phase/step) for a cohort or group of pupils

Progress – the key progress measures in the SIMS AM7 reports will be:

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

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

Example 1: a pupil assessed at end of Y2 as working at A5 (i.e. within age-related expectations)

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

(NB ‘A+’ is not used as a step in this context, as A+ is only used where a pupil in KS1 has achieved all age-related expectations and is working beyond)

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, i.e. 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**.

Progress from KS1 (levels) to KS2 (new system)

For the next few years, children in Key Stage 2 will have a National Curriculum level for their KS1 statutory assessment. To measure progress across KS2 we will therefore use the KS1 level as the baseline measure. If a child was working at the age-related expectation for Year 2 (which we have taken to be 2b or 2a) then the ‘expected progress’ measure will be that they are working within age-related expectations at a future point in time.

NB we are not implying that our new system of phases and steps are equivalent to old NC levels. It is not possible to equate an old level to a new ‘step’ as curriculum content has shifted around.

The screenshot below shows one of the news AM7 reports, illustrating the notion of ‘expected progress’ from the end of KS1 (in NC levels) to the end of Year 4 (in HfL steps). Pink cells represent ‘expected progress’.

Y4 Summer level →	Key Stage 1 (Phase A)				Lower Key Stage 2 (Phase B)							Upper KS2 (Phase C)
End of KS1 ↓	A3 or below	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B+	C1 or above
No available KS1 data												
Below Level 1												
1C												
1B												
1A												
2C												
2B/2A												
3C/3B												
3A+												

Example report from Assessment Manager 7, produced by Herts for Learning.

Age-related expectation at end of Year 2 = 2b/2a (old NC levels)

Age-related expectation at end of Year 4 = B5 (HfL steps)

Therefore that cell is pink, meaning ‘expected progress’ – however it should be noted that, in reality, this may represent very good progress, as the demands and expectations of the new National Curriculum are greater than those of the previous National Curriculum.