

16th September 2019

Dear Year R parents,

Reception Baseline

The Government are introducing a new assessment point in September 2020 for all children in Reception, it's called the 'Reception baseline' and will be a statutory feature of education for all children. This year, in conjunction with a company called NfER, they are trialling the baseline assessment format. We have opted to take part in the trial this year.

Before we formally begin the trial, I wanted to write to you to let you know about the baseline, how it's conducted, why we're taking part and what it will mean for your child.

First though, I thought it would be helpful to outline how the government currently assesses schools and children.

There are 5 key markers throughout your child's time in school:

End of Early Years (end of Year R)	have they met the Early Learning Goals?
Year 1 Phonics check	tests your child's reading ability against 40 words
Year 2 SATs	tests undertaken by children in Year 2 in May. These support and inform teacher assessment judgements but are not reported on directly.
Year 4 Times tables test	(new this year) Checks Year 4 children know all their tables to 12x12
Year 6 SATs	tests undertaken in May each year which are formally used to judge a school and relate to the data you may see in league tables.

Currently, the Government are primarily concerned with the **progress** a child makes between Year 2 and Year 6 only.

In Autumn 2020, they will introduce the baseline for Year R formally and do away (well, that's what they're saying at the moment!) with Year 2 testing. Therefore, they will measure children's progress (the value a school adds basically) from the very beginning of Year R when they join the school until Year 6 when they leave.



So, why are we taking part this year?

We want to have a say in shaping the baseline assessment. It's quite controversial as many feel children this young shouldn't be tested so if we know what's expected and how they will be tested, we can give feedback along with thousands of other schools to make sure it is really right for children in Early Years. The pilot allows us to check the tests are fit for purpose and that the outcomes meet all the key requirements for assessment. The bigger the sample taking part, the more reliable the feedback. Also, the tests are administered using tablets, PCs or Chrome books. It allows us to test that the technology works efficiently and sufficiently within our school. We were part of the Year 4 trial of times tables tests last year and found glitches in the system, as did many schools.

Who designed them?

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) are contracted by the Government to design and administer the tests. We already use NFER for tests for all other year groups of children and trust what they produce.

What will my child be doing as part of the assessment?

The test is a series of games, puzzles and questions using concrete (actual) resources as well as online pictures. Miss Kirkham or Miss Palk will be with your child throughout and they won't even know they're being tested! They will work 1:1 in a quiet area in the classroom and we can take as many breaks as each individual child needs. The guidance is that the testing will take no more than 20 mins. These assessment is only for English and Maths, incorporating understanding and speaking and listening. NFER and the DfE are very clear that we are unable to share information about the assessment content with anyone, including parents. This is usual practice when we are dealing with SATs tests in Years 2 & 6.

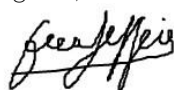
What happens to the results?

This year, the results will not be numerical ie. We will not have a 'score'. We will receive a 'pupil report' which is a series of narrative statements describing how each pupil performed on the assessment but this is likely to not add anything to what we already know! We are able to incorporate the individual narrative statements into a broader discussion about your child during the first term – this should happen during October parents evening providing we have the information back from NFER in time. All information gathered by NFER during the pilot is highly confidential and won't be shared with anyone – this complies with our data protection policy and GDPR rules.

The most important thing is not to worry about it! Miss Kirkham and Miss Palk are gathering evidence for our own baseline even now and we're not anticipating the online formal baseline check to throw up anything we don't already know! What's important to us, and we think to you too, is that your child is happy and settled into school during this first half term. If they're happy, they'll learn and all of what's to come in the rest of the year will fall into place!

That said, if you have any questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to ask Miss Kirkham or I and we will do our best to answer them.

Kind regards,



Emma Jefferies
Headteacher

