Key Stage 2 SATs 2015

Following a review of KS2 SATs published in June 2011 a number of changes have been made to the Year 6 tests, with the aim of making them fairer for all children. Lord Bew, the author of the report, recommended a greater focus on the progress children make throughout the school year, as opposed to a test-day snapshot of what they know. He also highlighted the value of teacher assessment (a class teacher can provide valuable information about an individual’s performance and progress).

KS2 SATs papers explained
All Year 6 children are required to take externally-set assessments in English and Maths. The standard papers cover levels 3-5, with level 4 being the expected national average at the end of primary school. Children sit the following tests:

Year 6 English SATs
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling – Paper 1 comprises 40 to 50 short-answer questions covering grammar, punctuation and vocabulary; Paper 2 is a spelling test with 20 questions.
- English reading – one paper based on reading comprehension of three to four texts, with a total of 35 to 40 questions.

The English grammar, punctuation and spelling test covers sentence grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, handwriting and spelling and was introduced in 2013.

What is the SPAG test?
The new English grammar, punctuation and spelling test (informally known as the SPAG test) was introduced in May 2013 as part of the KS2 SATs programme for Year 6 pupils, replacing the previous English writing test.

‘The Government wants all children to leave primary school with a sound grasp of essential English skills,’ says a Department for Education (DfE) spokesperson. ‘The test will put an additional focus on writing skills and encourage good teaching.’ The DfE has yet to confirm whether children will receive a standalone mark for the SPAG test, or whether it will form part of their overall English level.

What does the SPAG test examine?
The SPAG test includes questions that assess the following elements of the English curriculum:
- **Sentence grammar** through both identifying and writing sentences that are grammatically correct
- **Punctuation** through identifying and writing sentences that are correctly punctuated
- **Vocabulary** through identifying and writing sentences in which a word is used correctly
- **Spelling**

What sort of questions will your child need to answer?
The SPAG test consists of two papers.
Paper 1 requires multiple choice or short sentence answers, covering areas such as using connectives (because, despite, however, etc.), using pronouns (I/me) correctly, capitalising the correct words in a sentence and explaining why, putting the correct punctuation into a given sentence, writing sentences that illustrate two different meanings of the same word (such as 'present'), identifying the verb/noun/adjective/clauses in a sentence, and using plurals correctly. For example:

Q: Which ending would make the word lazy an adverb? A: laziness/lazily/lazier/laziest
Correct answer: lazily

Paper 2 is a spelling test, in which children will have to spell words dictated by the examiner (presented within sentences). For example:

Pria turned on the television to watch her favourite cartoon.

What skills and knowledge do children need to succeed?
'The ability to write with purpose, accuracy and clarity, drawing on a wide range of vocabulary, is integral to success,' says a DfE spokesperson.

However for your child to do well in the SPAG test, they don’t just have to be good at writing; they also need a technical understanding of how the English language works. As well as being able to spell words correctly, use a wide range of vocabulary and punctuate well, they need to grasp the meaning of grammatical terms such as noun, verb, adjective, prefix, pronoun and adverb, know what phrases and clauses are and how to use them, understand what connectives are and how they work, know how to turn a question into a command, and so on. This terminology can be a stumbling block even for children who are otherwise good at reading and writing, and make the questions hard to understand; see the simple literacy glossary***

Year 6 Maths SATs
- Mathematics - Papers 1 and 2, each lasting 45 minutes, and Paper 3, a 20-minute mental Maths test.

In addition, high-achieving children may be entered for Level 6 SATs papers in the same subjects. The Department for Education (DfE) advises that only children who are expected to achieve a level 6 should take these tests; if they don’t pass, they are awarded the grade from their level 3-5 papers instead.
When are the 2015 KS2 SATs tests?

KS2 SATs will be held in the week beginning 11 May 2015.

The tests will follow this timetable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 English reading</th>
<th>Level 6 English reading</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 English grammar, punctuation and spelling</th>
<th>Level 6 English grammar, punctuation and spelling</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 mental mathematics</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 mathematics Paper 1</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 mathematics Paper 2</th>
<th>Levels 3-5 mathematics Paper 1</th>
<th>Level 6 mathematics Paper 1</th>
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Science sampling: what's it all about?

The biggest change for KS2 SATs was that although there are no formal science SATs in 2014, 'science sampling' was reintroduced. Under this system, 9,500 children – five children from 1,500 schools – will be randomly selected to take a science test. Schools that are selected will be notified by mid-May, and are legally obliged to participate if chosen.

The science sampling test will comprise three papers, each of no more than 25 minutes, to be taken within a two-week period from Monday 1 June 2015. Results will only be published at a national level; neither schools nor parents will be given their children’s individual results, and they won’t be used in league tables. Science sampling will take place every two years.

Other changes to SATs in 2014

- A new format and timing (one hour) for the level 3-5 English reading test.
- A ban on calculators in the level 3-5 Maths tests.
- The percentage of children achieving level 6 was shown in school league tables for the first time.
- Teachers can now request extra time for children with special educational needs based on their own observations, rather than having to provide evidence from a specialist professional.
Teacher assessment in the KS2 SATs

- Other subjects, including English speaking and listening, are assessed by teachers rather than by children taking a formal written test. This assessment data is then submitted to the DfE, and is subject to moderation.

- Replacing the writing test given previously, your child’s teacher will assess their writing composition, so your child’s result for English writing will be a judgement of their work during year 6. Your child’s grammar, punctuation and spelling skills will be assessed as part of their writing, but their creativity and writing style will also be evaluated.

- Children’s progress, as well as their achievement, will be measured and reported on.

- Teacher assessments will be passed on to secondary schools so they can be used in planning for year 7 teaching.

- The following subjects will continue to be teacher assessed: speaking and listening.

- Maths and reading tests will continue to be marked externally.