

Changes to national curriculum tests and teacher assessments

On 14 October 2008, the Secretary of State announced that the key stage 3 national curriculum tests are no longer statutory for 2009. The key stage 3 national curriculum tests will be replaced by improved classroom assessment by teachers and frequent reporting to parents in years 7, 8 and 9. There will be a stronger focus on one-to-one tuition and catch up support for pupils in the first years of secondary school.

Schools can choose to administer one or more of the 2009 key stage 3 national curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science and should place an order before 12 December 2008.

The National Assessment Agency (NAA) will continue to provide further updates about key stage 3 requirements for teacher assessment and reporting in 2009.

Changes for key stage 3

As the key stage 3 national curriculum tests are now non-statutory, the decision to administer the tests in 2009 will be at the discretion of the headteacher and school governors. End of key stage tests can contribute to the broader range of evidence of pupils' work that teachers use when making periodic assessments and judgements about overall national curriculum levels. Schools will need to determine whether using the end of key stage 3 national curriculum tests supports their wider assessment policy.

Schools are still required to submit teacher assessment level judgements to the NAA at the end of key stage 3. Teacher assessment level judgements will only need to be submitted in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Schools are still required to report teacher assessment level judgements to parents, carers or guardians for both core and foundation subjects.

How do schools administer the non-statutory tests?

Schools can choose to administer one or more of the 2009 national curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science. As in previous years, pupils need to have covered the full programme of study in a subject in order to fully access a test. Pupils will still need to complete all subject papers at the relevant tier in order to be awarded an overall national curriculum test level in the subject.

The tests can be administered any time deemed suitable by the school, and there is no requirement to register pupils, apply for access arrangements or sign a headteacher's declaration form. Schools should still consider the full range of access arrangements to enable all pupils to access the tests and to ensure that their test results accurately reflect their abilities. Decisions about access arrangements should be made within the school. Local authorities will not be required to monitor administration of the tests.

Schools will need to make their own marking arrangements as external marking is no longer provided. The test materials will include *Mark scheme* packs and pupil packs which will be sent to schools and available on the NAA website at naa.org.uk/tests. Level threshold tables and a teacher's guide will also be published online. These materials will provide all the information schools need to mark the tests and determine levels. As these tests will not be externally marked, schools need to order the appropriate number of *Mark scheme* packs for each subject. Schools will decide how to use the results, including whether these are reported to parents alongside the teacher assessment levels. Test results will not be collected or published.

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2009 key stage 3 test orders

The key stage 3 national curriculum tests will be freely available to all schools (maintained and independent) who place an order on the 2009 *Test orders* website before 12 December 2008. The method for ordering key stage 3 tests remains unchanged. To access the 2009 *Test orders* website, go to naa.org.uk/testorders.

Assessing pupils' progress

Schools are still required to submit teacher assessment level judgements to the NAA at the end of key stage 3 in the core subjects and report these to parents, carers or guardians. The deadline for online submission of teacher assessments is Friday, 10 July 2009.

When making teacher assessment judgements, schools are increasingly using the Assessing pupils' progress (APP) materials. This structured approach was developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) with the National Strategies and equips teachers to make judgements on pupils' progress. It supports teachers to improve their understanding of learners' needs and to tailor their planning and teaching accordingly, by enabling them to:

- use diagnostic information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses to improve teaching, learning and pupils' progress
- make reliable judgements related to national standards drawing on a wide range of evidence
- track pupils' progress.

For further information on APP please visit the QCA website at qca.org.uk/assessment.

The DCSF *Assessment for learning strategy* (May 2008) sets out the financial and professional development support available to schools to implement APP. The expectation is that by 2011 all schools will have embedded the APP approach to teacher assessment.

In addition, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has recently produced *Personalised learning – a practical guide* which examines key aspects of personalised learning. The guide aims to support schools moving to a system based on progression, underpinned by accurate assessment for learning, and with pupils supported, where necessary, with relevant interventions,

including one-to-one support. The Government committed £1 billion for personalised learning across 2005-2008, and £1.6 billion has subsequently been allocated from 2008-2011 for personalised learning and special educational needs. Copies of the guide are available from online publications at <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk>

What if I ordered 2009 key stage 3 national curriculum tests before the policy changed on 14 October 2008?

Schools need to decide whether they still want pupils to sit the tests for all three subjects in 2009 and then review the test order accordingly, stating the number of *Mark scheme* packs and pupil estimates per subject. All orders placed before 12 December 2008 will be processed and materials will be delivered to schools in April 2009.

Schools who wish to amend or cancel their order, should go to the 2009 *Test orders* website at naa.org.uk/testorders and select the 'test orders' tab to edit the existing order.

The future of key stage 3 assessments

The new expert group set up by the DCSF will advise on key stage 3 assessments. In particular they will focus on:

- the introduction of national-level sampling for key stage 3 so that standards at age 14 across the education system as a whole can be monitored by the public year on year
- provision of regular reports to parents
- provision of training and support to ensure teachers can track pupils' progress rigorously
- the impact of the new measures on teachers' workload.

Please check the NAA website for regularly updated frequently asked questions at naa.org.uk/faqs.

Contact details

If you have any queries about key stage 3 national curriculum tests, please contact the national curriculum tests helpline on 08700 60 60 40.