

National Curriculum Levels – an explanation

All schools that come under the auspices of the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) are subject to the National Curriculum and progress through it in levels which are calibrated in numbers and subdivided by letters.

When children join St. Peter's in Reception they are completing the final year of the **Foundation Stage**, which is pre- National Curriculum.

The first two years after the Foundation Stage are known as **Key Stage 1** and cover Years 1 and 2. The next 4 years are known as **Key Stage 2** and cover Years 3 to 6. As a First School, St. Peter's only goes up to Year 4.

The first rung on the National Curriculum levels "ladder" is 1c and the hierarchy proceeds as follows:

1c, 1b, 1a, 2c, 2b, 2a, 3c, 3b, 3a, 4c, 4b, 4a, 5c, 5b, 5a etc up to 10.

Primary schools normally only teach up to level 5b.

The national guidelines state that at the end of Key Stage 1 (i.e. the end of Year 2) children should be at level 2b in English, Maths and Science. At the end of Key Stage 2 (i.e. the end of Year 6) children are expected to be at level 4 in these subjects. There are no official guidelines for expected achievements at Years 3, 4 and 5 but obviously a steady progression is desirable.

Two notes of caution:

A child achieving level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 will not necessarily get the same level at the beginning of Key Stage 2 because of a mismatch between the two Key Stages. Also, as a result of the expectation that a child would progress 2 levels over 4 years at Key Stage 2, it is possible that he/she could receive the same numerical level over 2 consecutive years. It does not necessarily mean that no progress has been made.

SATs

These are the tests that are statutory for all state educated children in Year 6 (Key Stage 2) and Year 9 (Key Stage 3). The Government says they are optional (to assist teacher assessment) in Year 2 (Key Stage 1). At St. Peter's the children take these tests in Year 2 and the results are used to inform our teacher assessments which we then publish.

At Key Stage 1 the tests are a mixture of actual tests and teacher assessment which is moderated at a local level. They are conducted in an informal way and give teachers and parents a guide as to how well the child is performing nationally. The subjects tested are English, Maths and Science.

At Key Stage 2 the Year 6 tests are unseen papers in English, Maths and Science. The tests are conducted under strict examination conditions and the papers are marked externally.

Optional SATs are also undertaken at St. Peter's in Years 3 and 4. These are examinations produced by the government in English and Maths, which schools may choose to use to assess children's progress in these areas. They are taken under strict examination conditions but marked internally with the results being sent to the local authority for use in assessing the school's general performance.