

## Update for school leaders on KS1 and 2 Statutory Assessment

This briefing provides an update for school leaders in primary schools on developments relating to statutory assessment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and sets out the Union's advice and guidance on this issue.

### Issues of concern

NASUWT members have raised a number of important concerns about arrangements for statutory assessment this year. These are summarised below.

- The new system has required schools to become familiar with a new way of assessing pupils' work that is quite different from the one in place previously. The NASUWT has warned repeatedly that if the Department for Education (DfE) is intent on introducing a new system of statutory assessment, staff in schools must be given the time and space to familiarise themselves with the features of this new system. However, interim performance descriptors were only issued towards the end of last year, much later than originally intended.
- The experience of teachers and school leaders on statutory assessment is that the publication of exemplification materials is important in helping them to understand how assessment criteria should be applied. Exemplification materials are particularly important when assessment systems are subject to significant change. However, the current suite of exemplification materials did not become available until this February, less than five months before the assessment period. This has limited the time available to schools to make use of the materials to assist in the assessment of pupils' work.
- The Government was clear that it would 'raise the bar' in terms of the expected standard of performance at the end of Key Stage 2. It stated that the expected standard would be broadly equivalent to Level 4b in future. However, the original exemplification materials appeared to suggest that the expected standard would be much higher, closer to Level 5c under the old National Curriculum.
- The Government has not yet confirmed the levels of progress pupils will need to demonstrate in order for schools to avoid falling below the floor standards. It has stated that it cannot provide confirmation until it is able to review the outcomes of this year's assessments. This lack of clarity about thresholds of acceptable school performance has created significant anxiety across the education system.
- The exemplar materials produced by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) have raised concerns about the way in which certain areas of knowledge and understanding should be assessed. For example, significant confusion has arisen about the appropriate use of exclamation marks.
- The exemplification materials included a tick list of assessment criteria that teachers could use to assess pupils' work. However, in some schools, this was at risk of being interpreted in a way that would have required teachers to record over 6,000 distinct assessments for a typical class of 30 pupils.
- When the Key Stage 2 writing test was replaced by statutory teacher assessment in 2012, the NASUWT pressed for the inclusion in statutory guidance of a clear requirement that teachers must not produce additional annotations or written records to justify their assessments. The guidance confirmed that the only evidence required would be the work that pupils had produced during their normal activities in the classroom. This guidance also made clear that moderation should take place by means of a professional dialogue between teacher and moderator and that schools should make time

available for this meeting to take place. This provision removed the risk of 'moderation at a distance' in which teachers could be placed under pressure to produce excessive additional written annotations to justify their assessments. However, the STA initially removed these elements of the guidance for this year, increasing the risk of some schools instructing teachers to produce extensive explanations of their assessments that they previously would have been able to give verbally, based on their knowledge of the standards reached by the pupils in their class.

### **Action taken by the NASUWT**

In light of the concern that members have raised directly with the NASUWT about these issues, particularly following the publication of the exemplification materials in February, the Union sought views and feedback from members on the revised assessment arrangements. This information has ensured that the steps taken by the NASUWT on this issue have been fully informed by the views of teachers and school leaders. The Union also reaffirmed its commitment to protect members from any increases in their workload resulting from the introduction of the revised assessment arrangements and its determination to make use of its current action short of strike action instructions, which members should be following, to do so.

The NASUWT wrote to the Secretary of State for Education on 17 February to alert her to members' concerns. The NASUWT pressed her to take two steps in particular to address this issue.

Firstly, in light of her commitment to reducing workload, the Union made clear that she should confirm the actions that she would take to ensure that teachers and school leaders are protected from any workload increases arising from the revised system of statutory assessment.

Secondly, in light of the confusion her Department's approach to curriculum and qualifications reform had caused, the NASUWT maintained that she should confirm that the outcomes of statutory teacher assessment should not be used in official evaluations of school performance, such as performance tables or floor targets, for the year 2015/16.

In addition to this correspondence, the NASUWT has engaged with the STA to raise concerns about arrangements for teacher assessment that fall within its remit.

### **Advice for members**

The STA has issued a clarification document on the assessments and the Secretary of State has now responded to the NASUWT's letter. The STA document and the Secretary of State's correspondence can be viewed at [www.nasuwt.org.uk/assessment](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/assessment).

These documents make clear that teachers should not be expected to complete pre-moderation checklists and that their own existing internal assessment arrangements are sufficient for this purpose. It has also been confirmed that moderation should be conducted between class teachers and moderators through professional dialogue and the deadline for submission of teacher assessments has been moved back to 30 June 2016.

In respect of accountability, Ofsted has confirmed that *'inspectors should take into account that, during this first year, pupils and teachers will still be adapting their approach, in particular to the unfamiliar teacher assessment frameworks and the higher standards'*<sup>1</sup> The Government has also stated that *'all organisations holding schools to account should be aware of the changes being introduced in 2016 and will consider the impact of this in making any decisions about performance or intervention on the basis of 2016 data alone.'*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ofsted (2016). *School inspection update. March 2016. Issue 6*. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/507558/School\\_inspection\\_update\\_March\\_2016.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/507558/School_inspection_update_March_2016.pdf), accessed on 20.03.16.

<sup>2</sup> DfE. (2016). *Teacher assessments: letter from Nick Gibb to the NAHT*. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessments-letter-from-nick-gibb-to-the-naht](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessments-letter-from-nick-gibb-to-the-naht), accessed on 20.03.16.

The NASUWT is therefore advising school leader members as follows:

- continue to resist pressure from governors, local authorities or other external bodies to require teachers to produce any additional assessment materials solely in anticipation of the moderation process. This includes the completion of checklists such as those published originally by the STA;
- continue to ensure that performance management arrangements for teachers do not include any crude pupil performance data target, including those linked to Key Stage 1 and 2 statutory assessment. School leaders should also resist the inclusion of such targets in their own performance management objectives. The NASUWT will not accept denial of legitimate pay progression for school leaders or criticisms of their performance based solely on the use of pupil performance data;
- discuss with staff about creating the time, space and support required to allow them to become familiar with the new assessment criteria and to make use of them to undertake statutory assessment. In particular, they should not be expected to do this in a way that will add to their workload;
- resist any pressure to use the introduction of the new assessment arrangements for more test preparation activities on pupils that will serve only to increase their anxiety and create needless stress and additional workload for school leaders and teachers.

The NASUWT will continue to stand by those teachers and school leaders who assert their professionalism by using their judgement and discretion to determine how pupils can best be helped to achieve and succeed, recognising that such an approach is ultimately the one most likely to secure the best outcomes for pupils.

The NASUWT's action short of strike action instructions are in place to protect all school leaders in all state-funded schools from any adverse workload impacts and to ensure that the advice set out above is implemented. Further information about the action short of strike action instructions is available at [www.nasuwat.org.uk/industrialaction](http://www.nasuwat.org.uk/industrialaction).

### **Future action**

The NASUWT will continue to insist that the DfE takes further steps to recognise the serious challenges that teachers and school leaders have encountered as a result of the flawed way in which statutory assessment arrangements have been implemented this year. In particular, the NASUWT will maintain its call for the DfE to suspend use of 2015/16 teacher assessment outcomes in accountability measures and will press the DfE to work with the Union to ensure that future assessment arrangements avoid the problems that have arisen this year.

### **Further help and advice**

Any school leader members with concerns about the implications of this year's arrangements for statutory assessment should contact the NASUWT Member Support Advice Team on **03330 145550** or [advice@nasuwat.org.uk](mailto:advice@nasuwat.org.uk).

# **NASUWT**

**The Teachers' Union**

Tel: 03330 145550

E-mail: [advice@mail.nasuwat.org.uk](mailto:advice@mail.nasuwat.org.uk)

Website: [www.nasuwat.org.uk](http://www.nasuwat.org.uk)