



# Corbridge Middle School

## Assessment: Life without levels

Dear Parents and Carers,

This is a time of significant change in education. There are changes nationally to both the curriculum and to assessment. This booklet aims to provide you with information about what is changing and how it will affect your child.

### Interim Progress Report and an invitation to our Parent Evenings

We would like to invite you to school to discuss your child's progress on one of the following dates:

Tuesday 10th November

Wednesday 18th November

Monday 23rd November

Your child's Interim Progress Report is to help you decide which teachers you would most like to see by giving you some feedback on whether your child is currently making expected progress and how their attitude is towards their learning in each subject. It also gives the teachers the opportunity to indicate if they would particularly like an opportunity to discuss your child's progress with you. If you feel more time is needed after this appointment teachers will be happy to make an individual appointment for another time.

Parents of Years 5, 6, 7 & 8 are invited on the same evenings. Because of the amount of time available we are only able to allocate five minutes for each appointment. **A maximum of six appointments can be made per child.** We will do our best to meet your requests.

The children will make their own appointments with their teachers that you would like to see. We will be explaining to them how to do this on Monday, 2nd November. They will need to bring the Interim Progress Report back into school and the appointment times will be written directly onto the sheets.

If you would like an opportunity to discuss anything with me directly please just approach me on the evening.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## The curriculum

### What is changing?

There is a new National Curriculum. This affects what is taught and when it is taught.

### In what way is it changing?

The subjects taught will remain the same.

The new National Curriculum has a greater focus on knowledge development, along with the opportunity to study the 'big ideas' of a subject in greater depth. English, Maths and Science remain very important and are considered as core subjects. The National Curriculum sets out in some detail what must be taught in each of these subjects, and they take up a substantial part of your child's learning week. Alongside these are the familiar foundation subjects which play a key part in providing a broad and balanced curriculum: Art, Computing, Design & Technology, Food Studies, Foreign



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Languages, Geography, History, Music, R.E., P.S.H.E. and Physical Education. For these foundation subjects, the details in the National Curriculum are significantly briefer; schools have much more flexibility regarding what they cover in these subjects.

The bar has been raised – particularly in English and Maths and particularly in Years 5 and 6.

Much of the publicity about the changes to the curriculum has focussed on 'higher expectations' in various subjects, and it is certainly the case that in some areas the content of the new curriculum is significantly more demanding than in the past. For example, in mathematics there is now much greater focus on the skills of arithmetic and also on working with fractions. In science, a new unit of work on evolution is introduced for Year 6 (work which would have previously been studied later). In English lessons there will now be more attention paid to the study of grammar and spelling, an area which was far less notable in previous curricula.

## **So what is Corbridge Middle School doing?**

We are working closely with the Hexham partnership of schools to:

- ensure consistency in what is being taught in each year group.
- ensure that there is clear progression for each child as they move through each year group.

## **So what is my child being taught now?**

Your child is being taught the new curriculum.

Teachers across the middle and high school are meeting, tweaking and agreeing all the content of the curriculum for the year.

A booklet will be available for every parent by the end of the Autumn term summarising the content for every subject in every year group.

## **Assessment**

There is a flurry of change happening in education, including a new National Curriculum, more challenging Key Stage 2 tests, GCSEs and new style A levels.

### **What is changing in how my child is assessed?**

The government have removed levels as the way assessment is reported across Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 nationally. This affects all our pupils.

Where previously children were graded using levels, we have now entered a new period in which national curriculum levels have been removed nationally (often referred to as 'Life without Levels').

### **So what has the government introduced instead?**

It is up to every individual school to decide how they will measure attainment and progress. There is no longer a common format for reporting attainment.

### **So what is Corbridge Middle School doing?**

We are working closely with all the schools in the partnership to make sure that we agree what we should expect pupils to be able to do by the end of every school year.

These will be known as Age Related Expectations (ARE) and are based on the national curriculum as well as on what the children are expected to be able to do for their Key Stage 2 tests (SATs) and their GCSEs.

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## Are the Age Related Expectations the same in every school?

- Yes across all schools in the country for English and mathematics in years 5 and 6.
- Yes across all schools in the partnership for all subjects in all year groups.

This is a real strength in the Hexham partnership. Many schools are working in isolation and their content and the way it is assessed could be completely different to another school in the same area.

## But if every school could come up with a different system, how will we know how well individuals or groups of children are doing?

A good question! The removal of levels is proving a real challenge for every school (and Ofsted inspector!) However:

- This is a real opportunity to change the way we teach and assess for the better.
- Teachers continue to be clear about what they are teaching and the progression through the knowledge and skills for each subject is being agreed across the whole partnership. This is a really positive step.
- Pupils will still be clear about what they are learning. They will continue to receive feedback which ensures that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do next. This feedback was recognised as exemplary by Ofsted 2015.
- Ofsted are absolutely clear – it is up to the school to demonstrate the progress and attainment of all pupils, all individuals and cohorts.

## But as a parent, how will I know how my child is doing?

We appreciate that this is very different for parents and whilst levels weren't perfect, it was reassuring to receive regular information about the level that your child was working at. The teachers at Corbridge Middle School are still working really hard to ensure that your child is reaching their potential and will continue to contact you directly if we have any concerns. In addition:

- By half-term you will receive a progress update which will enable you to see, for each individual subject, what your child's attitude to learning is and whether the teacher is confident that they are making good progress.
- After half term you will have the opportunity to come along to a parent evening to discuss this with teachers if you feel this to be necessary.
- By Christmas the Age Related Expectations will have been agreed across the partnership and you will be able to see exactly what they are and if your child is expected to be at, above or below those expectations.
- In the Spring term you will receive an update on progress towards their 'ARE' and there will be parent evenings where you can discuss your child's progress and attainment and progress with their teacher.
- In the Summer Term their school report will say whether they have achieved their target and are working below expectations, working at expectations or working above expectations.

## But my child is in Year 6; surely they will get levels in the SATs tests?

No! Whilst the national curriculum makes it clear what the expectations are for every Year 6 child in English and maths, nobody will know until after they have been trialled this year how many marks will be needed to achieve those 'ARE'.

Informally known as 'SATs', the National Curriculum Tests are still compulsory for children at the end of Year 6, but this year is being treated as a pilot. They will undertake tests in Reading, Mathematics, and Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling. The tests will still be sent away for marking, and results will be reported to schools and parents at the end of the year. Where previously these tests were graded in levels (normally numbering between Level 2 and Level 6 in the middle school), from 2016 the tests will



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be reported as a scaled score, with a score of 100 representing the expected level for each age group. It has not yet been decided what the range of scores will be.

**My child was a Level 3 at Key Stage 1. Surely they will be above Age Related Expectations by the end of the year? Will they start to do work from the year group above?**

No. Firstly the bar has been raised and it will be harder to reach those 'ARE'.

Rather than moving on to the following year group's expectations, all schools will now encourage more in-depth and investigative work to allow a greater mastery and understanding of concepts and ideas. This will really challenge even the most able child.

The Hexham Partnership of schools has agreed that whilst assessing the pupils we will use the following terminology: emerging, developing, secure and mastery. This will inform our teaching.

	Entering	Developing	Secure (Age Related Expectations)	Mastering
Definition	Basic awareness.	Correctly using and applying.	Confidently using and applying.	Naturally using and applying.
Cognitive challenge	Low level cognitive demand. Involves following instructions.	Higher level of cognitive demand. Involves mental processing beyond recall. Requires some degree of decision making.	Cognitive demands are complex and abstract. Involves problems with multi-steps and more than 1 possible answer.	Complex and abstract with independent and original learning.
Indicative teaching style	Modelling. Explaining.	Reminding. Guiding.	Coaching. Probing questioning.	Listening and encouraging independent learning.
Types of success criteria	Steps to success.	Remember to include.	Child generated.	Uses initiative and self-manages.
Nature of progress	Acquiring. Refining.	Applying. Practising.	Deepening. Extending.	Can independently adapt to any situation.
Support	High.	Medium.	Low.	Self-support.
Typically pupils will	Name, describe, follow instructions or methods, complete tasks, recall information, ask basic questions, use, match, report, measure, list, illustrate, label, recognise, tell, repeat, arrange, define, memorise.	Apply skills to solve problems. Explain methods, classify, infer, categorise, identify patterns, organise, modify, predict, interpret, summarise, make observations, estimate, compare.	Solve non-routine, appraise, explain concepts, hypothesise, investigate cite evidence, design, create, prove.	Display consummate comprehension and understanding. Display expertise and proficiency in original application and use. Demonstrate finesse, prowess and deftness showing evaluation and self-reflection skills in a wide variety of contexts.

Our Assessment Policy can be found on our school website.

**If, after reading the booklet, you would like to hear more and have the opportunity to ask us questions, please come along to our Assessment Information Evening which will be held on Wednesday 4th November at 6:30pm. Whilst I cannot promise that we will have all the answers, especially regarding how the SATs will be reported, we can promise some lively debate!**