



St Bartholomew's CE Primary School

Monday, 25 April 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to update you as to the changes in the Year 2 and 6 SATs and how these would impact on your child.

- We do have a clear idea of the format of the tests and of course the content – which is driven by the National Curriculum.
- The government is still however unclear on the expected standards that children will need to reach (age expectations) in writing, and has not made clear the criteria for those who are exceeding or working towards this standard – in any subject.
- The children will receive a scaled score this year, no more details on this have been released – as they will be decided on once everyone has taken the tests.

The chief area of controversy has been writing, where teachers have to assess children's overall attainment as there is no test. The specific guidance for this has been late, then withdrawn, reissued and now clarified again, with the dates for submission moved and then moved back again. There is still on-going concern from all the major teaching organisations that the new expected standard is very high and primarily consists of a tick list of attributes not a best fit of overall ability. This raises the spectre of children being assessed as being below age expectation if they do not meet one small part of this list. For example a very talented writer who previously would have attained very highly may be deemed as below age expectation because they have poor spelling. Conversely the school prides itself on its presentation, and we have focussed heavily on handwriting as prescribed in the national curriculum; this element of the Yr2 and Yr6 requirement has now been heavily downgraded!

Similarly Maths at KS1 will no longer be based on a 'best fit' of a child's overall ability but on a checklist, here we could have the situation where a child does very well in the KS1 test but cannot be assessed highly due to one small area of the curriculum. This is not the case at KS2 where it continues to be a best fit, assessed by a test.

You may have picked up on some of these issues through the wider press, we along with the vast majority of the teaching profession have serious concerns over many aspects of this year's testing and assessment arrangements. These are of course however decided and regulated by the government and closely monitored and moderated by the local authority.

I have attached a government booklet summarising the new test arrangements – this is in itself now wrong because just today the government has been forced to scrap the KS1 spelling and grammar element due to them having previously published the confidential test!

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I very well understand the concerns of parents, especially those whose children are moving onto secondary school next year. We will as usual be liaising closely with our colleagues at the various senior schools, they are of course aware of the issues affecting this year's Yr6 SATs, indeed the government itself has issued guidance to Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate that this year's results may be unreliable!

I would of course reassure you that our focus has continued to be on delivering high quality teaching for all pupils based on the National Curriculum. We do not teach to the tests but are pragmatic in ensuring that the children perform to the best of their ability. We are confident that we continue to prepare our children both for the next stage in their education but also for life. Over the next couple of months more information and clarification will I am sure continue to emerge, especially regarding the outcomes from the SATs.

In terms of the practicalities of the SATS, the dates are detailed on the leaflet. For the elder children you can help them through gentle encouragement and support, and by making sure they get plenty of rest and sleep in between tests. Full attendance for the tests is really important and if there are any issues with absence, illness and lateness during the SATs please inform the school as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or concerns please ask – we will do our best to answer!

Yours faithfully,

James Shawley

Headteacher