

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Use of Standardised Assessments in Aberdeenshire Schools



How will Standardised Assessments be used in Aberdeenshire?

There are many different appropriate approaches to assessment. Using these, teachers can tell how well each pupil is progressing in their learning. They do this by ensuring that planning and assessment takes place in a progressive way across the levels within the national Curriculum for Excellence.

Sources of assessment evidence in our schools include:

- observations of learners carrying out tasks and activities, e.g. practical investigations, performances, presentations and discussions
- records and profiles of work

created by pupils

- information obtained through quality questioning as part of focused conversations between teachers and pupils

- written responses
- a product, e.g. piece of artwork, report, project
- accounts provided by others (parents, other pupils or staff) about what learners have done
- formal assessments including standardised assessments

In common with most local authorities in Scotland, Aberdeenshire has decided to implement a system of standardised assessments that will help to support this process.





What does Standardised Assessment involve?

This will involve pupils participating, every two years, in a short programme of assessments that will cover the core curriculum areas of literacy and numeracy, as well as aspects relating to thinking skills. The assessments will be carried out in normal class time and do not require pupils to have taken part in any preparation or revising beforehand.

Pupils use a computer to complete the assessments, and evidence indicates that they find the questions to be interesting and engaging. A key feature of the system is that the level of difficulty of the questions asked is based on how well the children have answered previous questions. This means that no child will have to face a series of questions that are either too easy or too difficult for them thus ensuring their experience is a positive one.

Which pupils will be involved?

It is planned that from session 2013/14, all pupils at P1, P3, P5 and P7 will participate in these assessments, as well as pupils in S1.

Whilst we would recommend that all pupils should participate, we recognise that for a small number, this may not be appropriate. Should this situation arise, the Head Teacher of the school will engage with their parents/carers.

In primary schools, Aberdeenshire EL&L trialled the assessments with P5 pupils across a number of schools during session 2012/2013. All of our secondary schools have been using a form of standardised baseline assessments for several years. As an Authority we have now moved towards using one type of standardised assessment in all of our primary and secondary schools.

How will the results of these assessments support your child's learning?

The information resulting from the assessments will provide additional information about each

child's learning that will:

- add to the picture that the teacher already has about your child's progress in their learning
- provide teachers with useful information about learning that will assist them in planning next steps
- provide one part of the range of evidence which teachers will use to support progress in learning
- provide a potential source of evidence, which may be shared in context, in the course of discussions with parents/carers about their children's progress
- provide school managers with a source of evidence that complements the wide range of other evidence, and which allows them to manage and plan for improvement in the future.

The information resulting from the assessments will NOT:

- be used to compile rank orders of young people, or indeed, of schools or areas
- be included within annual pupil progress reports, or as a separate report which details the outcomes from the assessments alone.

What assessment system do we use?

The assessment system that Aberdeenshire will be using is provided by the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM), which is based in Durham University.

CEM assessments are already used widely across local authorities in Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond.

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