



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Optional key stage 1 tests guidance

October 2023

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1 Summary

1.1 About this guidance

This guidance sets out information about how schools can access and use the optional end of key stage 1 (KS1) national curriculum tests for the academic year 2023 to 2024. While the tests are completely optional, this guidance provides information about how schools can use the tests, including when they will be available and how to get the most out of them. This guidance is produced by the [Standards and Testing Agency \(STA\)](https://www.gov.uk/standards-and-testing-agency)¹, an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE), and is relevant until the end of the academic year 2023 to 2024.

1.2 Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- all staff who would like to use the optional KS1 tests
- headteachers and senior leadership teams

1.3 Legal status

The end of KS1 national curriculum assessments are now non-statutory and this guidance is for information only.

¹ www.gov.uk/standards-and-testing-agency

2 Changes for 2023 to 2024

2.1 Assessments at the end of KS1

Following the Government's response to the [2017 consultation on primary assessment](#)², on 20 July 2022, DfE announced that assessments at the end of KS1 would become non-statutory from the academic year 2023 to 2024.

The reception baseline assessment (RBA) will replace the end of KS1 assessments as the baseline for cohort level primary progress measures. It became statutory in the academic year 2021 to 2022, and the reception cohort from that year reach the end of KS1 in the academic year 2023 to 2024.

STA intends to continue to develop and supply guidance and materials for optional, end of KS1 tests from the academic year 2023 to 2024. These will include optional tests of English reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics.

Maintained schools and academies will receive paper copies of the KS1 tests for all subjects unless they decline test papers using the [Primary Assessment Gateway \(PAG\)](#)³. Schools who decline test materials will still be able to download these materials from the PAG. We will also continue to make the end of KS1 [teacher assessment frameworks](#)⁴ available for optional use.

The aim of the optional assessments is to give schools access to test papers to support in the measurement of pupil achievement and to help identify where their pupils need additional support as they transition into key stage 2 (KS2). The tests can also be used to inform teacher assessment judgements using the optional teacher assessment frameworks.

The government encourages schools to administer the optional tests and teacher assessments, but there is no requirement to use these, or report results to parents or local authorities, and they will not be used for school accountability purposes. Schools who do not use the optional tests and teacher assessments do not have to report this to STA.

² www.gov.uk/government/consultations/primary-assessment-in-england

³ www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-1

3 Important dates

These dates are subject to change. If any changes are needed due to circumstances beyond STA's control, schools will be informed at the appropriate time, via the [assessment update](#)⁵ and on [GOV.UK](#)⁶.

3.1 Important dates for 2023

Date	Action
October	<p>Optional KS1 tests access arrangements guidance⁷ published</p> <p>Non-statutory teacher assessment (TA) guidance⁸ published</p>
Monday 16 October to Friday 17 November	<p>Forms available on the PAG⁹ for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintained schools and academies to decline optional test papers, if they do not wish to receive paper copies maintained schools and academies to order modified versions of the optional tests participating independent schools to order standard and modified versions of the optional tests special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and secure units to order standard and modified versions of the optional tests, for pupils working at the standard of the tests and able to access them schools to submit holiday dates

3.2 Important dates for 2024

Date	Action
March	Optional KS1 test administration guidance ¹⁰ published
Monday 22 April to Friday 26 April	Schools receive optional KS1 test materials, including any modified test orders
Throughout May	Recommended optional KS1 test administration window

⁵ www.us17.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=8088a92c9c7454749d4a06114&id=56fc8c15ed

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-tests-access-arrangements

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment-guidance

⁹ www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-1-tests

Wednesday 1 May	Optional KS1 test materials and mark schemes available to download from the PAG (see section 4.4)
Thursday 16 May	Raw score to scaled score conversion tables and compensatory marks for spelling available to download from the PAG
Monday 3 June	Optional KS1 test materials and raw score to scaled score conversion tables available on GOV.UK

4 Optional national curriculum tests

4.1 Overview of tests

The optional KS1 tests are designed to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of the [KS1 programmes of study](#)¹¹. Schools can choose to use these to support in the measurement of pupil attainment.

The optional KS1 tests consist of:

- English reading Paper 1: combined reading prompt and answer booklet
- English reading Paper 2: reading booklet and reading answer booklet
- mathematics Paper 1: arithmetic
- mathematics Paper 2: reasoning
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling Paper 1: spelling
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling Paper 2: questions

The optional KS1 tests are not designed to be strictly timed. We recommend that teachers use their discretion to decide if pupils need a rest break during any of the tests or whether, if appropriate, to stop a test early.

English reading test

There are 2 English reading papers. Both papers contain a selection of texts that are designed to increase in difficulty. They include a mixture of text types.

Paper 1 consists of a combined reading prompt and answer booklet. The test takes approximately 30 minutes.

Paper 2 consists of an answer booklet and a separate reading booklet. It contains more challenging texts than Paper 1. The test takes approximately 40 minutes.

Mathematics test

The mathematics test comprises 2 components, presented to pupils as 2 test papers.

Paper 1: arithmetic consists of a single test paper and takes approximately 20 minutes.

¹¹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum#programmes-of-study-by-subject

Paper 2: reasoning consists of a single test paper and takes approximately 35 minutes. The paper includes a practice question and 5 aural questions. After the aural questions, the time allowed for the remainder of the paper should be approximately 30 minutes.

English grammar, punctuation and spelling test

The English grammar, punctuation and spelling test includes 2 papers.

Paper 1: spelling consists of a test transcript to be read by the test administrator and an answer booklet for pupils to write 20 spellings. The test paper takes approximately 15 minutes.

Paper 2: a combined question and answer booklet focusing on pupils' knowledge of grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. The test paper takes approximately 20 minutes.

4.2 Practice test materials

[Practice test materials](#)¹² are available to use alongside, or help teachers prepare for, the optional tests. These include past versions of KS1 national curriculum tests, mark schemes and test administration instructions.

Past versions of the modified tests (excluding braille) are also available as practice test materials.

4.3 Test frameworks

[Test frameworks](#)¹³ are available for each test. Although written for test developers, these may also be of interest to schools.

Teachers should not use the test frameworks to guide teaching and learning. They do not provide information on how schools should teach the national curriculum.

STA will continue to use the test framework to develop the optional tests.

4.4 Ordering, declining and downloading test materials

Schools should submit their holiday dates for the academic year 2023 to 2024 on the PAG by Friday 17 November. STA will use this information when planning deliveries of test materials.

¹² www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-practice-materials

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-test-frameworks

Maintained schools and academies (including free schools)

Maintained schools and academies do not need to place a test order for standard versions of the optional KS1 tests. STA will calculate the quantities required based on school census data. Modified tests should be ordered by Friday 17 November on the PAG, if required (see section 4.5).

Maintained schools and academies can use the 'Decline optional KS1 test papers' form on the PAG to inform STA they do not wish to receive printed versions of optional KS1 test papers (for all subjects). This form will close on Friday 17 November and after this date test papers will be printed and delivered to schools that have not declined materials. Please note that once a school has declined optional papers there is no option to re-order.

Maintained schools and academies that decline test papers will still be able to download optional test materials and mark schemes from the PAG from Wednesday 1 May. They will also be available on GOV.UK from Monday 3 June. Some maintained schools and academies may prefer to download the test materials for one or more subjects, rather than receiving paper copies of all the tests.

Independent schools

Independent schools choosing to participate in the optional tests can order standard and modified materials on the PAG by Friday 17 November.

Independent schools that place a test order will have access to download optional test materials and mark schemes from the PAG on Wednesday 1 May.

Special schools, pupil referral units and secure units

Special schools, PRUs and secure units can order standard and modified versions of the optional tests on the PAG until Friday 17 November if any pupils are working at the standard of the tests and are able to access them. Otherwise, STA will assume they do not wish to order test papers for their pupils and will not send test materials. If schools believe their pupils may reach the standard of the tests by May 2024, they can order test materials for them.

All special schools, PRUs and secure units will be able to download optional test materials and mark schemes from the PAG on Wednesday 1 May, including those who did not place a test order.

4.5 Test materials

Standard booklets are A4 (297mm x 210mm) with multi-tonal diagrams and illustrations. Standard materials use an STA developed font called 'Key Stage 1' at 15pt. STA also

develops modified versions of the tests, which are primarily designed for pupils with significant visual impairments, although they may be suitable for pupils with other needs. The modified large print papers use 'Arial Bold' at 18pt, with 'Arial Bold' at 24pt used for emphasis (replacing use of bold in standard materials). A pupil is not required to have an identified special educational need or disability to use modified tests.

The modified tests available are:

- modified large print versions, which are A4 but with more white space present than in the standard booklets – some diagrams are substituted for a high contrast design or require the use of physical models
- braille versions, available in uncontracted (Grade 1) Unified English Braille (UEB) only, which are A4 – diagrams are produced in tactile formats or as physical models, and a larger booklet (297mm x 275mm) is produced for the English reading prompt and answer booklet

All schools can order modified versions of the tests on the PAG until Friday 17 November.

Schools can contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 to:

- make late orders for modified materials after Friday 17 November (for example where a pupil arrives in school after this date or if a pupil's needs change)
- ask for further advice about which modified materials may be suitable
- request hard copies of the braille tests from previous years

4.6 Delivery of test materials

Schools will receive optional test materials, including any modified test orders, in the week beginning Monday 22 April.

Materials are delivered to school addresses taken from [Get Information about Schools](https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk)¹⁴ (GIAS). Therefore, schools that are receiving test materials must ensure their details are up to date and log in to GIAS via [DfE Sign-in](https://services.signin.education.gov.uk)¹⁵ to make changes.

If schools have not declined test materials and they have not arrived by Friday 26 April, or if anything is missing from the materials, schools should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

¹⁴ www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk

¹⁵ <https://services.signin.education.gov.uk>

Additional test materials

Schools can download additional optional KS1 test materials and mark schemes from the PAG from Wednesday 1 May (see section 4.4). This includes modified large print versions but excludes braille. Schools requiring additional braille materials should contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

4.7 Security of test materials

Schools may choose to administer the non-statutory optional KS1 tests under test conditions. To help maintain the integrity of the tests for those doing so, we ask that all schools treat all test materials as confidential from when they are received or downloaded until Monday 3 June, and follow the guidance on keeping materials secure in the [test administration guidance](#)¹⁶.

¹⁶ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-1-tests

5 Test participation

5.1 Participating pupils

There are no requirements for how schools use the optional KS1 tests, or which pupils take them. The tests have been designed for pupils in year 2 who have completed the relevant KS1 programme of study, are moving on to KS2 and will reach the age of 7 by the end of the academic year 2023 to 2024.

The optional tests have not been designed for pupils who are working at the [pre-key stage 1 standards](#)¹⁷ or would be assessed using the [engagement model](#)¹⁸.

5.2 Access arrangements

The optional KS1 tests are intended to assess pupils' abilities in a fair and comparable way. They are designed so that most pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) can participate using the standard versions. However, a small number of pupils may need additional arrangements.

[Access arrangements](#)¹⁹ are adjustments that schools can make to support specific pupils. If the school chooses to administer the tests under test conditions, the support provided should be primarily based on normal classroom practice.

¹⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-key-stage-1-standards

¹⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model

¹⁹ www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-1-tests-how-to-use-access-arrangements

6 Test administration

6.1 Administering the tests

The optional tests are intended to support classroom practice, and there are no requirements for how these should be administered. However, to maximise the value of the tests and administer them in line with previous years, schools can follow the [test administration guidance](#)²⁰, which will be published in March. STA will also provide test administration instructions alongside the optional KS1 tests.

The tests are designed to be taken at the end of the KS1 programme of study. It is suggested that schools administer the tests during May, to help inform the support that can be given to pupils on their transition to KS2 ahead of time.

6.2 Marking the tests

The optional KS1 tests are marked by schools using mark schemes that will be available on the PAG from Wednesday 1 May. We recommend that tests are marked by a member of staff familiar with the pupil, as marking requires professional judgement about which responses are correct.

6.3 Using test results

The purpose of the optional tests is to support the evaluation of pupil achievement and help schools to understand where pupils need additional help as they transition into KS2.

Raw score to scaled score conversion tables and compensatory marks for spelling will be available for schools to download from the PAG on Thursday 16 May. They will also be published on GOV.UK on Monday 3 June. Teachers can use these to convert pupils' raw scores into [scaled scores](#)²¹ to see whether each pupil has met the expected standard in the tests. The use of scaled scores enables accurate comparisons of pupil performance over time.

Schools are not required to report results to parents or local authorities, and they will not be used for school accountability purposes.

²⁰ www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-1-test-administration

²¹ www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-scaled-scores-at-key-stage-1

7 Teacher assessment

All teacher assessment is now non-statutory at the end of KS1. Schools are encouraged to continue to use the end of KS1 [teacher assessment framework](#)²² to support classroom practice. The [non-statutory teacher assessment guidance](#)²³ will support schools with the delivery of non-statutory teacher assessment.

²² www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-1

²³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment-guidance

8 Reporting to parents

8.1 Annual reports

Headteachers of maintained schools, including maintained special schools, must prepare annual reports for every pupil's parents. Details of this are outlined in section 7 of the [Assessment and reporting arrangements \(Year 1 phonics screening check\)](#)²⁴.

Schools are encouraged to provide additional information to parents at the end of KS1, as their child transitions into KS2. Schools may wish to include results of the optional tests in their annual reports to parents, as part of the information on the pupil's achievements and general progress.

Academies' requirements are set out in their funding agreements.

Further information relating to data handling can be found in section 8 of the [Assessment and reporting arrangements \(Year 1 phonics screening check\)](#)²⁵.

²⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check

²⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-and-reporting-arrangements-phonics-screening-check

9 Further information

9.1 Useful websites and links

- Primary Assessment Gateway

www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk

- Get Information about Schools

www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk

Optional key stage 1 tests

Collection available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-1-tests, including:

- Optional KS1 tests: test administration guidance
- Optional KS1 tests: access arrangements guidance

National curriculum tests: practice materials

Collection available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-practice-materials, including:

- past papers and mark schemes
- scaled score conversion tables

9.2 General enquiries

For general enquiries about the assessment and reporting arrangements at KS1, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

9.3 Message us

For enquiries relating to KS1 access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can use the 'Message us – access arrangements' form which can be found on the [PAG](#)²⁶.

9.4 Modified tests

Schools can discuss the suitability of, and order, braille and MLP versions of the optional KS1 tests by contacting the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or emailing MTH@iwanttoconnect.co.uk.

²⁶ www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk



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The 'Assessment and Reporting Arrangements' (ARA) contains provisions made pursuant to Article 9 of [The Education \(National Curriculum\) \(Key Stage 1 Assessment Arrangements\) \(England\) Order 2004](#), as amended. The 2004 Order is made under section 87(3)(c) of the [Education Act 2002](#).

Under section 87(12) of the Education Act 2002, the ARA gives full effect to or otherwise supplements the provisions made in the 2004 Order and as such has effect as if made by the 2004 Order. The ARA provides information and guidance on national curriculum assessments and their administration.

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