

## Assessment for Curriculum for Excellence – Frequently Asked Questions <sup>1</sup>

### General

#### **Q: What will be new and different about assessment in CfE?**

**A:** There are four main features of the new assessment system in *Curriculum for Excellence*. These are:

- Assessment practices will follow and reinforce the curriculum, promote high quality learning and teaching and give more autonomy and professional responsibility to teachers
- Standards and expectations are defined in a way that reflect the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This will support greater breadth and depth of learning and a greater focus on skills development including higher order skills
- A national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3 to 18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving consistency and confidence in their professional judgements
- A National Assessment Resource will help teachers to achieve greater consistency and understanding in their professional judgements. There will also be a major focus on CPD to help teachers develop the skills required.

#### **Q: What guidance and support will be available on assessment in CfE?**

**A:** In her speech to the Scottish Learning Festival on 23 September, the Cabinet Secretary for Life Long Learning has set out the strategy that will govern the assessment system for *Curriculum for Excellence*. This includes the policy on national standards and expectations for assessment, the process for quality assurance and moderation, the uses of assessment information for improvement and expectations for reporting. *Assessment for Curriculum for Excellence: strategic vision and key principles* published on the *Curriculum for Excellence* website sets out more detail of the new assessment system.

Later in the session, we will publish a **Framework for Assessment**. This will provide guidance and support to ensure that arrangements for assessment, at all levels of the educational community, support the principles and purposes of *Curriculum for Excellence* and build on the Assessment is for Learning programme. The Framework has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and practitioners from the 3 to 18.

In addition we are developing a **National Assessment Resource** which will support staff in making judgements about learner performance.

There will be a major focus on **continuing professional development** on assessment to ensure that teachers develop skills and expertise in applying the established standards consistently and fairly.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes on terminology: The term 'teacher' or 'staff' in this document is used to refer to all staff involved in assessment and includes pre-school practitioners, college lecturers, youth workers and other relevant practitioners. The term 'school' should be taken to include pre-school centres, residential and day special schools (including secure provision), and primary and secondary schools, wherever it is used. We recognise that many young people who are post 16 may view themselves as adults. However, in this document we have adopted the terminology of children and young people to reflect a consistent approach across *Curriculum for Excellence*.

We are also redesigning the **Scottish Survey of Achievement** so it tells us much more about young people's literacy and numeracy skills.

**Q: Will we have to wait until the Framework for Assessment is published before we can develop our assessment practices?**

**A:** No. While the Framework for Assessment will provide further detail on assessment within *Curriculum for Excellence*, schools, centres, colleges and other providers should be developing their assessment arrangements, building on the standards with which they are already familiar.

*Curriculum for Excellence* aims to raise standards of achievement and ensure success for all learners. 5-14 levels will form important first points of reference for establishing an understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* standards. The guidance and support through the National Assessment Resource, as well as moderation and continuing professional development activities will be important in ensuring that teachers develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations and apply these consistently.

The *Principles and Practice* papers in each of the curriculum areas provide useful guidance on assessing progress. Teachers should use this information together with the guidance provided in Building the Curriculum 2 and Building the Curriculum 3 as they develop their assessment practices. Much of their current practice will continue to be relevant to the new curriculum. Schools are still expected to have robust evidence of children's development and progress, together with an effective tracking system to monitor their attainment and achievement.

**Q: Does the new assessment system only apply to 3 to 15?**

**A:** No, the Framework for Assessment and policy and practices related to *Curriculum for Excellence* are for 3 to 18 and include assessment in the senior phase (from 16 to 18). SQA working with key partners, will ensure that standards and expectations for National Qualifications are consistent with the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and include the breadth, level of challenge and application of learning. SQA will provide external quality assurance for National Qualifications to help achieve high quality and consistency in assessment judgements and quality assurance practices within schools and education authorities.

**Q: When will schools be expected to assess progress and achievement using the new assessment system?**

**A:** We expect schools and local authorities to develop their thinking about how they will work with the new standards and expectations over the course of this year. From August 2010, all learners will be experiencing the new curriculum. The expectation is that from August 2010 assessment will be related to the standards and expectations within the assessment framework.

**Q: In what ways does the new assessment system give teachers more professional responsibility?**

**A:** Assessment of children's and young people's progress and achievements 3 to 15 will be based on teachers' assessment. The new system is designed to support learning and so relies more on teachers' professional judgement of how well learners are doing.

**Q: There is an increased emphasis on teacher's assessment in the new system. How will the assessment system be credible and robust?**

**A:** The commitment to assessment processes based on teachers' professional judgements was given in *Building the Curriculum 3*. The assessment system includes two key features which have been designed to ensure that the assessment system in *Curriculum for Excellence* is credible and robust-these are the local and national procedures for moderation and quality assurance of teachers' assessment judgements and provision of support and exemplification through the National Assessment Resource.

Scottish Government, education authorities and other partners will work together to build on local and national practices for quality assurance and moderation of assessment. The aim will be to achieve consistency in standards and expectations and build trust and confidence in teacher's judgements. Education authorities and national partners will work together to develop the most efficient and effective approaches possible for quality assurance and moderation.

Teachers will also have access to a new national resource - the National Assessment Resource (NAR) - which will help them as they make their judgements about progress and achievement. Using national examples of the standards which will be provided as part of the NAR will support teachers in developing consistent standards.

**Q: How will we have credible assessment of children and young people's achievements in the important areas of literacy and numeracy?**

**A:** Teachers in primary and secondary schools will be supported in assessing children's progress in literacy and numeracy in a number of ways including using the guidance and materials available through the National Assessment Resource (NAR) and by participating in moderation activities-both of these will ensure teachers develop an shared understanding of standards and expectations and apply these consistently.

By applying the principles and practices which will be supported by the NAR and through moderation, teachers will be able to ensure that the standards and expectations in literacy and numeracy are rigorously applied. This will enable teachers to provide a robust and credible assessment of children's achievements in literacy and numeracy at all stages of their broad general education.

National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications are being developed at SCQF levels 3, 4 or 5. They will be available for young people from S3 onwards and will build on the development and assessment of the standards and expectations of literacy and numeracy skills from earlier stages These qualifications will involve external marking by SQA as well as teachers' assessment of some aspects. SQA will quality assure teachers' assessments to ensure national standards are maintained. The qualifications will also be available for adult learners who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

**Q: How does the new assessment system build on the existing strengths?**

**A:** Scotland has many strengths in assessment practices that have been developed through, for example the *Assessment is for Learning* programme and *National Qualifications*. The new assessment system builds on these. The ten key features<sup>2</sup> of the national *Assessment is for Learning* initiative are integral components of the new approach. The development of the new and revised National Qualifications will ensure that approaches to assessment provide more time for learning and the good practice which reduces the time spent on assessment for certification will be encouraged.

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<sup>2</sup> For further information see <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/toolkit/index.asp>

Assessment practice should follow and reinforce the curriculum and promote high quality learning and teaching approaches. This is reflected in the principles of assessment within the new framework. These are that assessment practices should: **support learning** including through sharing learning intentions and success criteria and high quality interactions and feedback; **promote learner engagement by** learner involvement in reflection, setting learning goals and next steps including through personal learning planning and through self and peer assessment; **ensure appropriate personal support** is in place to be fair and inclusive and to enable learners to have the best chance of success

It is important that the information coming from assessment is able to show the breadth and depth of learning and is based on a variety of approaches and range of evidence. Assessment approaches need to be proportionate and fit for purpose: different forms of assessment are appropriate at different stages and in different areas of learning.

We are also building on the strengths of assessment and quality assurance approaches in National Qualifications. These will inform the development of the quality assurance and moderation approaches 3 to 18 to ensure that teachers develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations which will result in increased reliability and confidence in their assessment judgements.

**Q: We are an AifL school. Will we just continue doing what we are doing?**

**A:** The effective practice developed through the national initiative Assessment is for Learning (AifL) is integral to the new assessment system. AifL schools are in a very strong position to further develop their assessment practices to realise the ambition of *Curriculum for Excellence* in raising standards of achievement and ensuring success for all learners.

The experiences and outcomes represent a broader range of knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities than is currently assessed. This means that teachers will require to develop their assessment approaches to ensure that learners have the opportunity to provide evidence of their progress and achievements across all aspects of their learning.

It will be important that staff are involved in reflection and self-evaluation to ensure that their assessment practices are fit for purpose within *Curriculum for Excellence*. Schools are still expected to have robust evidence of children's development and progress, together with an effective tracking system to monitor their attainment and achievement. Teachers need to have easily available valid and reliable assessment data to help them track learners' progress and achievements and ensure appropriate support and challenge in their learning. Assessment information also helps to identify areas of strength, aspects which prompt further questions, and scope for improvement in learning and teaching practices.

**Q: Not all secondary schools have fully embedded AifL in their assessment practices. How will such schools be supported to ensure that they can deliver the new approaches?**

**A:** Teachers in secondary schools should continue to develop their assessment practices in line with the national initiative Assessment is for Learning. The ten key features<sup>3</sup> of effective AifL practice are integral components of the new assessment system. Teachers, in all sectors, will be supported by continuing professional development activities as well as the guidance and materials available through the National Assessment resource. Through participating in moderation activities, teachers will also be able to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations and apply these consistently. This support will enable teachers to deepen their understanding and expertise in assessment. It will also help develop their capacity to make sound judgements about progress and achievement.

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<sup>3</sup> For further information see <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/toolkit/index.asp>

**Q: Will there be National Tests?**

**A:** No. The broad range of knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities across all aspects of learning within *Curriculum for Excellence* cannot be adequately assessed by conventional tests alone. To enable us to have a fuller picture of learners' progress and achievement, assessment evidence across the range of learning needs to be evaluated by teachers. This will provide more reliable information about learners' progress and achievements. It will also avoid some of the negative effects that national testing can have such as over emphasising a narrow snapshot of what children can do, 'teaching to the test' and narrowing of the curriculum to focus on those aspects of learning that are tested.

**Q: Is it true that there will be national tests in literacy and numeracy at P7?**

**A:** No. We will not be introducing national tests in literacy and numeracy in primary 7. Through the improved assessment practices, quality assurance and support for teachers provided through the National Assessment Resource and focused continuing professional development, schools, education authorities will have robust, moderated, nationally benchmarked information about the performance of learners, including at primary 7.

**Q: Will Scottish Government influence education authorities in relation to the assessment approaches used in schools and the assessment information they collect?**

**A:** Scottish Government will work with education authorities and other partners to develop processes for sharing assessment information so that education authorities can use the data to learn about the work of their schools, and where appropriate to support improvements in aspects of provision.

Schools and education authorities will have the flexibility to use a range of assessment approaches as appropriate to the nature of learning being assessed and the needs of their learners. Education authorities should ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to encourage and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for children and young people in order to inform planning for improvement.

**Q: What CPD will be available for assessment?**

**A:** The Scottish Government, LTS, SQA and Scotland's Colleges will work together on support for assessment and qualifications. This will include a programme of CPD on assessment approaches, including moderation activities.

**Assessing progress and achievement**

**Q: How will we know if children and young people are progressing well?**

**A:** Reflecting the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, progress is now defined in terms of 'how much' and 'how well' as well as learners' rate of progress. This approach will promote greater breadth and depth of learning including a greater focus on the secure development of skills and knowledge. Assessing progress across the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and when applying learning in different and unfamiliar contexts will also help teachers to plan, track progress and summarise achievement in a rounded way.

In *Curriculum for Excellence* the standards expected for progression are indicated within the experiences and outcomes at the different levels. The levels represent the breadth and depth of learning to be experienced by young people, typically over a three year period. The wider spacing of levels provides scope for practitioners to plan the curriculum with appropriate pace, challenge, personalisation and choice. It is important to recognise the progress and achievements of all young people including those with additional support needs by planning for and recognising 'short steps' in learning.

The *Principles and Practice papers* in each of the curriculum areas include more specific guidance of features of progression.

**Q: Is everyone expected to progress through the CfE levels in the same way?**

**A:** The expectations (the early curriculum level in the pre-school years and P1, first curriculum level-to the end of P4, second curriculum level-to the end of P7 and third curriculum level as the broad general education during S1 to S3) apply to the learning of every child and young person. A broad general education includes all of the experiences and outcomes across all curriculum areas up to and including the third level. These should be experienced by all children and young people as far as this is consistent with their learning needs and prior achievements. The arrangements for assessment should enable and motivate all learners to develop to their fullest across all aspects of the curriculum.

It is recognised that children and young people will progress at different rates: some will require additional support and may take longer for their learning to be secure at a particular level for some or all areas of the curriculum; others will achieve secure learning sooner.

**Q: Some teachers feel that they are encouraged to get our pupils through the 5-14 levels as quickly as possible. Will this be the same in CfE?**

**A:** No. The focus is no longer on 'how fast' learners progress and achieve the levels which can lead to superficial approaches to learning. Reflecting the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, progress is now defined in terms of 'how much' and 'how well' as well as learners' rate of progress. This approach will promote greater breadth and depth of learning including a greater focus on the secure development of skills and knowledge. Assessing progress across the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and when applying learning in different and unfamiliar contexts will also help teachers to plan, track progress and summarise achievement in a rounded way.

**Q: At what stages do we expect children and young people to progress through the different levels in CfE?**

**A:** The expectations about progression through curriculum levels are:

- the early curriculum level in the pre-school years and P1
- First curriculum level-to the end of P4
- Second curriculum level-to the end of P7
- Third and Fourth curriculum levels-S1 to S3 (Fourth curriculum level broadly aligns to SCQF level 4)
- The senior phase-S4 to S6, and college or other means of study

These expectations apply to the learning of every child and young as far as this is consistent with their learning needs and prior achievements.

**Q: Do teachers have to wait to P1, end of P4, end of P7 etc to assess children in relation to CfE level?**

**A:** No. Teachers will assess progress constantly as part of daily learning and teaching. From time to time teachers also take stock of their learners' progress by evaluating a range of evidence in order to be able to plan ahead and to report on progress. This is vital in ensuring that learners' progress is on track and that action is being taken to address any problems at the earliest possible point.

**Q: Can children and young people pass or fail assessments in the new assessment system?**

**A:** Yes. As with all assessments, teachers will discuss and agree criteria that will define what learners will require to do to demonstrate success in relation to a particular assessment task or activity. Teachers will focus on positive aspects of learners' performance and provide encouraging feedback identifying their strengths. Where learners do not meet these criteria teachers will also discuss what learners need to do to improve their learning. The National Assessment Resource will include illustrations of performances and learners' work to clarify expected standards.

**Q: Will assessments be graded?**

**A:** Assessments related to the experiences and outcomes at Early to Fourth curriculum levels will not be graded. For National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications, Skills for Work qualifications and the new National 4 qualifications achievement will be related to the appropriate SCQF level. The course assessments in the new and revised qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher will be graded.

**Q: The experiences and outcomes are less specific than the 5-14 outcomes. How will we know if we are working to the right standards?**

**A:** *Curriculum for Excellence* aims to raise standards of achievement and ensure success for all learners. Teachers will develop their approaches to assessment building on the standards with which they are already familiar. 5-14 levels will form important first points of reference for establishing an understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* standards. The guidance and support through the National Assessment Resource, as well as moderation and continuing professional development activities will be important in ensuring that teachers develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations and apply these consistently.

**National Assessment Resource (NAR)**

**Q: How will teachers be able to access the NAR?**

**A:** The National Assessment Resource will be closely linked with existing systems including online services from LTS and SQA as well as Glow so teachers will be able to access it through a number of routes.

**Q: What will be the benefits of the NAR?**

**A:** The National Assessment Resource will:

- develop professional skills and capacity in assessment;
- integrate with Glow to involve the education community in developing, peer reviewing and quality assuring assessments for *Curriculum for Excellence*;
- provide examples and guidance on assessment;
- provide teachers with an opportunity to come together to discuss assessment within *Curriculum for Excellence* and to share knowledge and experiences.

**Q: Who is responsible for developing the resources available through the NAR?**

**A:** Initially, national partners will work together with education authorities and practitioners to ensure that the NAR provides a range of high quality assessment guidance, resources and illustrations of learners' performance which exemplify expected standards across the range of learning in the experiences and outcomes. National partners are commissioning resources in the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. Resources will continue to be added to the NAR and in the long term partners plan to ensure that resources are available across all stages and areas of the curriculum.

In addition, Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) items and some 5-14 items are being reviewed and adapted as necessary to ensure they are fit for purpose in the assessment of

*Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes. Relevant items will be made accessible to individual teachers through the NAR.

One of the key functions of NAR is to provide a way for teachers to collaborate and develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations. Ultimately, as confidence and understanding grows, it is expected that teachers will contribute to and share their resources through the NAR.

**Q: Who is responsible for the quality assurance of the NAR resources?**

**A:** In the early stages, all partners are working closely together to develop procedures for quality assurance and to ensure that agreed criteria are applied rigorously in order to exemplify national standards and expectations. It is important that teachers as the professionals with responsibility for learning and assessment have ownership of the NAR and are responsible for the quality assurance of resources to ensure they are fit for purpose.

**Q: How can teachers be sure that the resources available through NAR exemplify the national standards and expectations?**

**A:** All partners are working closely together to develop procedures for quality assurance and to ensure that agreed criteria are applied rigorously in order to exemplify national standards and expectations. By having rigorous quality assurance or 'kite marking' procedures in place, teachers can be sure that the resources available through the NAR will support them in applying standards consistently.

**Q: Will there be materials for all curriculum areas in the NAR?**

**A:** Initially the focus will be on providing guidance and support in the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. In the long term, national partners plan to ensure that resources are available across all levels and areas of the curriculum.

**Q: In what way will the assessment material in the new NAR be different from the material in the existing National Assessment Bank?**

**A:** Rather than a limited range of tests which teachers use to confirm their assessment judgements at the 5-14 levels, the NAR will contain a wide range of high quality assessment guidance, resources and illustrations of learners' performance which they can use in an on-going way. The assessments, and supporting exemplification, will include a range of media including video, audio and interactive resources as well as the more familiar text that will also be enhanced with graphics and pictures. These will exemplify expected standards across the range of learning in the experiences and outcomes and their equivalent in the senior phase.

**Q: Will the 5-14 National Assessment Bank continue to be available?**

**A:** The 5-14 National Assessment Bank will be switched off when the Cabinet Secretary is satisfied that the materials for the NAR will be of sufficient quality to provide the necessary support and that the work remains on schedule.

**Q: What will happen to National Assessments?**

**A:** Existing 5-14 National Assessment items and Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) items are being reviewed and some may be adapted to ensure they are fit for purpose in the assessment of *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes. This adaptation will include ensuring that assessments are in relevant and interesting contexts. Appropriate items will be made accessible to individual teachers through the NAR.

**Q: Is the NAR not just a replacement NAB?**

**A:** No. The new National Assessment Resource is more than a bank of assessment items for tests. It will allow teachers to collaborate and develop a shared understanding of standards. In addition, it will provide guidance on a wider range of assessment approaches using a range of media such as video, audio and interactive resources as well as the more familiar text which will also be enhanced with graphics and pictures. It will also include illustrations of performances and learners' work to support teachers in developing a shared understanding of standards which they can apply consistently.

**Q: How will I know that my judgment of a young person's progress would be the same as my colleague in another school/authority?**

**A:** A national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3 to 18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving greater consistency and confidence in their professional judgements. Moderation activities aim to achieve consistency in judgements by enabling teachers to share their understanding of standards and expectations of performance. The national examples of the standards and expectations which will be provided as part of the NAR will also support teachers in developing consistent standards.

**Q: What will the national exemplars look like?**

**A:** The assessments, and supporting exemplification, will include video, audio and interactive resources as well as the more familiar text which will also be enhanced with graphics and pictures.

**Q: Is there a place for standardised tests-we find them helpful and easy to carry out?**

**A:** Some schools and education authorities may decide to continue to use such tests in addition to the range of resources and assessments available through the NAR in order to assess progress and identify learner's strengths and additional support needs. It is important that they recognise the particular purposes of assessment instruments and use the information emerging from assessment appropriately, within the boundaries for which they were intended. Standardised assessments cannot be a substitute for the range of assessment approaches required within *Curriculum for Excellence*. We need to match the range of knowledge skills, attributes and capabilities described in the experiences and outcomes to get a true reflection of children's progress and achievements within the new curriculum.

## **Moderation and Quality Assurance**

**Q: What is moderation?**

**A:** Moderation is the term used for the practices for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations which involve teachers:

- working together from the guidance provided to plan learning, teaching and assessment
- building on existing standards and expectations
- drawing on exemplification
- engaging with colleagues to share and confirm expectations.

**Q: How will the system ensure consistency in teachers' assessment judgements?**

**A:** Moderation aims to achieve consistency by:

- enabling teachers to share their understanding of standards and expectations of performance
- involving teachers in professional dialogue with colleagues
- using nationally provided exemplification illustrating achievement and progress
- focusing on the quality of assessment tasks and resources before they are used

- sampling learners' evidence and reviewing teacher's judgements.

**Q: How will education authorities ensure consistency of standards for young people who move between authorities?**

**A:** Education authorities will have a key role in ensuring that schools have suitable arrangements in place to support teachers' judgements and focus on any action required for improvement. They will be able to build on and further develop the existing good practices of sharing standards to ensure consistency in some schools and education authorities. In addition, the national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3-18 will support teachers in achieving greater consistency. This will help those young people who move between authorities.

**Q: How will moderation and other quality assurance activities be organised?**

**A:** Scottish Government, education authorities and other partners will work together to build on local and national practices for quality assurance and moderation of assessment. Education authorities and national partners will work together to develop the most efficient and effective approaches possible for quality assurance and moderation.

**Q: Will moderation be necessary in all curriculum areas?**

**A:** Some parts of the curriculum, notably aspects of literacy and numeracy, require greater reliability and consistency than others and the moderation process and exemplification are likely to be prioritised in these areas. However, some moderation will always be necessary to establish consistent expectations at school and associated school/cluster level. This will ensure reliability and confidence in assessment judgements which is especially important particularly at points of transition such as from primary to secondary school. Over time teachers will have opportunities to participate in moderation processes across all areas of the curriculum helping them in sharing expectations of performance and develop a shared understanding of standards and apply these consistently.

**Q: What is the role of HMIE?**

**A:** As part of inspections, HMIE will report on the effectiveness of improvement through self evaluation and make recommendations where practice needs to be improved. HMIE will aim where practicable, to include at least one school in every group of associated schools within its inspection programme in any one year, and will review the arrangements for moderation within that group of schools. This will support, promote and extend the quality and rigour of the moderation process and ensure regular national coverage.

**SSA**

**Q: What will be different about SSA in CfE?**

**A:** The Scottish Survey of Achievement will be adapted and fully aligned with *Curriculum for Excellence* and will focus on attainment in numeracy and literacy in schools. It will be a sample based survey of achievement focusing on attainment in numeracy and literacy in schools in alternate years, starting with numeracy in 2011. It will include written and practical assessments which cover numeracy and literacy across the curriculum.

**Q: We don't currently find the SSA helpful in informing improvements in our learning and teaching practices-what will be different in the new SSA?**

**A:** The Scottish Government will ensure that national and international surveys of achievement and performance measures are aligned fully with the purposes of learning and provide an overview of attainment in areas of priority. They will also ensure that information and data coming from such surveys help to inform improvements in learning and teaching at classroom level.

## **Reports to Parents**

### **Q: How will parents know how well their children are doing?**

**A:** Parents will get information about their children's progress in achieving the Curriculum for Excellence levels in key areas of learning such as literacy and numeracy as well as performance across the curriculum. To help parents support their children's learning, it is important that teachers share full and open accounts of each learner's progress. At particular points – especially at points of transition – teachers will work with children and young people to sum up achievements through profiles. These will include summary statements of progress within and through the curriculum levels as well as progress towards qualifications in the senior phase.

### **Q: What reports will parents get?**

**A:** As at present, parents will get the regular information about their children's strengths, progress and achievements.

The new assessment system is designed to provide on-going feedback to teachers, parents and children and young people about what learning needs to improve and focuses on steps that need to be taken to address learners' areas for development. This will ensure that they make appropriate progress in their learning.

In addition to individual reports on the progress of the child or young person, parents will receive information on: how well all learners and particular groups of learners are achieving; the performance of children and young people in the school in relation to expected levels at particular stages in key areas such as literacy and numeracy; and how the school is applying national standards and expectations. In relation to National Qualifications, SQA will report on learners' achievements through the Scottish Qualifications Certificate.

### **Q: Will we report on *Curriculum for Excellence* levels to parents?**

**A:** Reflecting the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, progress is now defined in terms of 'how much' and 'how well' as well as learners' rate of progress. This approach will promote greater breadth and depth of learning including a greater focus on the secure development of skills and knowledge. For this reason, reports to parents will focus on how well children and young people are demonstrating that their progress is secure across the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and by applying their learning.

The focus is no longer on 'how fast' learners progress and achieve the levels since this can lead to superficial approaches to learning. Under the 5-14 Programme, learners moved to the next level as soon as they had achieved a set of learning outcomes.

### **Q: What will we report for children who progress through a level over several years?**

**A:** The levels represent the breadth and depth of learning to be experienced by children and young people, typically over a three year period. This wider spacing of levels allows scope for children and young people to progress along different routes and pathways through the experiences and outcomes. It allows opportunities for enriching learning experiences and for consolidation and reinforcing learning. Reports to parents during such periods will focus on how well learners are progressing and becoming secure in their learning. Parents will get information on their children's strengths, and achievements as well as any gaps in progress and how they can help.

**Q: Will parents receive information that will help them choose the right school for their children?**

**A:** Yes. Parents will receive information on: how well all learners and particular groups of learners are progressing and achieving; the performance of children and young people in the school in relation to expected levels at particular stages in key areas such as literacy and numeracy; and how the school is applying national standards and expectations in relation to the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and when applying learning.

### **Self-evaluation for improvement**

**Q: Without National Assessments, how can schools and education authorities have confidence in assessment information?**

**A:** Through the improved assessment practices, support from the National Assessment Resource and the robust quality assurance processes, schools and education authorities will have moderated, nationally benchmarked information about the performance of learners which will provide confidence in the reliability of the information.

**Q: How will schools and education authorities know how well the learners in their preschools and schools are doing in comparison to others?**

**A:** To enable schools to use benchmarking information, the Scottish Government will develop from its previous work with education authorities a process to enable sharing of information about learners' performance at school level. The Scottish Government will not collate or publish aggregate information nationally. Education authorities should ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to encourage and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for children and young people in order to inform planning for improvement.

**Q: What can be done to ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to inform improvements in learning and teaching?**

**A:** It is important that schools and education authorities recognise the particular purposes of assessment instruments and use the information emerging from assessment appropriately, within the boundaries for which they were intended. Education authorities should ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to encourage and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for children and young people in order to inform planning for improvement.

### **5-14 National Assessment Bank**

**Q: When will schools and education authorities stop using 5-14 assessments?**

**A:** Many already have, but we expect schools and local authorities to develop their thinking about how they will work with the new standards and expectations over the course of this year. From August 2010, all learners will be experiencing the new curriculum and the expectation is that assessment would be with reference to outcomes and experiences and the standards and expectations within the assessment framework.

**Q: When will the 5-14 National Assessment Bank be switched off?**

**A:** When the Cabinet Secretary is satisfied that the materials for the NAR will be of sufficient quality to provide the necessary support from August 2010 and that the work remains on schedule.

**Q: What will happen to the 5-14 NAB items?**

**A:** Existing 5-14 and Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) items are being reviewed and some may be adapted as necessary to ensure they are fit for purpose in the assessment of *Curriculum for Excellence* experiences and outcomes. Relevant items will be made accessible to individual teachers through the NAR.

**Q: What are the nationally agreed benchmarks that will be used to inform teachers' shared understanding of standards?**

**A:** We will build on existing standards defined in 5-14 and illustrated through the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) as well as those in National Qualifications. The international standards, for example those defined in *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)*, *Trends in International Maths and Science Surveys (TIMSS)* and *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, were used to inform the standards and expectations described by the experiences and outcomes in the new curriculum. These national and international benchmarks will continue to be used as materials are developed for the NAR and quality assurance and moderation procedures are developed.