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24th April 2015

Dear Parents

We are undergoing the biggest change in education for 20 years and it appears to me that most of this has gone unreported in the news. So I thought I would bring you up to date on what these changes mean to your child.

Firstly we have a new curriculum, alongside this the DfE have done away with levels for assessing pupil progress (we have always had a range of levels such as 2b and 4b). The DfE have asked each school to design their own new methods for assessment. Finally we also have new SEN legislation and new ways of working with those who need additional support.

All of this will have an impact on what we teach your child and how we report progress to you.

Firstly the new curriculum;

This is intended to be a more slimmed down curriculum in most subjects, although not in English, Maths or Science.

The Prime Minister has called it “rigorous, engaging and tough”, and Michael Gove, who was education minister when it was designed, has said “changes were necessary for England to keep pace with the most successful education systems in the world”.

It is designed to raise standards and this means that what is expected of pupils in each year group is now higher; this is particularly true in maths, where children are now expected to know much more at an earlier age. The areas where we have particularly noticed differences are:

Maths; more fractions, more times tables earlier (children need to know all tables up to and including 12x by Year 4), Roman numerals, more arithmetic and quick recall of number facts.

English; more focus on spelling, grammar and speaking and listening.

Because children now need to know things at a younger age than with the old curriculum, some children, who were at the appropriate level for their age now appear behind where they should be and those children who were above what was expected at their age now appear to be working at age related expectations. This does not mean we have not taught them



appropriately or that they have failed but that the 'goal posts' have moved. We are working hard to ensure we get all children to the appropriate level as quickly as we can.

I attach a booklet that gives an overview of the changes to the curriculum, for your child's year group. I have put all of these booklets on the school website so you can see changes across the years if you wish.

Secondly assessment;

Many of you will know that we used 'levels' to assess children and that level 2b was the expected level for a child at the end of Year 2 and Level 4b was the expected level for a child at the end of year 6. Those levels have now been scrapped. We have not been given anything in their place and all schools have been told to design their own assessment processes. The performance descriptors that should give us an idea of expected progress have been delayed.

You may be interested in the following quote from The Guardian Jan 2015.

"Serious behind-the-scenes concerns have been raised about a new assessment system scheduled to be introduced in English primary schools in September, an internal Department for Education paper warns. The new "performance descriptors", produced in [draft form](#) for public consultation in October 2014, have encountered a hitch. Influential DfE advisers appear to have concerns about the proposed guidance advising teachers on how the old system of national curriculum "levels", measuring pupil progress, is being replaced. The internal DfE paper, marked "'Official Sensitive'", lists progress on primary assessment as "amber-red [the second worst category] because of performance descriptors". "Consultation on performance descriptors for teacher assessment: over 300 responses to date, significant concerns being raised. "Two of those who seemed alarmed are very close to the DfE: Tim Oates, who led the department's "expert panel" on the national curriculum that proposed ending the levels system, and Ruth Miskin, former head teacher and phonics expert. "There is a risk that if ministers want to review their approach, the performance descriptors cannot be finalised by September as planned. "The DfE says: "We do not comment on leaks," but there are indications from the department that the guidance will be finalised by September.

Doddi School, like most schools, have been working, with others, to come up with the best assessment for us. This is still work in progress as we wait for government guidance; however we feel we are on the right tracks and way ahead many schools. From 2016 there still will be tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 set by the government, and these will be reported as a scaled score with 100 being expected level. However the system we use to assess and track progress between Foundation year and Year 2 and between Year 2 and Year 6 is for us to decide. Currently we are reporting children as at expected level, emerging or exceeding expected level. Current Year 6 and Year 2 will sit tests in May marks in the old levels way.

Finally SEN changes; for those children with SEN, it is now called SEND and we will be asking you to help us fill in new paperwork for children with SEN.

As ever, our commitment is to provide the best education we can, and work for the best interests of all children in our care. As most of you know, our mission is always to be a centre for excellence in education and to be a place where children enjoy learning. This continues to be at the heart of all our decisions. Please do come and talk to us if you have any queries.

There is a wealth of information about all these changes on the internet, as well as the DfE website. I have found www.primarycurriculum.me.uk/ a useful place for information. But a google search of 'new curriculum primary' will give you much more information than I can possibly put in one letter.

I know this sounds complicated, but if you have any questions please ask and if you would like a parents evening to discuss these changes please let me know.

Best wishes

Sarah Evans