



14 July 2016

Dear parents and carers

Assessment and expectations in the new National Curriculum

A new National Curriculum came into operation in September 2014 for children in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5; from September 2015, all Years 1-6 began working to the new curriculum.

One of the features of the new National Curriculum (which Years 3 and 6 began this academic year) is that it no longer uses a system of numbered 'levels' to describe children's attainment. This is because it was felt by the Department for Education (DfE) that the use of levels had at times been detrimental to children. For example, talking to children about their attainment using numbered levels could contribute towards their developing a "fixed mindset" about their ability, whereas we want to foster in all our children a "growth mindset", meaning that we believe that we can all improve our abilities with practice, effort and persistence. We would also like to further enrich our pupils' learning by developing a greater breadth of skills and knowledge, so that they are confident to apply their skills to different areas of the curriculum, rather than focus on moving to the 'next level.'

Pupils will still be familiar with their 'next steps' learning targets as a way of ensuring maximum opportunity for progress but there will be no emphasis on what numerical level they are working at.

This national change – the removal of levels – means that, when we discuss your child's attainment with you, either in meetings or written reports, we no longer report levels, as these no longer have any relevance to the curriculum.

Instead your child's current level of attainment is referred to as:

- working broadly within the expected range of attainment of the curriculum
- working towards the expected range of attainment of the curriculum
- working beyond the expected range of attainment of the curriculum

It is important to acknowledge that the standards expected in this new National Curriculum are much higher than those in previous years.

Previously at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), the "expected standard" was Level 4. Many children who in the past would have achieved Level 4 have not attained the new expected standard this year because it is far more challenging. This can be seen in the national data – for example, in reading, last year (2015) 89% achieved Level 4 or better in tests. This year (2016), only 66% nationally met the new expected standard.

At the end of Key Stage 2, in all the National Curriculum tests (SATS), the highest standard of attainment that the tests award is 'Working at the expected standard'. Our reports, therefore, use the teacher assessment "working beyond the expected range" very sparingly indeed, as there is no such award at the end of the Key Stage.

Hertfordshire's advice to parents is that you should not be concerned if your child is "working broadly within the expected range of attainment" (the highest result they can achieve in the Key Stage 2 tests) or "working towards the expected range of attainment of the curriculum" (as the national bar has been instantly raised so high).

Reading the narrative that the teacher has written about the areas of strength in your child's learning and areas that require more attention is the more valuable aspect of their report.

Yours sincerely

Mr R Halls
Headteacher