

# Report of the Expert Group on Assessment

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# Foreword

Dear Secretary of State,

This is the report of the Expert Group on Assessment that you asked us to undertake as part of your announcement on 14 October 2008 about changes to the assessment and accountability system, including the discontinuation of statutory national Key Stage 3 tests.

You established the group to provide further advice to you on a range of aspects of assessment. We have followed the terms of reference set out for us and have taken the opportunity to consider a range of written and oral evidence from both individuals and organisations. This has included evidence from experienced practitioners as well as from those who are primarily concerned with the theoretical aspects of assessment.

We are grateful for their contributions which have enhanced our own understanding of the complex issues in question and contributed to lively discussion within the group. This evidence, in addition to the report of the House of Commons Children's, Schools and Families Select Committee on Testing and Assessment, and the report of Lord Sutherland of Houndwood's Inquiry into the delivery of National Curriculum Tests in 2008, have all contributed significantly to our recommendations.

In addition to considering the specific areas of our remit, we have also covered a wider range of issues in response to evidence which has been brought to our attention and our own experiences in the education system. We believe that the recommendations we have made will help the assessment system to meet more effectively the needs of those who use it, including pupils, teachers, parents, Government, and the public.

In forming our recommendations, we have sought to answer two key questions: what are the essential purposes of assessment and how can they best be met? We have laid out what are, in our view, the four central purposes of assessment and then shaped our recommendations to create an assessment system that best meets them.

We have set out both short and long term recommendations. In the short term we believe our report sets out the best course of immediate action but we are aware that future developments could mean further changes need to be implemented.

Assessment is vital for achieving high standards and eradicating unacceptable differences in the outcomes of education. When used well, assessment provides invaluable information on how we can continue to improve teaching and learning. Summative tests have as important a role as formative assessment and both are essential to maintaining an excellent education system.

We wish to thank all those who contributed to our work and especially the children of the National Children's Bureau who brought us a refreshingly different perspective. Mick Walker of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and Miriam Rosen of Ofsted deserve special note for the invaluable advice they offered throughout this process. We are extremely grateful to Professor Pam Sammons, Dr Jo-Anne Baird and David Linsell, head teacher of Ratton School, for taking the time to meet with us personally and for their valuable advice. We would also like to thank our secretariat for their work.

We hope that this report can build on the success of England's assessment and education system, and benefit all children, whose educational assessment should always contribute to their progress.

Yours sincerely,

The Expert Group on Assessment

Dame Yasmin Bevan

Professor Sir Tim Brighouse

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# Introduction

1. This report explores the purposes of assessment, the extent to which the current system meets these purposes, and what improvements should be made to it.
2. The report of the Select Committee Inquiry on Testing and Assessment highlighted the many purposes to which tests and assessments are sometimes put, and the problems which can arise when these purposes are not clearly defined or designed.
3. The current system incorporates a range of different types of assessment which are used to meet a number of different purposes. At an early stage in the Group's work, it was decided that, in making recommendations to improve the assessment system, it would be important to be clear what the major purposes of assessment were up to the end of Key Stage 3. We concluded that there were four key purposes, and in our report we have considered the assessment system from the perspective of these four purposes:

## Four Purposes

- to optimise the effectiveness of pupils' learning and teachers' teaching;
- to hold individual schools accountable for their performance;
- to provide parents with information about their child's progress; and
- to provide reliable information about national standards over time.

4. Each part of the assessment system puts varying emphases on each of these purposes. It is important to be clear which part of the assessment system serves which purpose. This is to ensure that each purpose is being adequately met and to minimise the extent to which one purpose is met at the expense of another, especially the first of those listed above.

## Making assessment work for pupils and teachers

5. The assessment system as a whole must prioritise the use of assessment to benefit pupils' learning. Whilst we welcome the considerable progress in this area over recent years, there is room for further improvement.

In particular, we would like to see greater emphasis on formative assessment in order to aid pupil progress – all teachers need to be skilled in accurately and continuously assessing where pupils are in their learning, and what they need to learn next. We also believe that greater collaboration between teachers at different key stages, to develop a shared language of assessment and support accurate judgements, would be of considerable benefit in securing pupils' progress. This should include cross-Key Stage moderation and more effective use of assessment to strengthen transition between and within key stages, particularly between Key Stages 2 and 3. Our proposals on these areas are covered in chapter 1.

### **Making assessment work as part of the school accountability system**

6. The school accountability system will be covered in detail in the DCSF White Paper on 21st century schools; it is also currently the subject of a Select Committee inquiry. However, it is important to set out here our position on accountability, because it has been fundamental to our approach to the remit, and is a key purpose of tests that underpins our recommendations. Our argument is explained in greater detail in chapter 2.
7. A high level of accountability for each school is beneficial for everyone who has a stake in the education system: pupils, parents, schools and the taxpayer. The fact that we have strong accountability in the education system means that we can confidently devolve a lot of autonomy to schools and invest high levels of trust in teachers and school leaders. It would therefore be misguided to weaken accountability.
8. Externally marked tests and examinations play an important role in the accountability system. External validation of pupils' performance is vital for the public accountability of schools, for example, in fulfilling their responsibilities for providing accurate information to parents about their individual children's attainment at the end of primary and secondary education.
9. Whilst the school system as a whole places a high level of trust in schools and teachers, there is a view that this is not always the case in the area of assessment. The argument has been made that removing all externally marked Key Stage 2 tests and replacing them with teacher assessment only would demonstrate a higher level of trust in teachers. Whilst we have considered this argument, and evidence about the reliability of both tests and teacher assessment, we have concluded that this approach would represent a step backwards, both for pupils' learning and for school accountability.
10. The accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment is improving; and whilst there are issues around variability of marking in tests, independently measuring pupils against national standards remains, in our view, the best way of providing objective information on the performance of each pupil and each school.

11. National curriculum tests which are applied across the whole system, and at significant cost, need to be used sparingly and carefully. Our remit already reflected the Government's decision that the use of this kind of test was not necessary to meet assessment purposes at secondary level because GCSEs and other general qualifications provide external validation and accountability for each secondary school.
12. At the end of the primary phase, however, there are no such external qualifications. We believe, therefore, that the case for retaining some external testing at Year 6 in each primary school is strong. We have questioned whether the full range of current tests is necessary. We have also looked at evidence from recent piloting about how the test model at Key Stage 2 can be developed and improved through different approaches.
13. In the short term, recommendations are offered to improve the nature of the tests and the way in which the test data are used. For the longer term, we propose that alternative methods of testing and assessment should be trialled, and that teacher assessment should be strengthened. Further decisions should then be taken once evidence from these trials is available.
14. The recommendations in chapter 2 are designed to build trust in formative assessment within a system where accredited summative assessment is carried out in conditions which are rigorous, valid, reliable, transparent and fair.

### **Making assessment work for parents**

15. The third purpose of assessment is that it should be used to provide clear and accessible information to parents on their children's attainment and progress. Reporting to parents has long been a feature of the education system, but there is still too much variation in the quality of information, and in the frequency and ways it is communicated. We believe that in order for parents to support their children's education well, they need to be equipped with high-quality information that is easily understood and comprehensive but not over-elaborate.
16. We also believe that parents have the right to expect robust, externally validated assessments of their child's attainment which is nationally comparable, after a full phase of seven years at a publicly-funded school. Our recommendations in chapter 3 are designed to improve the quality and usefulness of the information shared with parents.

### **Making assessment work for tracking national standards over time**

17. An over-riding principle of a national assessment system is to make sure that the standards against which pupils are assessed are held at a consistent level over time; the maxim being 'if you want to measure change don't change the measure'. This is vital for international and intra-national comparisons.
18. Although national tests are no longer administered at Key Stage 3, it remains important to ensure that the public and the

Government can monitor average national performance at this crucial stage in pupils' learning over an extended period of time through national sample tests, which should be taken at the end of Year 9. England has participated in international comparison studies for many years, such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, which yield valuable information on how our pupils perform in comparison with those in other countries. The recommendations include suggestions for integration of these tests into a more frequent cycle of national sample testing.

### Summary

19. By considering assessment from these four perspectives, we have sought to recognise strengths in the current system and also areas for improvement – both in the nature of the assessments themselves, and in the uses to which they are put.
20. It is a great strength of this country's education system that we have the level of accountability and public transparency that we do, through publishing both national test data and Ofsted inspection reports for each school. A high level of school accountability benefits everyone in the education system. There is an important role for externally marked tests in the accountability system, alongside Ofsted inspections and other elements. Whilst secondary schools are held to account through Key Stage 4 results, it is right that primary schools should be held to account, in part, through the results of externally marked Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics, marking the end of a seven-year phase of primary education.
21. However, the accountability system does not at present adequately capture how well schools are performing across a range of areas and outcomes for their pupils. Although externally marked tests should continue to play an essential role in the primary school accountability system, they should not be the only accountability measure. DCSF should therefore develop the School Report Card urgently, so that it recognises the broader range of outcomes to which schools contribute, as well as giving due credit to schools for focusing on the progress of all their children, not only for those children who achieve the threshold level of performance. DCSF should then actively promote the School Report Card as an alternative to Achievement and Attainment Tables as the focus of public accountability for schools.
22. Whilst schools should continue to assess English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 through national tests, we believe that the system as a whole would benefit from a different way of assessing science and technology at Key Stage 2. Raising the profile of science at Key Stage 2 has been beneficial to science, but the present Key Stage 2 science test does not best assess what most needs to be developed and improved in children's knowledge, skills and understanding of science.
23. We therefore propose a move away from externally marked science tests at Key Stage



2, and recommend instead that both science and technology should now be assessed through high-quality teacher assessment, supported by materials to help teachers continue to improve the quality of their assessment skills.

24. We also think that the Key Stage 2 tests should be taken later in the summer term of Year 6. This is so that pupils continue to spend time on English and mathematics and to help develop the quality and robustness of the teacher assessment data transferred to secondary school on transition. We have made further recommendations to ease this pivotal transition in a pupil's education so that more pupils can transfer to secondary school in the best possible way. The primary graduation certificate could have a real impact on the self-esteem of those about to start secondary schools, especially the most vulnerable who do not always receive strong support from home.

25. We were asked to examine how best a national sampling system could be introduced so that we can still track standards in Key Stage 3. Our recommendation will allow for a system of minimal burden and the maximum benefit.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Continuing work

(a) Key Stage 3 tests should continue to be made available to schools, in the same way as optional tests are available for other school year groups.

(b) DCSF and its partners should continue to promote Assessment for Learning, including the use of 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' materials, in all primary and secondary schools through the existing strategy.

### Recommendation 2: Cross Key Stage moderation of teacher assessment to improve reliability and trust

- (a) Within and between schools, both Early Years practitioners and Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in moderation of Early Year Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) judgements; and both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers should be involved in the moderation of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments.
- (b) As APP is introduced, primary and secondary schools should work together to ensure the consistency of Key Stage 2 teacher assessment judgements.

### Recommendation 3: Improving transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

- (a) DCSF should commission the development of an 'extended study' which all pupils would begin at primary school and complete at their secondary school, in order to help create curriculum continuity and a smooth and consistent transition.
- (b) All Year 6 pupils should spend a short period of time at the end of the summer term in the secondary school which they will attend in the autumn.
- (c) Primary schools should use 'primary graduation certificates' to recognise each child's achievements in a range of subjects

and areas, and highlight the child's strengths before he or she progresses to secondary school.

**Recommendation 4: Ensuring that lower attainers at Key Stage 2 catch up at the start of Key Stage 3**

- (a) Local authorities should focus one-to-one tuition funding on children entering Key Stage 3 in Year 7, and those in Year 8, where their performance is below national expectations.
- (b) DCSF's review of the Dedicated Schools Grant should consider how best to use school funding to support transition and catch-up in Year 7 and Year 8.
- (c) DCSF, in conjunction with test development experts, should develop a suitable assessment to be used at the end of Year 7 for measuring the progress of those children who entered Key Stage 3 below national expectations.

**Recommendation 5: Strengthening the quality of teacher assessment**

- (a) The assessment capacity of the teaching profession should be increased further, by encouraging teachers to take part in moderation and in one-to-one tuition. In the longer term, DCSF should explore with its partners the possibility of including more coverage of assessment in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses, in the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL), and in National College for School Leadership's (NCSL) middle leadership and National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) courses.

- (b) All schools should have a lead assessor, with the longer-term aspiration that by 2020, all schools should have access to an accredited Chartered Assessor.
- (c) DCSF should work with assessment organisations to develop a national accreditation of schools with an institution-level mark of excellence in assessment, with the expectation that these schools should then share their expertise with other schools.

**Recommendation 6: School Report Card**

- (a) DCSF should introduce the School Report Card, as soon as is practically possible, to give proper recognition to schools' performance across a broader range of outcomes. The School Report Card should replace the Achievement and Attainment Tables as the focus of public accountability for schools.
- (b) The School Report Card should recognise functional skills qualifications as well as other test and examination results in its indication of academic achievement and progression.

**Recommendation 7: Changing assessment at Key Stage 2**

- (a) Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics should remain as a key accountability measure for all primary schools.
- (b) These tests should be administered in the middle of June, a month later than the current testing week, so that pupils continue to spend time on English and mathematics and to develop the quality and robustness of teacher assessment data transferred to secondary schools.

- (c) Key Stage 2 science tests should be discontinued; science and ICT at Key Stage 2 should be assessed through teacher assessment; and assessment tasks should be developed for science.
- (d) DCSF should publish the guidance it has developed on ensuring that preparation for Key Stage 2 tests is proportionate and educationally appropriate, and encourage schools to follow that guidance.
- (e) DCSF should continue to trial single level tests at Key Stage 2, including trialling their use in an accountability context.
- (f) As single level tests and the Chartered Assessor models are further developed, trialled and implemented, DCSF should monitor whether a sufficiently robust moderation infrastructure exists for teacher assessment to be used as part of the accountability system.

#### **Recommendation 8: Reporting to parents**

- (a) DCSF should provide, with the help of Ofsted and others, case study examples of different forms of good practice in reporting to parents. This should communicate both the minimum level of contact and engagement which parents should expect to have, and also provide examples of outstanding practice in this area. It should include illustrations of written reports available at any time on e-learning platforms to which parents have access, and appropriately timed review meetings including discussing progress and sharing targets for next steps.

- (b) Ofsted should check how highly parents rate the parental engagement and involvement arrangements at their school. We welcome DCSF's and Ofsted's proposal to develop parental surveys as part of the well-being indicators and would want parental views to contribute to the School Report Card. Ofsted should continue to carry out parental satisfaction surveys when they inspect schools.

#### **Recommendation 9: National sample testing at Key Stage 3 to monitor standards over time**

- (a) A national sample testing system should be introduced for pupils at the end of Year 9, in order to monitor national standards over time.
- (b) DCSF should make participation in these national sample tests compulsory for those schools and pupils who are selected each year.
- (c) The tests should not aim to measure standards in different local authorities, schools or classes. The results should not be used in any way for school or local authority accountability, and results should not be published at school level or at local authority level.
- (d) Where possible, test items should be linked to international comparison surveys in which England already participates (e.g. TIMSS).

# Chapter 1: Making assessment work for pupils and teachers

- 1.1** Assessment practices and systems must always seek to improve educational outcomes for individual children. Much valuable work has been done over the past twenty years to highlight the impact of good uses of assessment on teaching and learning. Whatever else it achieves, assessment must contribute powerfully to children's unhindered progress throughout their education.
- 1.2** A great deal of evidence indicates that this is best achieved through a combination of summative and formative assessment – both stepping back at regular intervals to take stock of a pupil's performance, particularly at transition points between phases of education (such as primary to secondary, and secondary to post-16), and also assessing on a more informal, day-to-day basis in order to contribute to pupils' learning. Some forms of assessment can be 'formative' and 'summative', i.e. Key Stage 2 tests can 'summarise' the level that pupils have reached in English and mathematics, and help secondary schools 'form' a view as to where pupils should begin their learning in their new school.

## Summative assessment

- 1.3** Summative assessments, such as tests at the end of a key stage, may or may not be used for accountability purposes. For example, the current system in England uses tests at the end of Key Stage 2 for the purpose of school accountability, but no longer uses tests at the end of Key Stage 3 for this purpose (see Chapter 2).
- 1.4** However, the very existence of summative tests can also be educationally valuable, quite apart from their use within an accountability system. Drawing on a wide range of evidence, the Select Committee report on Testing and Assessment concludes that 'appropriate testing can help to ensure that teachers focus on achievement and often that has meant excellent teaching, which is very sound'.
- 1.5** We agree with this conclusion, both from evidence we have seen for our own report, and from our broader experience. Evidence from this year suggests that many schools believe this to be the case. Whilst many schools have welcomed the decision no longer to require schools to administer the Key Stage 3 tests and report the results, around three quarters of secondary schools

have ordered Key Stage 3 tests from QCA for summer 2009. There is still considerable demand from schools for access to test materials as part of a broader assessment system. Since many schools find these tests useful, they should be able to continue to use them on a voluntary basis. The tests should be made available for those schools who want them in the same way as optional tests are available for other school year groups.

### Recommendation 1: Continuing Work

- (a) **KS3 tests should continue to be made available to schools, in the same way as optional tests are available for other school year groups.**

## Formative assessment

1.6 Teachers, school leaders and others have increasingly recognised the great value of using Assessment for Learning (or formative assessment) as well as making an assessment of learning (summative assessment). If assessment is going to genuinely aid individual pupils to make progress in their learning, it cannot simply be about summative test and examination results; rather, it requires teachers to have a range of strategies to assess how their pupils are doing on a day-to-day and periodic basis, and to help these pupils to understand what they already know and how best to learn what they do not. The work of Dylan Wiliam, Paul Black and others has made an important

contribution to spreading understanding of formative assessment throughout the teaching profession.<sup>1</sup>

- 1.7 However, we believe that there is room for further development in the ways in which assessment is used to support pupils' learning. Some teachers still rely too heavily on summative tests at the expense of developing their own formative assessment skills, and there is still unevenness across the school system in the effective use of Assessment for Learning. One in four Ofsted school inspection reports refers to the assessment of learning as a key area for improvement.
- 1.8 To strengthen the effectiveness of assessment in helping both pupils and teachers, we propose a greater focus on three areas:
- continuing to improve Assessment for Learning across all primary and secondary schools;
  - encouraging more collaboration on assessment and moderation between different key stages, and particularly at the point of transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3; and
  - ensuring teachers have access to the necessary training and support to help them to assess effectively.

## Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP)

1.9 Assessment for Learning (AfL) was defined by the Assessment Reform Group in 2002 as 'the

process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'. It is an approach that is a fundamental part of good teaching and learning rather than an add-on or a specific set of materials.

- 1.10** Evidence from pilots shows that AfL creates a valuable common language for developing high quality assessment, and ensuring that all children know where they are in their learning and how they can improve; this information is also valuable for parents.
- 1.11** A range of tools has been developed to support teachers in making robust, reliable and educationally useful assessments of their pupils. These include the Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) materials, which have been developed by QCA and the National Strategies, and on which we have considered a range of evidence. This structured approach to teacher assessment sets clear criteria by which a pupil can be assessed, so that the teacher is secure in assigning a pupil a level on a scale of progress. Materials are currently available in reading, writing and mathematics for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3; and also in science and ICT for Key Stage 3.
- 1.12** The Assessment for Learning Strategy, launched in May 2008, is a project jointly owned by DCSF, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and others. The strategy sets out how these partners have committed to work together to develop Assessment for Learning over the period 2008-2011, with £50 million available for each of these years. One of the aims of the AfL Strategy is to ensure that all primary and secondary schools are introduced to the APP materials, and to offer support to those schools in implementing them consistently across mathematics and English, and subsequently in other core subjects.
- 1.13** Evidence from schools which have participated either in the APP pilots or in the Making Good Progress Pilot, or which are now implementing APP as part of the national programme, indicates that using and understanding APP has improved the quality of their assessments. It is also important in improving a shared and common language of assessment among teachers. This is especially important for better transition between phases and consistency in pupils' education, so that their next teacher can continue to support them on their learning journey in the most appropriate and consistent way.
- 1.14** We have noted that some teachers and teacher organisations have concerns about the increased workload associated with APP. This has been a particular issue in schools which trialled APP with only a small number of pupils in their class, whilst continuing to use their existing assessment systems for the rest of their pupils.
- 1.15** We recognise that there is an upfront investment in developing teachers' expertise so that APP is used effectively and is not merely a "tick box" exercise. We have noted, however, that whilst many teachers report an

initial increase in workload when getting to grips with APP, many quickly become familiar with the criteria and the workload reduces significantly. Many teachers have indicated that they think the initial extra effort is worth it, as they can see the value of tracking pupils' attainment for planning future teaching, identifying the next steps in learning for each pupil, and providing structured feedback to pupils and their parents on their progress.

- 1.16** It is therefore our view that, done well, APP represents a significant contribution to the professional development of teachers, which could have a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and upon the approach to assessment in general.

**(b) DCSF and its partners should continue to promote Assessment for Learning, including the use of 'Assessing Pupils' Progress' materials, in all primary and secondary schools through the existing strategy.**

### Cross-Key Stage working and transition

- 1.17** Assessing a pupil's achievements at the end of a key stage, either through teacher assessment or through an externally marked test, can have many benefits: it enables pupils, parents and teachers to stand back and look at the attainment over the course of an extended period, and see the level of progress from the last key stage. It is also the starting point from which a pupil's next

teacher can build further on his or her education, and so it is vitally important that it is as accurate and detailed as possible.

- 1.18** However, for a variety of reasons, transition between key stages or between educational institutions is not always as smooth as it might be. In particular, from the perspective of our remit, assessment information does not always play as helpful a role as it might in facilitating this transition.
- 1.19** Teacher assessments are largely moderated, at present, within the confines of a key stage, i.e. Key Stage 1 teacher assessments are moderated almost solely by other Key Stage 1 teachers. There can be insufficient trust between teachers and educational professionals on either side of the 'transitional divide' – for example, Key Stage 1 teachers may not have full confidence in the assessments made by Early Years practitioners. Key Stage 2 practitioners do not always trust the results from the end of Key Stage 1 (especially when there are stand-alone junior and infant schools), and many Key Stage 3 teachers do not believe that the Key Stage 2 test results of their new Year 7 pupils are an accurate reflection of the pupils' ability.
- 1.20** As well as a lack of trust between teachers and institutions there can be concerns over the amount of detailed information that is passed on. Clearly, more detailed information is of greater help in understanding the exact needs of an individual pupil and thereby securing good transition than an overall single attainment level. However, it is

important to decide what information is worthwhile and what is not. Demands to over-collect information will risk losing the goodwill and confidence of teachers in the system and should be guarded against.

- 1.21** We believe that teachers are certainly interested in their pupils' long-term achievement and not just in their immediate results, but further improvements could be made to the system in order to increase the trust between teachers at different key stages, and to promote a more long-term view of their pupils' achievements and progress.

### **Moderation between Early Years and Key Stage 1, and between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2**

- 1.22** We therefore echo the report of the Primary Curriculum review in recommending that Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFS Profile assessments within schools. This should lead to a greater shared understanding of the similarities and differences between approaches to teaching and learning in these two phases; greater trust between professionals at these two phases; and smoother transition between Early Years and Key Stage 1.
- 1.23** We have also considered assessment at the end of Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 are based on a range of evidence, including national assessment tests which are marked within schools and are used to support and confirm teacher judgements. These are then submitted to the

local authority. Local authorities moderate 25% of their schools each year, and QCA moderate 25% of local authority moderation processes each year. Feedback from local authorities shows that teachers and local authorities have welcomed the new assessment system at Key Stage 1 as they feel that it allows teachers to report more accurately on children's attainment and that it has helped Key Stage 1 teachers to focus more sharply on their own formative assessment skills.

- 1.24** More school-level moderation of Key Stage 1 results, involving Key Stage 2 teachers, would bring similar benefits including: greater shared understanding of each key stage; Key Stage 2 teachers having greater confidence in the judgements of Key Stage 1 teachers; and smoother transition between the two key stages.
- 1.25** As we have recommended for the transition between earlier education phases, there is great benefit in having teachers from the two phases involved in moderation of teacher assessment. This helps to develop a shared language and understanding and contributes to the development of richer, more useful information being passed on. We think this could have a particular benefit between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teachers, where the extent of change in the organisation of the curriculum is often greatest. This will be particularly relevant where teacher assessment scores which are transferred to secondary schools and subsequently published test results do not correlate.



### **Recommendation 2: Cross-Key Stage moderation of teacher assessment to improve reliability and trust**

- (a) Within and between schools, both Early Years practitioners and Key Stage 1 teachers should be involved in the moderation of EYFSP judgements; and both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers should be involved in the moderation of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments.**
- (b) As APP is introduced primary and secondary schools should work together to ensure the consistency of Key Stage 2 teacher assessment judgements.**

### **Transition between primary and secondary school**

- 1.26** We have noted particular issues around transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The experience of pupils, teachers, and parents, indicates that this transition is often challenging, and evidence from Ofsted and other research literature supports the view that this transition is often a weak feature of our education system.
- 1.27** From a school's perspective, this is hardly surprising in light of the considerable logistical challenges of transition between primary and secondary schools. Some children arrive at a secondary school with Year 7 pupils drawn from over fifty primary schools. Good practice in securing smooth

transition for individuals is more difficult to model in secondary schools that receive pupils from high numbers of primary schools – practice which would be taken for granted in some other partnerships of primary and secondary schools.

- 1.28** We are aware of a great deal of good practice on transition arrangements in schools, school partnerships and local authorities, for example 'primary classrooms' set up in secondary schools for visits from primary schools, joint appointments and of exciting joint curriculum development, including peer tutoring and joint residential weeks for Year 6 and Year 7/8 pupils. All are useful and well worth wider adoption. Smooth transition will also be facilitated as the APP materials are used more widely in both primary and secondary schools, as they provide both a common language and assessment tool between these two phases.
- 1.29** We have made three recommendations which build on the good transition practice of many schools. These are: the use of an extended study; time spent in secondary school during Year 6; and the use of primary graduation certificates. We give the reasons for these recommendations in more detail below.
- 1.30** In order for all pupils to be able to benefit from good primary to secondary transition arrangements, it would be helpful for all schools to participate in an 'extended study' of work which they begin in Year 6 and complete in Year 7 at their new secondary school.

- 1.31** This model was used recently in London Challenge, where secondary schools with large numbers of feeder primary schools from other boroughs overcame the logistical challenges of the project and reported that it provided a very effective bridge between primary and secondary schools. Some of the most successful elements were the cross-phase meetings and dialogue between primary and secondary schools, including opportunities for cross-phase moderation, joint planning and review meetings between Y6 and Y7 teachers which led to a very productive focus on pedagogy.
- 1.32** The extended study should be exciting and engage pupils in a challenging study over the period of transition. The group accepts that in order for this to be effective and useful, especially to pupils' Year 7 teachers, it needs to be done by all primary schools. When the extended study becomes commonly used we believe any logistical issues will be solved as the extended study will become part of the information that is already shared between primary and secondary schools that have a good transition process in place.
- 1.33** In order to maximise the benefits and minimise any potential burdens associated with this project, we recommend that it should be piloted through one of the DCSF's existing programmes (such as the City Challenges or Making Good Progress pilot) on a wide geographical basis – across a number of local authorities and in both rural and urban environments. The extended study should both challenge and interest pupils, and leave room for teachers to tailor it to their pupils' needs. The pilot should investigate how best to overcome the logistical challenges of ensuring the extended study follows the pupil to their secondary school, and explore the possibilities offered by electronic means.
- 1.34** It would also be beneficial for all Year 6 pupils to spend some time in the summer term of Year 6 at the secondary school which they will attend in the autumn, in order to familiarise themselves with the new setting before they start attending it full-time. This would allow them to feel more comfortable when starting in September and to meet their new teachers and classmates. But, if it is a well-designed programme, it will also help with many other elements of transition.
- 1.35** The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum discussed the importance of the five "transition bridges", and Key Stage 2 pupils spending time in secondary school is a practical way to achieve these.<sup>2</sup> It will create an opportunity for data to be shared between schools, secondary schools will be able to get a better understanding of the academic and pastoral needs of their incoming pupils, and find out where in their learning they are and how best to offer continuity in the new academic year. It will give the pupils a clear idea of what will be expected from them when they start secondary school.
- 1.36** We are also recommending a graduation certificate as a celebration of pupils

completing their primary education and of what they can do. It is not an assessment – it is about letting pupils know that they have done well and helping their sense of achievement before going on to secondary school. It should include three to five areas that a child is good at or keen on, and these should not be restricted to purely academic subjects, but could include a broad and balanced range of activities or skills a child may have demonstrated. Where possible, it should include ways that the pupil can continue to develop in the future, as this information will be useful to the pupils, parents and the secondary school.

**1.37** Primary school teachers will initially have a much better understanding of their pupils' capabilities than their secondary colleagues because of the number of contact hours they have with them, and thus will pick up on the unique interests and abilities of each child that could contribute to the graduation certificate.

**1.38** We do not think that the certificate should be mandatory but that schools will choose to do this, as many already do, because of the benefits it offers their students. The very small increase in workload to prepare these for their Year 6 pupils is far outweighed by the benefit they can bring to children's sense of accomplishment and passion for learning. This is most important for the pupils who do not receive strong support for their learning from home and for those who do not achieve as well as others in traditional academic subjects.

**1.39** New form tutors and other staff will be able to see how they could continue to develop the child's interest and ability in the areas mentioned on the certificate. Where possible these certificates should be presented to the pupils in a graduation ceremony, marking the end of their primary education. This not only gives the pupils an event to remember but also creates an opportunity for parents to be engaged with their child's accomplishment and future development.

### **Recommendation 3: Improving transition from KS2 and KS3**

- (a) DCSF should commission the development of an 'extended study', which all pupils would begin at primary school and complete at their secondary school, in order to help create curriculum continuity and a smooth and consistent transition.**
- (b) All Year 6 pupils should spend a short period of time at the end of the summer term in the secondary school which they will attend in the autumn.**
- (c) Primary schools should use 'primary graduation certificates' to recognise each child's achievements in a range of subjects and areas, and highlight the child's strengths before he or she progresses to secondary school.**

## Supporting the most vulnerable pupils at Key Stage 3

- 1.40** Although improved transition arrangements will help all pupils to perform to the best of their ability at secondary school, the transition between primary and secondary school can be a point of particular vulnerability for those pupils who have not secured a strong grasp of reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. It is vital that pupils who have not achieved level 4 in primary school should do so as quickly as possible in secondary school, in order to access the secondary curriculum and successfully progress in their education. This is why we believe that it is important that there should be an externally marked test in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- 1.41** It is not surprising that those pupils who leave primary school without a firm grasp of basic skills in English and mathematics suffer from an attainment gap between themselves and their more successful peers that widens with each successive year. It is therefore vital that pupils who need to get back on track should receive extra support at an early stage.
- 1.42** Although high quality classroom teaching is essential and the right of every child, some children need more time, and possibly one-to-one specialist teaching, to make progress. There is a variety of small group and one-to-one catch-up programmes, designed to ensure that all children receive the kind of support they need. The current Making Good Progress pilot offers ten hours of targeted one-to-one tuition in reading, writing or mathematics for up to 10 percent of the participating Key Stage 2 and 3 cohorts across ten pilot local authorities. The tuition sessions are tailored to tackle the individual pupil's learning needs and to match curricular targets set by the pupil's class or subject teacher.
- 1.43** One-to-one tuition is now being extended nationally. We welcome the Government's commitment to funding these programmes and will look forward to the evaluation of the programme to find out what works best. We recommend that when allocating the tuition money which is made available to them, local authorities should particularly prioritise Year 7 and Year 8 pupils who entered Key Stage 3 without having secured a level 4 in reading, writing or mathematics.
- 1.44** For the longer term, we recommend that the review of the Dedicated Schools Grant which DCSF is currently carrying out should look at the best ways of ensuring that adequate resources are identified to fund good transition arrangements and catch-up for those Year 7 pupils who need extra help, so that schools can continue to fund such long-term arrangements.
- 1.45** It is also vital that there is an assessment in Year 7 of whether these pupils have caught up as a result of the additional support. We therefore recommend that DCSF should work with test development experts to develop a suitable assessment to check the progress of these pupils at the end of Year 7. This should

be designed to show the success (or not) of their catch-up.

**Recommendation 4: Ensuring that lower attainers at Key Stage 2 catch up at the start of Key Stage 3**

- (a) Local authorities should focus one-to-one tuition funding on children entering Key Stage 3 in Year 7, and those in Year 8, where their performance is below national expectations.**
- (b) DCSF's review of the Dedicated Schools Grant should consider how best to use school funding to support transition and catch-up in Year 7 and Year 8.**
- (c) DCSF, in conjunction with test development experts, should develop a suitable assessment to be used at the end of Year 7 for measuring the progress of those children who entered KS3 behind national expectations.**

### Supporting teachers' assessment skills

**1.46** The Group recognises the expertise and commitment of the schools workforce. In all areas of their profession, teachers need access to high-quality training and support in order to develop and maintain their skills. However, insufficient emphasis has been placed on assessment both at initial teacher training and in later professional development. This is now being tackled in part by the introduction of the Assessment for Learning strategy.

- 1.47** We propose that there is a key role for some individuals to take on a specific job as accredited experts and leaders in the field of assessment. This Chartered Assessor role should be the mark of professional excellence which demonstrates publicly the capability of individuals in the use and management of assessment.
- 1.48** We also think that in the longer term, schools who excel in the quality of their assessment (accuracy of judgements, good practice in cross-moderation, effective use of AfL, commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in assessment) should be granted a 'licence to assess', and would then work with other local schools to share their expertise. This would be a mark of excellence and would create schools who could then offer peer-to-peer learning to other schools and moderation. This combined with the development of Chartered Assessors will mean there is significant strengthening of the workforce and the institutional infrastructure to improve the reliability and validity of teacher assessment.
- 1.49** Apart from the daily interaction of pupil and teacher, the wise use of assessment data can prompt improvements in teaching and learning within departments and phases and in schools as a whole. The key word here is 'wise', for data can as easily be misused to the unintended disadvantage of some pupils. Getting this right is particularly important when schools analyse comparative performances of apparently similar schools

and pupils elsewhere. For example, it is important to agree a common and consistent use of the following terms:

- **estimates** – what the data suggests a particular pupil will achieve;
- **predictions** – what, given their present attitudes and habits, pupils are likely to achieve; and
- **targets** – what the pupil agrees he or she will do their best to try to achieve.

**1.50** It is then important to visit other departments and schools to learn what approaches are leading to different pupil outcomes. Many schools use the Fischer Family Trust data to do this. We suggest that discussions take place with the Trust, and other suppliers of school data, to see if they would be prepared to establish a protocol illustrating how data can be used and misused and inviting schools to commit themselves to a good practice guide.

### **Recommendation 5: Strengthening the quality of teacher assessment**

- (a) **The assessment capacity of the teaching profession should be increased further, by encouraging teachers to take part in moderation and in one-to-one tuition. In the longer term, DCSF should explore with its partners the possibility of including more coverage of assessment in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses, in the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL), and in National College for School Leadership's (NCSL) middle leadership and National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) courses.**
- (b) **All schools should have a lead assessor, with the longer-term aspiration that by 2020, all schools should have access to an accredited Chartered Assessor.**
- (c) **DCSF should work with assessment organisations to develop a national accreditation of schools with an institution-level mark of excellence at assessment, with the expectation that these schools should then share their expertise with other schools.**

# Chapter 2: Making assessment work as part of the school accountability system

- 2.1** The fact that we have a strong accountability system means that our education system as a whole can devolve high levels of autonomy to schools and can invest high levels of trust in teachers and school leaders. OECD research shows that the proportion of decisions taken at school level is higher in England than in most other OECD countries – many decisions on budgets, staffing, teaching methods and resources, and on a range of others areas, are taken at school level. In fact, only the Netherlands grants a greater degree of autonomy than England in its education system.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.2** A high level of school accountability, reported to the public, is beneficial for everyone who has a stake in the education system. It is good for outcomes for pupils: evidence from the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment study in 2006 shows that ‘the strongest impact upon student performance was found in regard to the publication of schools’ student achievement data’.<sup>4</sup> It is good for schools: the most successful and most trusted organisations, including outstanding schools, colleges and universities, welcome high levels of accountability as they seek constantly to improve what they do. Finally,
- it is good for the taxpayer: access to high-quality information about standards in schools allows the public to see that their money is being spent effectively.
- 2.3** Externally marked and validated tests play an essential role in the accountability system. Although we do not believe that test results should be the only measure used for accountability, we are convinced that external validation of pupils’ performance is vital for public accountability, as well as being a key part of accountability to parents for their own children’s attainment. Whilst secondary schools are held to account for the performance of their pupils in external assessment through their Key Stage 4 results, primary schools should continue to be held to account in part through their Key Stage 2 test results.
- 2.4** However, there is scope for making aspects of accountability both broader and sharper. Many concerns about testing arise not from the tests themselves but from the uses to which the test data is put, and the impact this can have on school and teacher behaviour. Evidence we have received shows that some schools, teachers and educational organisations are concerned that the use of

the outcomes of external tests for purposes which are 'high stakes' for schools can lead to unequal attention to all pupils' needs, and to pupils being put under undue pressure by teachers as they prepare for, and sit, the tests. It can also lead to schools narrowing the curriculum. This is by no means inevitable – Ofsted frequently highlights evidence of schools that have both high levels of attainment and offer a full and wide-ranging curriculum. However, the narrow focus of the accountability system for primary schools on Key Stage 2 tests does not provide the best incentive for schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum.

**2.5** So although externally marked and validated tests should continue to play an essential role in the primary school accountability system, they should not be the only accountability measure. We welcome the proposed development of the School Report Card, which will recognise the broader range of outcomes to which schools contribute, as well as giving due credit to those schools which focus on the progression of all their children, rather than focusing on borderline pupils. We endorse in principle the idea of a single overall rating on the School Report Card, depending on the exact indicators and weightings which are used to arrive at this overall rating. The School Report Card should make the accountability system both broader, by measuring the full range of ECM outcomes, and sharper, by increasing the attention paid to the progress of every pupil, not only those on the borderline. 'League

tables' cannot be abolished by decree while there are national tests and qualifications taken by all schools. However, DCSF should actively promote the School Report Card as an alternative to Achievement and Attainment tables as the focus of public accountability for schools.

**2.6** Our remit specifically asked us to consider the place of functional skills qualifications. These are new qualifications in English, ICT and mathematics which are being piloted in schools, colleges and through other learning providers, and which will be introduced nationally from September 2010. DCSF describes functional skills as 'practical skills in English, ICT and mathematics that allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life'. The National Curriculum for English and mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4 is now designed to cover the development of functional skills, which will prepare pupils for the new functional skills tests, so no further changes are needed to the curriculum in order to reflect this emphasis on English and mathematics. It is important that the School Report Card should reflect these qualifications, as well as their text and examination results, in its indicators on academic achievement and progression, in order to reflect accurately the school's performance.



**Recommendation 6: School Report Cards**

- (a) DCSF should introduce the School Report Card, as soon as is practically possible, to give proper recognition to schools' performance across a broader range of outcomes. The School Report Card should replace the Achievement and Attainment Tables as the focus of public accountability for schools.**
- (b) The School Report Card should recognise functional skills qualifications as well as other test and examination results in its indication of academic achievement and progression.**

**2.7** As well as broadening the accountability system to take into account a wider range of outcomes, we also want to build stronger trust in teachers as part of a strong accountability system.

**2.8** The school system as a whole places a high level of trust in schools and teachers, but this is not the case in the area of assessment. The assessment system in England could be described as 'weak trust, strong accountability'. We should be aiming, rather, to secure a 'strong trust, strong accountability' system, in which teachers' judgements are seen as reliable, within the framework of strong accountability which we believe is vital to any high-performing school system. However, simply removing externally marked Key Stage 2 tests now, and replacing them with teacher assessment only, would represent a step backwards for pupils'

learning and for school accountability. The accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment is improving. However, it is not yet sufficiently robust and consistent to be used in place of externally validated assessments at the end of a seven-year phase of education. We therefore recommend that Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics should remain as a key accountability measure for all primary schools.

**2.9** We also propose changes to Key Stage 2 assessment in order to strengthen trust and the reliability of assessment, whilst also exploring further the possibility of more substantial changes to the tests in future. In the short term, we offer some recommendations to improve the way in which the testing system works. For the longer term, we also propose the continued trialling of alternative methods of testing in an accountability context, and that further decisions should then be taken once evidence from these trials is available.

**Short-term recommendations**

**2.10** The Key Stage 2 tests should be moved from the current testing window in May to the middle of June. Our primary reason for making this recommendation is the benefit it will bring to pupils in easing transition. By moving the dates back we reduce the gap in pupils' learning that can occur, where there can be a lessening of the emphasis on the core curriculum following the Key Stage 2 tests in early May of the summer term in Year 6, which is followed by six weeks of summer

holidays – this year a period of 16 weeks. Pupils can start their secondary education underprepared and out of practice. This is often blamed on the tests themselves, and particularly the notion that pupils have simply been “taught to the test”. The potential lengthy gap in learning is, in our view, the more significant factor. It will be important, however, that with later test dates, schools ensure that any preparation for the tests is proportionate and appropriate, and that any broader curricular activities which might typically take place after the tests are sensibly spread over the year.

**2.11** Moving the date of the tests will also mean that Key Stage 2 test results will not be available before the start of the autumn term. Secondary schools’ planning for their new intake of Year 7 pupils should be based on teacher assessment data from their feeder primary schools. Over time, we believe this will contribute to greater trust between primary and secondary schools, as it will put a greater onus on primary schools to continue to ensure that full, accurate and timely teacher assessment data is supplied. When the test results are then made available, they should confirm the teacher assessment data. There is always likely to be some variation between teacher assessment judgements and test data. If there are significant discrepancies overall, then secondary schools will be able to challenge their feeder primaries on the quality of the data they have provided. Secondary schools

and their feeder primary schools may want to consider working in clusters on cross-phase moderation of teacher assessment.

**2.12** There is currently a statutory duty on primary schools to submit their teacher assessment results to DCSF, but only about 85% do so. It will be important that DCSF and QCA work with schools to ensure that teacher assessment data is submitted in a timely way, given the increased emphasis on its use by secondary schools. Primary schools will also need to ensure that their arrangements for ongoing assessment of pupils and reaching teacher assessment judgements are sound, and subject to a reasonable degree of internal moderation.

**2.13** Improvements need to be made to the way science is assessed at Key Stage 2. As noted in the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum, science must continue to have a central place in pupils’ education because its importance will only grow as the world in which we live continues to be ever more powerfully influenced by technological and scientific developments. It is vital that pupils leave primary school well disposed to science, and with a growing understanding of basic scientific principles. Technology is on a par with science in the new primary curriculum and must also be part of a fresh look at what form assessment should take.

**2.14** The English and mathematics tests at the end of Key Stage 2 are a good test of the key skills which pupils need in order to access the secondary curriculum. However, every subject is different, and progression in

science is quite different from that in either English or mathematics. For example, having a firm understanding of magnetism does not allow a pupil to know anything about anatomy, whereas in mathematics understanding division is a basis on which to build an understanding of fractions. The practical nature of science and the importance of learning science by inquiry also make it distinct. All primary pupils should be able to access an enjoyable, exciting and hands-on science curriculum which lets them understand basic scientific principles first-hand. They should have plenty of time for practical experiments and linking science to their everyday lives.

**2.15** The current Key Stage 2 test has played an important role as part of the introduction of the National Curriculum in raising the profile of science in primary schools, in increasing the curriculum time for science and in supporting improvements in teaching and learning. We have seen the maintenance of high standards in primary science both nationally and internationally – as witnessed by the TIMSS study which has consistently found that only primary school children in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong achieve higher than our pupils.

**2.16** However, we believe that the existing Key Stage 2 science test will not best enable us to take the next step forward in improving science learning. Ofsted's *Success in Science* report (2008) showed that some schools were responding to the existence of the science test by reducing the amount of

practical, investigative work undertaken to focus on paper and pencil tests. Since such practical work is essential to a thorough understanding of science and the scientific method, and is especially important in the early years of science study, the result was lowered interest in and enthusiasm for science than would otherwise have been the case. Externally set and marked tests cannot readily assess investigative skills and the ability to design and carry out an experiment and understand its results.

**2.17** We have consulted widely with science education bodies, learned societies and others, and have concluded that unlike in English and mathematics, the summative assessment of the Key Stage 2 science curriculum is not best done through an externally set and marked written test. The difference in value of the tests is illustrated in part by the fact that Key Stage 2 English and mathematics results better predict later achievement in science than the Key Stage 2 science test does. In place of the science test, high quality, supported teacher assessment should be used.

**2.18** Although this will mean that science achievement cannot be used as part of the accountability framework at Key Stage 2, we do consider it important that each child's science results are reported to parents, and that steps are taken to support teacher assessment. Far from lessening the attention given to science these proposals should boost its status by achieving a better coverage of what needs to be assessed.

**2.19** Assessing Pupils' Progress materials are currently being developed for primary science, and will be available from 2010. In addition, DCSF should develop assessment tasks which teachers can use as part of their ongoing assessment of primary science, and which should be based on practical, investigative activities. We believe that both of these will be useful tools for the further development of primary teachers' assessment skills in science. To ensure that teachers are supported in doing this and that there is still a summative element to the assessment, we recommend that the DCSF should develop these tasks in conjunction with science education organisations. We believe that this recommendation will improve quality of the science education experience in schools, making it more enjoyable for pupils, and so encouraging more of them to pursue it to higher levels.

**2.20** We have stated elsewhere within the report that it is vital that pupils leave primary school with a good grasp of the core curriculum, so that they can successfully engage with learning in secondary school. Following the recommendations of the recent Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum, this core curriculum will now include ICT from 2011 onwards. ICT can be of great benefit when used across all subjects, but in an increasingly digital age it is important that all children know how to use ICT, and it is therefore appropriate that it should be assessed during primary school. This should be based on teacher assessment rather than

an externally marked test, and pupils' levels should be reported to parents and to secondary schools.

**2.21** Finally, it is important that schools prepare for external tests in a way which is appropriate and proportionate. We have already made clear our conviction that externally marked tests in English and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 can be educationally beneficial as well as necessary accountability purposes. However, we cannot ignore the risk that tests whose results are used for high-stakes accountability purposes can adversely lead to narrowing of the curriculum, 'teaching to the test' and undue pupil stress. We do not support drilling or narrow test preparation. The best way to prepare for Key Stage 2 tests is through a varied programme of high-quality teaching throughout the year, not through repeatedly sitting practice test papers. We have worked together with DCSF officials to produce guidance on what constitutes proportionate and appropriate preparation for Key Stage 2 tests. This guidance will be sent to all schools.

### **Recommendation 7: Changing Assessment at KS2**

- (a) Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics should remain as a key accountability measure for all primary schools.**
- (b) These tests should be administered in the middle of June, a month later than the current testing week, so that pupils continue to spend time on England and mathematics and to develop the quality and robustness of teacher assessment data transferred to secondary schools.**
- (c) Key Stage 2 science tests should be discontinued; science and ICT at Key Stage 2 should be assessed through teacher assessment; and assessment tasks should be developed for science.**
- (d) DCSF should publish the guidance it has developed on ensuring that preparation for Key Stage 2 tests is proportionate and educationally appropriate, and encourage schools to follow that guidance.**

**2.23** We have considered evidence emerging from the Making Good Progress pilot, of which single level tests form one strand. Single level tests are short tests in reading, writing and mathematics at a single national curriculum level which pupils in Key Stage 2 can take when their teacher judges them ready. Once teachers are sure that a pupil is working at a particular level, from observing a range of evidence from his or her classwork and homework, they can enter that pupil for a single level test. The pilot enables pupils to take tests in either December or June in any year. Three test rounds have taken place so far in the pilot, with another to come in June 2009.

**2.24** The interim report of the PricewaterhouseCoopers evaluation of the Making Good Progress pilot, which reports on the first two rounds of single level tests in December 2007 and June 2008, shows that single level tests have been broadly welcomed by schools participating in the pilot. There were serious technical problems with single level tests at Key Stage 3. However, these were not found at Key Stage 2. Support for the principles of single level tests has been maintained among pilot schools throughout the first year of the trials. Levels of understanding amongst schools about entry criteria have increased as the pilot has progressed, and data analysis suggests that a greater proportion of June 2008 test entries correlated more closely to teacher assessments compared to December 2007 test entries. Most pupils interviewed

### **Longer-term recommendations**

**2.22** In addition to making these short-term changes, we recommend that for the longer-term, the Government should continue to strengthen teacher assessment, and continue to trial single level tests. Decisions about whether there ought to be further changes should then be taken once evidence from these trials is available.

said that they enjoyed both the June and December single level tests.

**2.25** Teaching and learning findings from the evaluation to date are also positive, with a general view amongst interviewees that the tests had avoided any negative impact on either curriculum or teaching. However, schools taking part in the pilot currently also administer National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and results from these are reported in Achievement and Attainment Tables.

**2.26** In the Children's Plan, the Government said that it would consider implementing single level tests on a national basis, subject to positive evidence from the pilot and to the endorsement of this approach from the Regulator. We have considered emerging evidence and conclude that overall, there is not yet sufficient evidence for us to make recommendations as to whether or not single level tests should be implemented nationally. The pilot is still underway, with another round of tests due to be taken by pupils this June, and the full evaluation of the Making Good Progress pilot will be published in autumn 2009. This full evaluation will need to be taken into account when decisions are taken about the future of single level tests.

**2.27** We propose that further trialling of the single level tests should include a focus on providing evidence of how the tests would work when used as an accountability measure. The existing pilot schools should continue to trial single level tests, but not

administer National Curriculum tests. Single level test results would therefore be reported in Achievement and Attainment Tables during the trial period. DCSF should evaluate any impact of this approach on teaching and learning.

**2.28** We also believe it is important that further consideration is given to the use of technology in testing and assessment, and in particular to the viability of pupils taking their tests on-screen. Significant work on e-assessment is already taking place in the context of general qualifications, and good practice in this area could usefully be applied to e-assessment with younger age groups. We recommend that some small-scale piloting of this is planned – this could be in the context of the further piloting of single level tests.

**2.29** As these changes are made and as Chartered Assessors are introduced, DCSF should monitor progress in strengthening the reliability and consistency of teacher assessment, and in developing an infrastructure which provides assurance about this. As single level tests rely on effective teacher assessment to make sure that pupils are entered at the right level at the right time, they will tend to support teachers in developing very precise assessment skills. Similarly, Chartered Assessors will provide practical support to their colleagues in improving the quality of assessment and in ensuring that underpinning systems are sound. As these changes are embedded, DCSF should keep

under review whether sufficiently robust systems are being developed to allow elements of teacher assessment to be used more within the accountability system.

- (e) DCSF should continue to pilot single level tests at Key Stage 2, including trialling their use in an accountability context.**
- (f) As single level tests and the Chartered Assessor models are further developed, trialled and implemented, DCSF should monitor whether a sufficiently robust moderation infrastructure exists for teacher assessment to be used as part of the accountability system.**

### Accountability of middle schools

**2.30** There are 305 middle schools in England in 24 local authorities. In some of these authorities their presence is minimal (fewer than 10); the Isle of Wight is the only authority with an exclusive middle school system. In most of these authorities, and across the country, the number of middle schools is in decline and they are now responsible for educating only 4% of the population in those years that are relevant: largely Years 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**2.31** The principles we suggest for middle schools apply equally to new secondary schools (i.e. those which build up from Year 7 onwards and do not yet have any GCSE results through which to be held to account).

**2.32** All the middle schools were consulted and felt that they should only be accountable for the years that they teach the pupils, in most cases Year 5 to Year 8. Some middle schools use optional end of Year 8 tests as part of a locally defined system, but we cannot see any practical way of using these as part of an accountability system exclusively for middle schools; nor indeed can we see any great value in doing so.

**2.33** Key Stage 3 test results were not the main means through which middle schools were held to account before the tests were discontinued; most have children sitting Key Stage 2 tests and Ofsted continues to report on middle schools, as it does on other schools. Indeed, fewer than 6% of middle schools have a Year 9, so the total number of schools affected by the discontinuation of statutory Key Stage 3 tests is very small. As at present, therefore, middle schools should continue to be held to account through Key Stage 2 test results and Ofsted inspections and, when it is introduced, through the School Report Card. It is not desirable to create any new additional measures purely for the purpose of holding this small group of schools to account. In the absence of a national testing system which is coterminous with the age range of middle schools, however, Ofsted will continue to ensure that inspections can accurately assess pupils' attainment and progress in middle schools without relying on data from a national testing regime.

# Chapter 3: Making assessment work for parents

- 3.1** In previous chapters of this report, we have discussed the importance of using assessment to inform good teaching and learning, and the role of assessment in accountability. A third purpose of assessment is to provide clear, accurate and up-to-date information to parents.
- 3.2** It is important for parents to receive high-quality information on their children's achievements and progress, and on how they can help their children to make further progress. Levels of attainment and progress are not the only areas of information on which parents receive regular information – for example, schools also provide information on behaviour, attendance and special educational needs. However, parents should be entitled to know how their children are progressing in each subject on a regular basis, and this information should be communicated in an accessible way. We also believe that parents have the right to expect and receive an externally validated assessment of their child's performance in English and mathematics, which is nationally comparable, after a full phase of seven years at a publicly-funded school.
- 3.3** Traditionally, information about pupils' performance used to be conveyed only in an annual written report, sent home with the pupil at the end of the school year. Increasingly, reporting to parents has become more frequent, with many schools now reporting on a termly basis.
- 3.4** Many schools are making much greater use of technology to communicate with parents. DCSF Ministers have already said that all maintained schools should provide online reports to parents – all secondary schools should be doing this by September 2010, and all primary schools by 2012. Many schools already provide high-quality online information to their parents, and best practice is emerging all the time, but there is still significant variation in the quality and usefulness of the information which parents receive. We believe that it should be up to schools to determine what information about attainment and achievement they share with parents and precisely how they do it, but we think there would be value in producing case study examples of good practice to help schools consider how they might improve their own reporting to parents.
- 3.5** It is also important that parents can understand the language in which their child's progress is communicated to them. Clear online guidance should be made



available on what each of the National Curriculum levels means, in language which is accessible to parents and can help them to engage in their children's learning. It will be most useful if it not only describes where their child is currently, but also what the parents could do to help encourage their children's learning and development.

**3.6** As well as parents receiving detailed information on their child, it is also important that they can access impartial information about schools in their area, in order to help them make an informed decision about which would be the best school for their child. This information should include, but of course should not be restricted to, data from externally validated tests and examination results. Parents access information about schools from a range of sources, including performance tables and Ofsted reports. Ofsted's website is one of the most extensively used in the public sector – there were nearly 2.1 million viewing of reports on the Ofsted website between 1 September 2008 and 21 January 2009 – and parents make up a large proportion of these users.

**3.7** Although, as we have highlighted in Chapter 2, there are limitations to the usefulness of league tables, it is clearly important that parents have access to information about the attainment and progression of pupils in their child's school, and other local schools. We know from survey evidence that the majority of parents find test and examination results an important source of information about their child's school and about schools in their

area. We welcome the introduction of the School Report Card, and particularly the principle that it will aim to make information to parents clearer and more accessible. As well as presenting information in an accessible format, the School Report Card should also take into account parents' views on the quality of the school's level of parental engagement and involvement.

#### **Recommendation 8: Reporting to parents**

- (a) DCSF should provide, with the help of Ofsted and others, case study examples of different forms of good practice in reporting to parents. This should communicate both the minimum level of contact and engagement which parents should expect to have, and also provide examples of outstanding practice in this area. It should include illustrations of written reports available at any time on e-learning platforms to which parents have access, and appropriately timed review meetings including discussing progress and sharing targets for next steps.**
- (b) Ofsted should check how highly parents rate the parental engagement and involvement arrangements at their school by including appropriate questions in the surveys used for the well-being indicators which will contribute to the School Report Card, and by continuing to carry out parental satisfaction surveys when they inspect schools.**

# Chapter 4: Making assessment work for tracking national standards over time

**4.1** Our fourth main purpose of assessment is that it should be used to track national standards, enabling the Government, educational professionals and the public to see the progress over time of pupils, and the effectiveness of education policies. National sample testing will enable the Government to monitor areas of strength and areas where more focus is needed. It will also enable the public to hold the Government to account for the outcomes of significant public investment in education each year.

**4.2** Now that national tests are no longer administered at Key Stage 3, it is important to ensure that the public and the Government can monitor national performance over an extended period of time through national sample tests, which, as announced, will be introduced for pupils in Year 9. Many colleagues, organisations and institutions have provided us with useful evidence on this area, from experiences in the UK and elsewhere, on which we have drawn extensively in our discussions and our recommendations.

**4.3** England has participated for several years in international comparison assessment programmes, such as TIMSS, PISA and PIRLS.

These allow us not only to track our own performance over time, but also to benchmark our own system against those of other countries, ensuring that we continue to keep pace with other high-performing education systems. In an increasingly interconnected world, it is ever more important for pupils, parents, teachers and employers to have confidence that the standards against which pupils are being assessed remain at a consistent level over time, and for them to see how our education system is performing in comparison with those of other countries.

**4.4** A great deal of the evidence we have received on sample testing emphasises the importance of setting out the purpose of the sample test at the very beginning of its development. We believe that the primary purpose of a national sample test in Year 9 should be to track national and international standards over time. Results should not be published at school or local authority level, and should not be used to hold individual schools or LAs to account. This is solely about national and international standards over time, and holding the Government to account, and should not serve any other purpose.

- 4.5** In order for sample testing systems to offer highly reliable information about standards over time, test development experts advise that the tests should use the same or similar test items from one year to the next. The TIMSS tests, which are taken by pupils in England, ensure that 50% of their test items are the same year on year, in order to make reliable comparisons over time. We think that a similar approach should be used when designing the sample test for Year 9.
- 4.6** In order to tie national sample testing to the international comparison studies in which England already participates, we think it is important that links should be made between the mathematics and science national sample tests and the TIMSS test. Every four years, when the TIMSS study is administered, this could be used as the national sample test; and in intervening years, the national sample tests in mathematics and science should include common test items with the TIMSS survey in order to facilitate comparison between the two.
- 4.7** We are aware that this could be perceived as the replacement of one set of tests with another. However, research and advice we have considered indicates that in order to have a sample representative of the country, about 10,000 pupils would need to be tested. This is the equivalent of approximately one in sixty pupils being tested each year. Furthermore, it should be understood that a national sample is likely to be a different format of test from the previous end of Key Stage 3 tests, and could, for example, be multiple choice tests and/or consist of a single hour-long paper in each subject. To ensure that no school is overly tested and that the results offer an accurate reflection of the country, we recommend that, as now, it be taken by only one class within any given school as opposed to the whole year group, and that participation in these tests is made a statutory duty in the same way as Key Stage 2 tests are. Any school that does take part in the tests should get their results back, not for any form of accountability but for their own information and so that both the schools and pupils who participate receive some valid information for their own purposes.
- 4.8** Whilst the results of the sample will allow us to track standards over time and hold the Government to account, the data they supply can be extremely useful to policy makers. As we believe all good policy should be evidence-based, the Government should be able to collect specific information from time to time, especially to track the success of particular targeted policies. We therefore suggest that the Government should extend the sample in some years, so that they can collect data on particular groups of pupils (for example, pupils who receive free school meals).
- 4.9** In our numerous discussions around national sampling and other areas of the assessment system we did consider some further ideas. The three below are not recommendations

but we feel deserve further consideration by the Government and could be of great use:

- Whilst we think that linking to TIMSS is a good way of benchmarking our standards internationally, it only covers mathematics and science and does not include literacy. We suggest that the Government should seek to build a consensus amongst English-speaking countries over commissioning a literacy test (participants could include USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Hong Kong and Singapore amongst others) which could be used for the end of Key Stage 3.
- DCSF should consider having the national sampling system for the end of Year 9 run by an organisation that runs one of the existing international sample tests to ensure independence and impartiality, so that the results will be seen as accurate and reliable by all.
- As we have mentioned above, the data that national sampling provides can be incredibly rich and therefore useful to policy makers. Furthermore, there is also relatively little burden for schools in taking part in them. We therefore think that the Government should consider the use of national sampling at lower key stages, perhaps at the end of Year 4 (the half way point of Key Stage 2) as it could lead to much more fine grained and effective policy, especially around numeracy and literacy in primary schools.

**4.10** DCSF should explore the use of ICT in both the administration of the tests and in marking them, with a view to moving to on-screen marking when practically possible. This should be done for all tests, not just for national sampling, as the efficiencies it can bring could be useful to all, increasing marking accuracy and reliability and making the whole process faster and more reliable. This should also save money on the cost of administering the tests (for example they can be sent electronically rather than by post).

**4.11** As well as online marking a greater effort should be made to use ICT based assessment. This is different from the assessment of ICT we recommended above. The current method of external 'pen and paper' tests, means that there are some important competencies which are difficult if not impossible to assess through the traditional examination method. For example most curriculum designers and employers, as well as universities, agree that now the adult world demands people who have proven and high competence in for example creativity and innovation, collaboration and team work, communication and technological literacy. They need to show that they can handle all sorts of information, particularly computer based information, easily and with discernment. The use of ICT based assessment should allow for these competencies to be assessed. DCSF together with QCA, Becta and awarding bodies should develop and introduce the greater use of

technology in administering tests to pupils and should introduce on-screen marking.

- 4.12** Moreover we think that the UK's leading position in school reform, and in assessment expertise means that it is well placed to take a lead. Some of the answers to these issues lie in the greater use of ICT in examination settings, building in part on the pioneering work of the Key Stage 3 computer-based tests as well as the pioneering work of some schools
- 4.13** Finally we would like to reiterate the advice of Lord Sutherland's Inquiry that it is vital that those who will administer and mark the tests are properly consulted about how it is done. This will ensure that new approaches are realistic and deliverable, and that not only the format and content of the tests but also the test delivery process supports rather than disrupts teaching and learning in schools.

**Recommendation 9: National sample testing at Key Stage 3 to monitor standards over time**

- (a) A national sample testing system should be introduced for pupils at the end of Year 9, in order to monitor national standards over time.**
- (b) DCSF should make participation in these national sample tests compulsory for those schools and pupils who are selected each year.**
- (c) The tests should not aim to measure standards in different local authorities, schools or classes. The results should not be used in any way for school or local authority accountability, and results should not be published at school level or at local authority level.**
- (d) Where possible, test items should be linked to international comparison surveys in which England already participates (e.g. TIMSS).**

# Endnotes

- 1 See, for example, *Inside the Black Box*, Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black, King's College School of Education, London, 1998
- 2 See pp 98-99, the 5 transition bridges are: Administrative, Social and Personal, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Autonomy and Managing learning.
- 3 Education at a Glance, OECD (2008), p.488.
- 4 Education at a Glance, OECD (2008), p.473. This extract continues: 'The publication of student achievement data had a statistically significant positive impact upon student performance even after accounting for all demographic and socioeconomic background characteristics and other school institutional and policy or programme characteristics. Fifteen-year-old students in schools that published this student achievement data scored, on average, 3.5 score points higher on the PISA science scale than students in schools that did not publish achievement data, all other things being equal.'

# Annex A: Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Assessment

## 1. Context

Following the Secretary of State's announcement on 14 October of changes to strengthen the school accountability system and reform the assessment system at Key Stage 3, a small expert group will be established to advise on the proposed arrangements and their delivery. The Group will operate within the parameters set out by the Secretary of State, which are summarised in his oral statement to the House of Commons of 14 October 2008.

In particular the group's advice will be developed in the context of the following fundamental principles. A testing and assessment system should:

- give parents the information they need to compare different schools, choose the right school for their child and then track their child's progress;
- provide head teachers and teachers with the information they need to assess the progress of every child and their school as a whole, without unnecessary burdens or bureaucracy;
- and allow the public to hold national and local government and governing bodies to account for the performance of schools.

## 2. Membership

The expert group will consist of the following core members:

- Maurice Smith
- Tim Brighouse
- Jim Rose
- Yasmin Bevan (head teacher, Denbigh High School)
- Gill Mills (head teacher, Cross-in-Hand Church of England Primary School)

The group will have access to advice from leading academics, parents and other experts in the field of testing and school accountability. Ofsted and QCDA will be invited to attend meetings of the group as observers.

A secretariat for the expert group will be provided by DCSF.

## 3. Timetable

The group will provide advice to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. It will begin its work in October, concluding it by February 2009, though may be asked to provide interim advice, and advice on particular aspects of the remit by earlier dates.

## 4. Remit

The Group is asked to advise on:

Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

- What advice should be provided to schools to ensure that preparation for national curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 is proportionate, educationally appropriate, and that the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum is not inhibited.
- The early evidence emerging from evaluations of the first year of the Making Good Progress pilot in relation to single level tests.
- Current assessment arrangements at KS1, in particular examining whether the current requirements for teachers to use national tests as part of their teacher assessment and national moderation of teacher assessment are working effectively. Taking full account of the Rose review of the primary curriculum the group will advise on how to improve assessment skills in the workforce, enabling effective use of early interventions in literacy and numeracy.
- What should be done to ensure that every parent receives regular reports on their child's progress; clear information on the meaning of levels and expected progress and how best to support their child's learning through primary school.
- Whether more could be done to ensure every parent receives regular reports on their child's progress in years 7, 8 and 9, including through real-time reporting, and that teachers have the training and support to track progress rigorously and help every child make good progress.
- The use of existing tests (optional tests in years 7 and 8, and current national curriculum tests for Year 9 which will be made available to schools that wish to use them).
- How to ensure that there is a new focus on catch-up in the early years of secondary school, in particular for those who didn't reach national expectations in Key Stage 2, where the expectation is that schools will provide one-to-one tuition or other personalised support. The Group is asked to advise on how best schools might formally assess and report to parents the progress in catching up during Year 7.
- The development and delivery of a robust national sampling system to provide information about national standards in English, mathematics and science by testing a sample of Year 9 pupils each year. The group is asked for advice on developing the approach to sampling, taking into account experience in this country and abroad, and the potential for benchmarking performance against other countries; and on the case for continuing to collect teacher assessment data at Key Stage 3 on a national basis once a new sampling system is in place.

### Key Stage 3

How to ensure a strong focus on progression through Key Stage 3, including:



- Whether anything further is needed to ensure that the accountability system has sufficient focus on literacy and numeracy, considering the importance of and opportunity presented by the new functional skills qualifications.
- How best to maintain the public accountability of middle schools and new secondary schools.
- How best to ensure that this package of measures is coherent, manageable and minimises burdens on schools. This will include advice on the best way of introducing new elements, including appropriate timescales for phasing them in. The group should consider implications for teacher workload and training associated with the new arrangements, with a view to minimising unnecessary demands on schools.

## Wider accountability

### *School report cards*

The Secretary of State will consult the group on proposals for a major change to existing systems for presenting information about schools' performance, ahead of public consultation by the end of the year. A White Paper on this will be published in the spring. The group will be asked to consider proposals for a new Report Card for primary and secondary schools and advise on how best it can allow parents to understand how well schools are:

- supporting pupil progress in the classroom;
- raising standards and improving, including compared to other schools in their areas;
- and playing their role in supporting the wider development of children and improving wellbeing.

The group will be asked for advice on the potential and the design of the Report Card. There are a number of features of the model successfully used in New York City which will have clear attractions for parents, including an overall single grade. It will be critical to have the expert group's views on how this could be used in the English schools system in advance of the public consultation. The group's advice should also include: how the card can simplify information for parents and take greater account of their views; how it can incentivise schools to raise performance for all pupils and incentivise year by year progression, give credit for narrowing gaps, and promote better collaboration necessary for 14-19 and other objectives.

The group will also be asked for advice on appropriate indicators and any weightings in the Report Card, before proposals are put to full public consultation before the end of the year.

## 5. Objectives

The Group's objective is to offer advice on the above key elements of its remit, and to formulate specific proposals where required, taking into account implications for delivery, value for money considerations and any potential impact on workload in schools. The Group should draw on the following in coming to its conclusions:

- the report of the Select Committee on Children, Schools and Families on testing and assessment;

- the report of the independent inquiry, led by Lord Sutherland of Houndwood, into problems with the delivery of National Curriculum tests in the summer of 2008, reporting later in the autumn;
- the outcome of the Rose review of primary curriculum; and
- the evaluations of the first year of the Making Good Progress pilot, and of single level tests, due later in the autumn.

The Group should also take into account a wide range of stakeholder views, including (but not limited to) parents, pupils, teachers, the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the higher education sector and employers, either through interviews or other means as it sees fit. In the case of parents, and pupils, where there is limited existing evidence about their views on testing and assessment, the group may wish to consider means, including surveys and focus groups, to canvass views.

The group should involve those agencies and organisations directly involved in the delivery and regulation of national curriculum tests and the wider accountability system, including Ofsted, QCDA, Ofqual and the National Strategies. It will be important that the Group takes account of the views of the Social Partnership.

## Annex B: Select Bibliography

- 'The Children's Plan', DCSF, 2007
- Report of the Children's Schools and Families Select Committee on Testing and Assessment, 2008
- 'Science as a key component of the primary curriculum: a rationale with policy implications', Wynne Harlen, 2008
- 'The Sutherland Inquiry: an independent inquiry into the delivery of national Curriculum tests in 2008 a report to Ofqual and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families', 2008
- 'Assessment for Learning Strategy', DCSF/QCA/National Strategies/QCA, 2008
- 'Evaluation of the Making Good Progress Pilot: Interim Report', PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, 2008
- 'Proceedings of the policy and research seminar on national assessment arrangements for Key Stage 3', Cambridge Assessment/National Foundation for Educational Research/Nuffield Foundation, 2009
- 'Getting to Grips with Assessing Pupils' Progress', DCSF/QCA/National Strategies/QCA, 2009
- 'Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report', 2009

# Annex C: Glossary of terms

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| AfL    | Assessment for Learning                                 |
| APP    | Assessing Pupils' Progress                              |
| CIEA   | Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors            |
| ICT    | Information and communication technology                |
| ITT    | Initial teacher training                                |
| MGP    | Making Good Progress pilot                              |
| MTL    | Masters in Teaching and Learning                        |
| NCSL   | National College for School Leadership                  |
| OECD   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |
| Ofqual | Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator |
| PIRLS  | Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study    |
| PISA   | Programme for International Student Assessment          |
| QCA    | Qualifications and Curriculum Authority                 |
| TIMSS  | The International Mathematics and Science Study         |

# Annex D: Sources of Evidence Submitted to the Expert Group

We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their evidence which helped us complete our report and recommendations:

Professor Robert Alexander

Dr Jo-Anne Baird

Professor J Black

Dr Robert Fairbrother

David Linsell

Professor Pam Sammons

Professor Dylan Wiliam

Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME)

Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment (AAIA)

Association of College and School Leaders (ACSL)

Buckinghamshire County Council

Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA)

Edexcel

Education Leeds

Educational Software Publishers Association (ESPA)

General Teaching Council (GTC)

Mathematics and Education and Industry (MEI)

National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

NASUWT

National Foundation for Education Research (NFER)

Ofqual

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)

Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)

The Science Community Partnership Supporting Education (SCORE)

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)

St. Bede's Catholic School, Durham

Suffolk County Council, School Improvement

We would also like to thank all the middle schools and middle school authorities that responded to us about middle school accountability.

