

Reception Baseline Assessment- Factsheet

What is it?

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short, teacher-mediated assessment, and will be administered to reception pupils in all eligible schools. It has been designed to assess children's early mathematics, literacy, communication and language skills.

The RBA was due to be introduced as a statutory assessment in September 2020, but due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on schools, the 2020/21 academic year was instead an early adopter year. The RBA will be statutory for all eligible schools from the 2021/22 academic year.

What are the benefits?

The RBA will provide the basis for a new way of measuring the progress primary schools make with their pupils. It will give schools credit for the important work they do with their pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2. We will publish these measures for all-through primaries in the autumn of 2028 for the first time. This will be when those pupils who entered reception in autumn 2021 reach the end of KS2.

This factsheet has been produced to clear some common misconceptions regarding the RBA.

Q&A

- 1) It is wrong to be introducing the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) from September 2021, given the disruption schools have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The purpose of the RBA is to act as the starting point to enable the Department to measure the progress primary schools make with their pupils. It is not a measure of attainment, rather a means to assess all children on-entry, accounting for any impact on their experiences up to this point and comparing their prior attainment to other pupils nationally in 2021. This is important so that we can acknowledge and give credit to schools that do well to address lost time in education. The progress measure ensures schools are recognised for the work they do with their pupils, in particular for those with a challenging intake and those who have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Once statutory, the RBA will provide the basis for a fairer primary accountability measure which will take account of pupils' progress throughout the whole of primary school.

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2) It is wrong to assess four-year-olds. This new assessment will put them under pressure as soon as they enter the school system and will harm their education

The RBA is not be about judging or labelling four-year-olds or putting them under pressure. It will use materials that most pupils of this age will be familiar with. We trust practitioners to administer it in a way that does not put pressure on pupils. It is about having a starting point from which to measure the progress schools make with their pupils, not about their attainment. The data will only be used when the pupils reach the end of key stage 2, and even then, only to create a school-level progress measure.

The RBA will be a short, interactive and practical assessment. It covers early literacy, language and communication and early mathematics and will use age-appropriate resources that pupils can easily handle. Pupils will not have to prepare for it, either in pre-school or at home.

The RBA is not a test of pupils' knowledge and should not be viewed in the same way as the tests taken in formal conditions at the end of year 6 or in secondary school. It will simply provide a snapshot of where pupils are in their development when they start school.

3) Using four-year-olds to establish a baseline for a progress measure is unreliable, and schools cannot be held accountable for deviations from the prediction that baseline makes, and value-added measures cannot be causally attributed to school performance.

The purpose of accountability is to ensure schools are getting the best outcomes for their pupils. It is therefore right that we put in place incentives for schools to focus on the progress of all their pupils, including during the very important first three years, which the current progress measure does not capture.

Following trialling in the academic year 2018/19, a national pilot was conducted in the 2019/20 academic year. The analysis of the pilot assessment data indicated that the RBA functioned as expected and there is good evidence that the assessment is reliable and suitable for assessing pupils across the ability range. We have worked with early years practitioners, schools and other education experts to develop it. All aspects of the assessment's development have been informed by an extensive evidence base of early years research. We will also make sure that the data collected is valid and reliable for the purpose of creating a value-added progress measure.

Value-added progress measures are well regarded by schools and statisticians as a fairer way to judge school performance, as they take prior attainment into account. The Department has published a full validity report¹ on the RBA, demonstrating the reasons why we feel it is a valid and reliable assessment.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-validity-report>

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We have always made it clear that data is just the starting point for a conversation about schools' performance - and why we provide additional background information about schools alongside performance data.

4) The new assessment adds to reception teachers' workload, especially with the parallel introduction of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP).

The RBA will be administered as a short, teacher-mediated, age-appropriate assessment covering material that many pupils will already be familiar with, and will be carried out in normal teaching time using materials and guidance provided. Teachers will receive a series of short narrative explaining what knowledge and skills each child demonstrated during the assessment, which can be used as one source of evidence to inform teaching, and will be a helpful snapshot of where each child is when they enter reception.

Additionally, the RBA itself will provide valuable one-to-one time with each child, particularly during those important first weeks. It is also important to note that the introduction of the RBA will mean that statutory assessments at the end of year 2 will be removed, lessening the overall assessment burden on pupils and lightening teacher workload. The majority of respondents to the government consultation on this issue agreed it was preferable to have a light touch baseline assessment in reception instead of testing pupils at age 7.

We have been engaging with primary school teachers on the issue of workload and will continue to do so.

The primary focus of the EYFS reforms is to reduce workload, and the impact on teachers is the key consideration.

5) Pupils in infant and first schools should not take the reception baseline, as the pupils taking the assessment won't remain in the same schools until year 6

The Government believes that the RBA should be statutory for all schools with a reception year, including infant and first schools. Pupils from infant and first schools move on to all other types of schools, including all through primary schools and many pupils also change schools during the primary phase for other reasons. As is the case with all-through primaries, the RBA should supplement their current on-entry assessments that are done informally.

All schools with a reception year (including infant and first schools) will be required to administer the reception baseline assessment. The reception to key stage 2 progress measure will be applicable to the vast majority of schools in the primary phase - those where pupils enter in reception and leave in year 6. Other school types - infant, first, junior and middle schools - will be expected to be able to demonstrate their pupils' progress to Ofsted based on their own assessment information. KS2 attainment information will continue to be available for middle and junior schools. Further information can be found [here](#).

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6) Pupils with SEND will not be able to access the RBA.

The assessment has been designed so that almost all children will be able to access the assessment. As part of the development process, and separate to the practitioner and expert panels, the materials were reviewed by a SEND reviewer to ensure that they were suitable for use.

We have designed modified materials that can be ordered for children with visual impairments. Practitioners can also make further modifications to the assessment materials if they feel that it is necessary to do so. This can include copying printed resources onto larger paper or coloured paper. The assessment can also be taken in British Sign Language, although it is important that assessment materials do remain confidential if further modifications are made.

There is no time limit for the assessment so children can take as long as they need to answer questions and there is no need, like with other key stage 1 assessments, to apply for any sort of access arrangements. Modifications can just be made based on normal classroom practice.

There will be some rare circumstances in which a child cannot access any part of the assessment and in this case, it is down to the headteacher to decide if a child should be disapplied. If a headteacher does decide to disapply a child, they should have had discussions with parents first, and should make sure to tell parents about that decision.