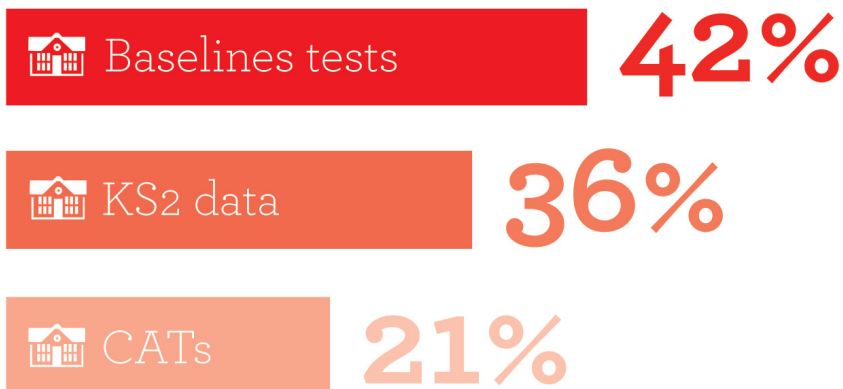


The Response

“Schools have really been left in the lurch in terms of identifying alternatives to Key Stage 3 attainment levels,” says Suzanne O’Farrell, Curriculum and Assessment Specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). “Schools have found it a challenge, at a time of considerable change in the system, to move away from levels and still be able to track pupil progress effectively. The response has been varied. Some have done little, some have attempted to recreate levels but in other names, and some have taken a really enlightened approach and are focusing on tracking curriculum understanding but not necessarily translating this into a number. The key is linking assessment and progress to the curriculum – assessment needs to shape teacher planning.”

Steve Colledge, former Secondary Director at The White Horse Federation, points out that in his experience schools had largely put the end of Key Stage 3 attainment levels on the ‘back burner’ – and only now are we seeing action. “For those who entered the teaching profession from 1988 this change is almost as traumatic as Britain leaving the EU,” he says. “They have not had the opportunity to assess without putting grades in a box. Two years ago we thought that at least three models would be released, but nothing happened and schools have stood by waiting for clarity. There has been a flurry of activity since Christmas on how assessment works and the guidance on more formative than summative assessment. And since Easter we’ve had lots of last-minute work on the curriculum and information being released for certain subjects. A different mindset is needed – and now we are seeing different approaches. Some schools are doing 9-1 GCSE grades for Years 7-11 and others are doing flight paths – though this is nothing new as we’ve always had targets.”

How will secondary schools measure the baseline levels of the new Year 7 cohort in September 2016?



*Results based on a March 2016 survey of 122 secondary schools where respondents included Headteachers, Deputy Heads, subject heads and classroom teachers.

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Schools Unsure of 'Life After Levels' Response

Research undertaken by Scholastic found that, as recently as March 2016, nearly half of schools were still unsure about their plan for tracking progress in Key Stage 3. Scholastic's survey of 122 secondary schools revealed that 49% of respondents (comprising of Headteachers, Deputy Heads, subject heads and classroom teachers) did not have a plan for the 2016-17 academic year for tracking progress in Years 7-9. Whilst half of all schools said they would prefer the same assessment system across the whole school in every subject, interviewees also cited a lack of consistency on approach within schools, between schools and across geographical regions. At the time of the survey, 42% of schools who responded said they were opting for their own baseline tests for measuring the Year 7 cohort. However, there was also a reliance on Key Stage 2 data (36%) and CATs - Cognitive Abilities Tests (21%). In the main, schools were found to be using a mixture of the new Key Stage 2 data and information from primary schools together with their own tests and classroom assessments.

"We resisted it (the move away from levels) for as long as we could," admits Mark Woods, Chief Executive of Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust. "We had established a working common understanding of levels and had some standardisation. In dealing with 'what next' we have introduced systems that build on the principles of levels - we now operate a two-year Key Stage 3 and focus on nailing English, maths and science progress. However, the issue is how you can ever demonstrate good progress in subjects where there is no common baseline coming in. We've had to take difficult decisions in subjects like art, where there is no baseline, and we don't have the intellectual capital or data to make a comparison. Many secondaries use early assessment in the first two weeks of term, or even on 'move up days' because there is little else to baseline to provide comparisons we can trust or understand. We've bought in comparative data tests to provide a consistent baseline, and to provide a clear measure of progress by the end of each year in Key Stage 3 to ratify teacher assessments of progress. It also provides the security of having a national data set to compare our students' work to."



"We resisted it (the move away from levels) for as long as we could ... We had established a working common understanding of levels and had some standardisation"

Mark Woods

Chief Executive
Cambridge Meridian
Academies Trust

What approaches have schools taken?

Brooke Weston Trust

“A big challenge is that we have been unclear on what GCSEs look like at the other end, so it is practically hard to map Key Stage 2 through to the end of Key Stage 4. We started looking at flight paths, all using a data and analytics tool behind them, and have been following this since the start of the year. What we’ve achieved, I think, is clarity and simplicity. If we are dealing with simple data people will understand it, and the more effective our response will be. Within the flight paths system we can move between parallel lines. So if our data capture shows a pupil is performing well we can move them up a flight path. If they fall below the requirements then we can intervene. We have used the language of levels where appropriate, and written new language where we need to. The system is working for our own performance analysis. For parents, we have discovered they don’t want the complex data. They just want to know if their son or daughter is on track, what their attitude to learning is like, and ultimately how they are behaving. So we have simplified what we report back from data capture points and now show where pupils are on the flight path in Key Stage 3 – if they are on track, and a comment on their attitude and behaviour.”

John Henrys, Executive Principal

King Edward VI School

“What we have come up with is an approach that we feel is workable. It is largely numerical in background, though it is not presented to pupils and parents in that way. Essentially we will measure students in five ways: basic, developing, secure, advanced and excelling. This is perhaps more subjective than levels but it will clearly show the path to progression. In development there has been ongoing conversation between subject leaders about the issue of whether all subjects are progressive. The perspective of some is that not all subjects are about going up a ladder, and actually that many are about breadth and depth. So a challenge for us is about representing the views of all subject leaders yet highlighting the need to demonstrate expected progress to GCSE and A Level whilst also enriching the curriculum. We came up with the first model in April 2015 and it took 13 months to get to our final version for implementation this September. There is still work to be done but it will provide consistency across departments, which we have never had. It will also provide consistency in the language used in class. This same language will go back to parents in their children’s workbooks and report on what they need to do keep improving.”

Sarah-Jayne Whyand, Assistant Headteacher – Data and Assessment

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– Data Assessment
King Edward VI School*

Plymouth CAST

“We work differently to a typical MAT in that we allow our secondary schools to make their own decisions at a local level rather than operate them centrally – our two secondaries are also at very different stages and we recognise they are best placed to take the most appropriate action for their own community around assessment. This year both schools have developed different systems in response. One has a model leading from GCSE down, not Year 7 up, which is logical. The other has bought in ideas from different organisations. In terms of hard impact, it’s too early to say. However, we recognise that the so-called ‘forgotten years’ at Key Stage 3 are critical and we are monitoring things carefully. Whatever system we are using, though, a key success factor is whether children understand how they are progressing. It must be able to measure progress for the child as well as the school. Now we have diagnostic tools to identify gaps in an individual child’s progress and respond accordingly. We also believe our system will enable us to identify issues more quickly in groups, for example if children are underachieving or not hitting expected.”

Neil Maslen, Area Advisor

King John School

“In September we will launch our new system in response. This is the culmination of two years’ work where we have reviewed our curriculum, worked with primary colleagues to create a high-level transition programme, and developed a best-practice grading system which mirrors the 9-1 Key Stage 4 grading system. We’ve run pilot schemes in different departments and opened our pupils’ eyes to being able to do a lot more than they thought. For higher ability pupils it will challenge them further and in more depth. For lower ability pupils it will help them to move away from sitting on the same level, which can be very de-motivating. We will have improved baseline tests – which account for the challenge in the new Key Stage 2 curriculum – alongside CAT scores and the Key Stage 2 scaled scores to give us a detailed view of each learner on entry. There are elements of caution around the new scaled scores and what a ‘100 pupil’ looks like, so we are conscious of the need to look at other measures. Then we want to develop our shared language of learning. The process will evolve – it’s work in progress – and whilst we are optimistic that we will see real impact in the months and years following the launch we are also realistic that until we see these learners complete their GCSEs we will not have the wealth of data that we currently do with the levels that we are used to. We need a full picture which realistically can only be seen once learners have progressed through the whole Key Stage 3 and 4 learning journey.”

Nic Spearman, Assistant Headteacher

“A key success factor is whether children understand how they are progressing. Whatever system is put in place must be able to measure progress for the child as well as the school.”

Neil Maslen

Area Advisor
Plymouth CAST

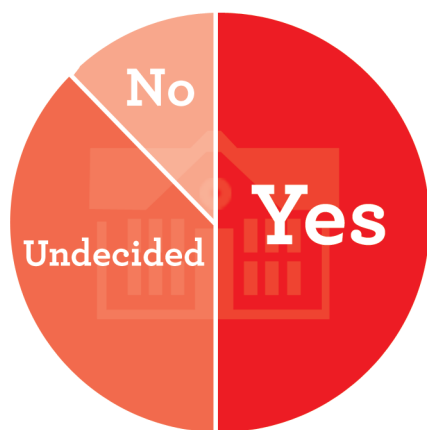
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Cam Academy Trust has developed an overarching Trust strategy which schools use and report on in their own way. “However, from what I’ve seen every Trust has developed their own system,” says Chief Executive Stephen Munday. “There is no clear answer at present, but that is bound to be the case when you lose a well-established national system and bring in new assessment. If there is fairly standard practice there will be a more standard system. But the blunt truth is there is no agreed system. What this suggests is that Ofsted may be wise to do some reporting on this across the sector.”

Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust’s Mark Woods agrees with Munday: “There is surely a major national piece of work that should be done around why this system changed without investment in its replacement. I feel frustrated about where we are now – it’s been an unnecessary distraction – with thousands of schools and staff all working on the same issue.



50%
of secondary schools say that they would prefer the same assessment system across the whole school in every subject

*Results based on a March 2016 survey of 122 secondary schools where respondents included Headteachers, Deputy Heads, subject heads and classroom teachers.

Parents are confused, but they were confused before. From their perspective they just want to know how their child is doing versus their classmates; are they making progress and fulfilling their potential? More importantly they want to know that their child is happy, and there is clarity on what they need to do to do better.”

Dawn Morton, Executive Headteacher at The Duke’s Middle School and Lindisfarne Middle School, also has concerns: “We have introduced a system using the 9–1 GCSE gradings for English and maths. This has proved fairly effective for most pupils; however, it’s not as effective for the least able pupils. For all other subjects we’ve designed our own bespoke system. This was very time-consuming for staff and meant a great deal of CPD time was needed to help departments to develop the criteria and moderate against the new criteria. The key problem is pupils moving between schools mid-key stage as so many different systems are used. Another problem relates to the amount of time needed to develop staff confidence. Finally, will Ofsted have confidence in the system you are using? Who knows, but it adds another level of uncertainty to the Ofsted process.”

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Another problem relates to the amount of time needed to develop staff confidence.”

Dawn Morton

*Executive Headteacher
The Duke’s Middle School
and Lindisfarne Middle
School*



ACSL's Suzanne O'Farrell adds: "Ofsted have clarified what they want to discuss in terms of assessment. They will want to know how assessment is being used to support pupils' progress and how assessment is aligned to the curriculum. Inspectors will look at whether schools have identified the key milestones and big ideas in each subject, how they know the extent to which pupils have grasped these big ideas, and ultimately what interventions and challenge they are implementing to support pupils. We are encouraging schools to ensure they identify the key ideas or threshold concepts when assessing so they can be sure whether students understand and have grasped these throughout Key Stage 3."

Former Secondary Director Steve Colledge maintains that the unprecedented change in the education system is not helping schools' develop the 'ultimate solution'. "The National Curriculum was brought in to look at students' understanding of the scheme of work rather than what is tested - and at the moment we don't know what that scheme of work at GCSE looks like," he explains. "In the past schools have had a bit more money and a bit more time to implement big changes. This is the first time we've had such change throughout all key stages at the same time. Schools are simply overloaded. There is not the time to think about it and we're seeing quick fixes and solutions. We would be much better prepared if schools had been given three or four years to run the changes in, at least we could have worked on the schemes of work for a useful length of time. I can't think of any situation before where we've had such massive change in advance of testing. It would have been far better to delay the introduction of the new GCSE or A Level (one or the other) to give everyone more time."



49%
of secondary schools
say they do not have a
plan for tracking
Key Stage 3 progress
for September 2016[†]

[†]Results based on a March 2016 survey of 122 secondary schools where respondents included Headteachers, Deputy Heads, subject heads and classroom teachers.

One has been done for you
"Ofsted ... will want to know how assessment is being used to support pupils' progress and how assessment is aligned to the curriculum."

Suzanne O'Farrell

Curriculum and Assessment Specialist
Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

Number	What the plant
4	makes food us
	produces poll
	receives pollen
	attracts insects

DIETETIC

starch

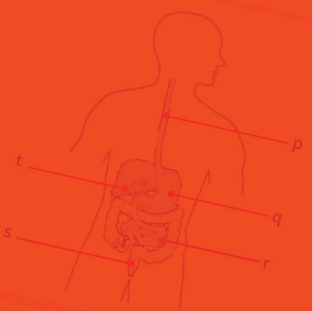
fat

protein

sugar

mar

shows part of the human digestive system.



all intestine?

each?