

Formative Assessment – Initial Guidance

Design and Technology Association

Introduction

DfE's website states:

'As part of our reforms to the national curriculum, the current system of 'levels' and level descriptions used to report children's attainment and progress will be removed. It will not be replaced. Schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative assessment, to support pupil attainment and progression.'

Perhaps the single most frequently asked question in relation to the new National Curriculum, particularly by secondary schools, is how should we assess pupils' work now the levels have gone? The aim of this initial guidance is to set out some principles to guide the development of formative, ongoing assessment systems in primary and secondary schools.

Developing a formative assessment system

According to the DfE schools are now able to focus their teacher assessment and reporting in D&T, not on a set of opaque level descriptions but on the essential knowledge, understanding and skills that all pupils should learn. It means that teachers have the freedom to develop a curriculum with challenging and relevant content, against which it is not possible to impose a centrally prescribed assessment system. How schools develop and teach a curriculum which is relevant to their pupils and how they track the progress they make against it, is for them to decide.

The D&T Association is positive about this change in approach and would advise schools to consider the following points when developing school-based assessment systems:

- Teachers need to consider more broadly what the pupil actually knows, understands and can do, rather than focus on a numerical level. The new programmes of study set out what pupils should be taught by the end of each key stage.
- An assessment system should be built into the school curriculum, so that schools can check what pupils have learnt and whether they are on track to meet National Curriculum expectations at the end of the key stage.
- During school inspections, if Ofsted gather and evaluate evidence about pupils' progress in D&T, this will be informed by the school's chosen pupil tracking data.
- To promote consistency, groups of schools may choose to use a common approach to formative assessment, for example across a local area, academy chain or federation.

Guiding principles

The D&T Association recommends that schools use the following principles, which are consistent with the Government's initial thinking. A formative assessment system should help schools to:

- set out **steps** so that pupils reach or exceed the end of key stage expectations
- judge whether pupils are on **track** to meet end of key stage expectations
- pinpoint aspects of the curriculum where pupils are **falling behind** and **recognise exceptional performance**
- support **planning** and **teaching** for all pupils
- **report to parents** and, where pupils move to other schools, provide clear information about each pupil's strengths, weaknesses and progress

Schools may find the Progression Framework developed by the D&T Association and National Curriculum Expert Group helpful when developing formative assessment systems. This is freely available from <https://www.data.org.uk/for-education/curriculum/dt-national-curriculum-for-england-2014/>.