

Consultation Summary Paper

DfE Consultation on Performance Descriptors for Use in Key Stage 1 And 2 Statutory Teacher Assessment

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/performance-descriptors-key-stages-1-and-2>

A brief introduction to Pearson

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A summary of the consultation

The new National Curriculum, which became statutory from this September for most subjects and most year groups, is no longer supported by a framework of assessment levels for measuring progress and attainment. Instead, national tests at the end of KS1 and KS2 will assess children against a scaled score, and schools will be required to develop their own approach to assessing children's progress against their curriculum between these key points.

Teacher assessment will also form part of the way in which children are assessed at the end of key stages. In this consultation, the DfE released a set performance descriptors for teachers to use to ensure effective and consistent assessment. They asked for views on, amongst other things, how easy the descriptors are to understand, whether they will support accurate and consistent judgements, and how well they reflect the National Curriculum.

A summary of the Pearson response

We think the descriptors are relatively clear. There are, however, a number of issues that need addressing if they are to be used effectively for teacher assessment and reporting to parents:

- the proposed terminology is rather bald (age seven seems very early to label a child 'below national standard');
- the term 'mastery' is used differently from the way in which the curriculum expert panel envisaged (i.e. to mean at the 'highest possible standard' rather than 'national standard');
- the mix of five point, four point and binary scales is confusing;
- there are some ambiguous words and phrases that could lead to inconsistent assessment;
- there are some differences between the curriculum and the descriptors;
- using marked scaled scores for SATs, and performance descriptors for teacher assessment, will make it hard for parents to properly understand their child's progress and attainment.

We recommended the Department do the following to address these issues:

- reconsider some terminology, particularly the descriptor 'below national standard' and phrases which could lead to inconsistent assessment;
- consult further on the best scale to use, and apply it consistently across subjects and key stages;
- rename the 'top' descriptor 'significantly above national standard' or similar, rather than 'mastery standard';
- iron out discrepancies between the curriculum and the descriptors;
- describe the SATs scaled scores using the same terminology as the performance descriptors;
- more generally, consider the need to a) help teachers understand how to stretch more able children by encouraging them to explore the curriculum in greater depth, rather than moving them on, and b) clarify how a curriculum and assessment model based around mastery and 'going deeper' sits alongside an accountability model that prioritises progress.