



2022-0007492POSoS

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

18^A March 2022

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 1 March, enclosing correspondence from your constituent,
, about Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments in 2022.

My department believes that assessment is a crucial part of a child's education and fundamental in a high performing education system. The statutory assessments at primary school are an essential part of ensuring that all pupils master the basics of reading, writing and mathematics to prepare them for secondary school. They allow schools and parents to see what pupils have achieved in relation to the age-related attainment expectations outlined in the national curriculum and ensure teachers can identify pupils who need the most support.

We recognise that pupils will have missed a critical period of their learning due to partial school closures in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years. It is vital that we know the impact of the pandemic on this cohort of pupils nationally and can give support to schools that need it the most. We have therefore confirmed that the full programme of statutory primary assessments will take place in the 2021-22 academic year. This will include the statutory introduction of the reception baseline assessment (RBA) and multiplication tables check, in addition to existing assessments, such as the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments and the phonics screening check, following their usual timetable.

Primary assessments also allow my department to hold schools to account to ensure they support all pupils, regardless of background or prior attainment, to achieve sufficient progress. As assessments will be returning for the first time since 2019, without any adaptations, the results will not be published in Key Stage 2 performance tables for the academic year 2021-22.

However, my department will still produce the normal suite of Key Stage 2 accountability measures at school level and share these securely with primary schools, academy trusts, local councils, and Ofsted for school improvement purposes and to help identify schools most in need of support.

It should be noted that data from assessments and progress measures are just the starting point for a conversation about a school's performance. Ofsted, local councils, governors, and parents should always look at a range of data, alongside a school's broader context and performance history, rather than focusing on one piece of information alone.

The RBA provides the basis for a fairer primary progress measure than at present, as it will take account of pupils' progress throughout the whole of primary school, including during the first three years, between Reception and Year 2, and enable the government to give full credit for the important work that schools do with their pupils. It will also enable my department to make the existing statutory end of Key Stage 1 assessments, both national curriculum tests and teacher assessments, non-statutory once the RBA is fully established. This is due to the fact that they will no longer be required to provide a baseline for progress measures, reducing the overall burden of the statutory assessment system.

My department worked with a range of early years practitioners, schools, and other education experts to develop the RBA, and all aspects of the assessment's development have been informed by an extensive evidence base of early years research. My department conducted trials from September to October 2018 and has collected further data during the pilot to ensure that the RBA is robust. This evidence is set out in the RBA validity report, which was published in February 2020 and is available at: tinyurl.com/s5bnvaat.

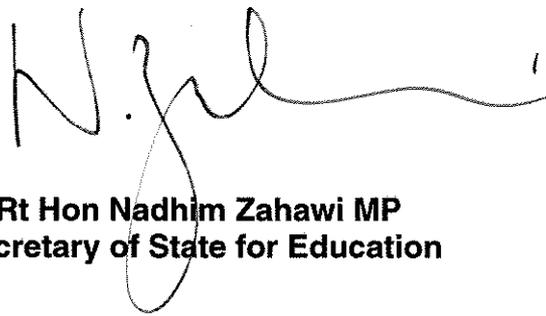
With regards to Ms Shaw's concern for students' mental health, I would like to assure her that mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the government. The government is providing more than £17 million this year to build on existing mental health support in education settings, including £9.5 million to enable up to a third of schools and colleges to train a senior mental health lead, as part of my department's commitment to fund training for leads in all schools and colleges by 2025.

In September, my department invited state-funded schools and colleges to begin booking my department's quality-assured training courses for their senior mental health lead, to support them to implement an effective whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. The guidance on this training is available at: tinyurl.com/J99n8JYb.

To sit alongside this, my department has worked with the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (formally Public Health England) and the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition to update the guidance on whole school or college approaches to mental health. With the guidance now reflecting the most recent children and young people's mental health prevalence data, the role of the senior mental health lead in implementing approaches, and new case studies to illustrate this. A copy of the guidance is available at: tinyurl.com/yc84cy44.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education