A guide to National Curriculum levels and your child's annual report
The National Curriculum Levels

From Year 1 in their school life, all children are assessed against the National Curriculum Levels; children in Reception follow the Foundation Stage Curriculum.

This is how the National Curriculum Levels build up:

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**Level 2b** is the level expected nationally of the average child at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

**Level 4b** is the level expected nationally of an average child at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year6)

Some children need more consolidation in their early years, some develop quickly. Some experience blips along the way, and some need to consolidate their learning at various stages, often at the beginning of a new Key Stage. Children need the early building blocks of learning to be solid to enable them to learn better and increasingly quickly as they near the upper end of the school.

The children are in our school for seven years and these levels are a guide to their progress. We aim to unlock potential and shape the future through tireless commitment to meeting our pupils’ needs and by working closely with you, as parents.

**ENGLISH**

At all levels, learning English is about learning to use language to express and communicate thoughts and ideas. We do this through speaking, listening, reading and writing. Getting better at English means making progress in each of these closely related areas. Talking to your child and ‘talk for writing’ overall, is crucial in helping children to make progress in all aspects of English.

Writing is usually a more challenging aspect to develop – At Newlands children are taught to think about their writing in terms of **Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation.** They then use these aspects to help them improve by working towards short term targets for improvement in these areas.

**VCOP Pyramids**

During your visits to school you may see VCOP pyramids on the desks or walls of your children’s classrooms. The VCOP Pyramids are a graphic representation for the range of vocabulary, punctuation, connectives and openers that should be realistic for most children at each level of writing. Each line represents a level. Therefore use of a full stop alone is Level 1 in punctuation,(not necessarily in writing overall) a full stop and a question mark are Level 2 and so on.
Connectives pyramid

Ambitious vocabulary
Openers pyramid

Punctuation pyramid
PROGRESS IN READING

In school, regular guided reading sessions help teachers monitor children’s progress through the National Curriculum levels and help to move them through to the next level. Class teachers will hear pupils read in guided sessions every week. Guided reading is also supported by individual reading which may be done to parents, volunteers, assistants, teachers or senior teachers and noted in pupils’ ‘reading records’.

There are 7 foci for assessment in reading. They are linked to the National Curriculum and designed to give a detailed view of children’s attainment in all types of reading.

READING ASSESSMENT FOCI

1 Use a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to read for meaning; This mostly describes the early stages of reading where lots of listening to pupils read aloud is needed.

2 Understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text;

3 Deduce, infer or interpret information, events or ideas from texts

4 Identify and comment on the structure and organisation of texts, including grammatical and presentational features at text level

5 Explain and comment on the writer’s use of language, including grammatical and literacy features at word and sentence level

6 Identify and comment on writer’s purposes and viewpoints and the overall effect of the text on the reader

7 Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts and literacy traditions.

As children’s reading develops they will work with less teacher support and show what they can do across a wider range of more challenging texts. Children are expected to develop their ability to make informed choices about what and how they read with increasing independence.

Progression within each assessment focus is shown not only by the different criteria but also by how it is used:

Level 1: In some reading, usually with support

Level 2: In some reading

Level 3: In most reading

Level 4 and above: Across a range of reading

In the initial stages of reading children need to develop fluent and confident reading. Children will discuss the story but the focus is on ensuring children can read the text at a good pace, using a variety of strategies. At this stage the children will be expected to talk about the text and show they understand what they read.

When fluent and confident reading is established the focus is more on developing the comprehension and higher order reading skills. Initially some children find it difficult to express their opinions about text and may need support in developing their responses.
Research shows that there is “a highly significant improvement by children who received practice at home,” (DFES, 2003) and that in homes where parents offer support this can be more significant a factor than the school’s efforts and the effort of the pupils themselves (De Fraja, 2010). This is a particularly important point during school holidays, where many pupils can fall behind their peers if they do not continue to practice their reading. Little and often – reading to you on a regular basis really does make a difference.

**PROGRESS IN MATHS**

At all levels, learning maths is about solving problems and using key processes such as: looking for patterns and relationships between numbers, communicating and presenting maths using words and diagrams and reasoning and developing mathematical arguments.

Progression in maths involves using and applying these processes and skills. Progress through levels also involves increasing demand, so that for example, at levels 1 and 2 children are required to demonstrate their ability ‘with support’ whereas at higher levels the emphasis is on independence.

We emphasise real-life contexts and ‘challenge’. We design activities to stretch pupils of all abilities, often relating the maths to the context where we might find it in later life.

**MATHS ASSESSMENT FOCI**

**Using and applying mathematics**

- Problem solving
- Communicating
- Reasoning

**Number**

- Numbers and the number system
- Fractions (level 1 and above), decimals (level 3 and above), percentages, ratio (level 4 and above) and proportion (level 5 and above)
- Operations and relationships between them
- Mental methods
- Solving numerical problems
- Written methods
- Algebra (level 5 and above)
Shape, space and measures

• Properties of shape
• Properties of position and movement
• Measures

Handling data

• Processing and representing data
• Interpreting data
• Specifying the problem, planning and collecting data (level 5 and above)

To help encourage your child, play games with numbers and develop a range of mental calculation strategies to help build confidence and competence. Older children will also need to practise and consolidate skills such as mental arithmetic, working out angles and calculating averages etc. These skills are necessary for solving the ‘bigger’ problems they will encounter as their mathematics develops. Many parents will find that the way maths is taught is different from their own experience – but there is no right or wrong way – any method is fine as long as the child understands what they are doing.

The best chance for success lies in school and home working together and using similar approaches. If you are uncertain about the methods used in school please don’t hesitate to see your child’s teacher.

SCHOOL REPORTS

Our annual reports are timed to be used as a vehicle for dialogue and discussion between you, your child and your child’s teacher. Good questions to ask when reading the report are:

Is my child in line with national average levels of attainment? If not, what is the school doing to help? What can I do to help?

Where are my child’s strengths? How can I congratulate him/her and pass on the positive praise that I have received?

Do I agree with what is written in the report? Do I notice the same at home or are there new things that I should inform the school about?

Do I understand the ‘next steps’ and how I can help my child achieve them?

We hope that you find your child’s report a useful and informative document. Teachers have invested a huge amount of time in developing what we feel is a detailed and thorough understanding of your child’s progress and needs. I am extremely grateful for all of their hard work and for all the hard work of parents in supporting the learning journey during their child’s time at Newlands.

Mr. C. M. McCarthy
Headteacher
Acknowledgement

With thanks to Sheering C of E Primary School for providing a model 'guide for parents'.

References