

- ✓ Understanding Key Stage 2
- ✓ National Curriculum tests
- ✓ Helping your child



What your child is  
**learning**  
at school

department for  
education and skills

**7-11**

# AT A GLANCE



## Understanding Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11)

- All children in state schools follow the National Curriculum, which sets out the subjects and skills they have the right to learn. There are four key stages, and children aged between seven and 11 are at Key Stage 2.
- Your child will study 11 core subjects. So that you know how well they are doing, they will be formally assessed in three subjects: English, maths and science.
- Your child will be assessed in these subjects by their teacher as they move through Key Stage 2. But they will also sit tests, which take place when they are 11.
- National Curriculum tests are not ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ tests. They are used to check how your child is progressing in school. The results of the tests are used to form the basis on which future learning is built.
- You can play a crucial role in your child’s success in Key Stage 2 by taking an active part in their education and by giving them support and encouragement.

### Did you know?

**The National Curriculum tests that your child will take at the age of 11 are called ‘key stage tests’ and are commonly known as ‘SATs’.**

# Making sense of Key Stage 2

Between the ages of seven and 11, if your child is in a state school, they will study Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum. But what does that mean, exactly?

This booklet will explain what you need to know. It covers:

- subjects your child will study
- how they will be assessed
- information about National Curriculum tests
- practical tips for supporting your child with their schoolwork.

## The National Curriculum at Key Stage 2

The National Curriculum allows all children to be educated in a way that is balanced and challenging. It lists the subjects and skills that every child has a right to learn and enables teachers to measure how well children are doing, so that they can help them do better.

## Your child can't fail

National Curriculum tests are not 'pass' or 'fail' tests. They are used to check your child's progress in school and to plan the next stage of their learning.

## What subjects will your child study?

At the age of seven, your child is still learning about the world around them. By teaching them a wide range of subjects, the National Curriculum feeds their natural curiosity, allows them to gain new skills and gives them the knowledge they will need to move onto Key Stage 3.

Some schools will teach other subjects, such as personal, social and health education and citizenship. These are optional, but very valuable subjects to study.

## Measuring your child's progress

You might have heard teachers talk about learning 'levels', which measure how far your child is progressing in certain subjects. There are eight levels in the National

Curriculum – Level 1 is the lowest and Level 8 the highest. By the end of Key Stage 2, most children are at Level 4.

## How do you know what level your child is at?

- At this point in your child's education their class teacher will measure their progress on a regular basis in all the subjects they study.
- When your child is at the end of Key Stage 2 – usually at age 11 – they will also take National Curriculum tests in English, maths and science.
- Your child's teacher assessment level and your child's test results combined will identify what level your child is at.
- Your child's teacher will tell you the test results and the level your child is at. You will be able to see how your child is doing in comparison to other children at the same stage across England. The report you

### Your child's school must teach your child the following subjects:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Design and technology (DT)
- History
- Religious education (RE)
- Physical education (PE)
- Geography
- Art and design
- Music
- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Modern foreign languages

receive from your child's teacher will include a summary of the test results for all the children in your child's age group in the school and the previous year's national results.

### **Remember...**

... not all children develop at the same rate. If your child is at a lower level than other children, it doesn't mean they have failed.

## **Questions and answers National Curriculum tests**

### **Why do children have to take tests?**

National Curriculum tests will provide a snapshot of how the National Curriculum is being delivered across the country. The tests are designed to cover work that your child has

learnt over previous years and provide a good basis from which to plan their future learning. It is compulsory for all children in state schools who have reached the end of Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 to sit the National Curriculum tests.

### **What if I don't want my child to take a test?**

State schools must make sure that pupils who are ready to sit the tests are entered for the National Curriculum tests, so your child will not be able to 'opt out'. If your child is at an independent school, then you will need to contact the school to see if they are participating in the tests.



## When do the tests take place?

At the end of Key Stage 2, your child will sit the tests on timetabled days during May.

## What do the tests involve?

Tests take place over a number of days and last no longer than an hour per test. Your child will have had time to prepare, and they won't be tested on anything that isn't in the National Curriculum. Test papers are sent away to be marked by an external marker.

## What can I do to help my child?

You play an important part in your child's success at school. Help them do their best by giving them lots of encouragement. There are some practical tips on page 7 of this booklet.

## What are your children tested for?

National Curriculum tests cover what your child has learnt in class over the previous few years and provide the opportunity for your child to show their knowledge and understanding. Teachers will then use the test results, as well as their teacher assessment results (their professional judgement on what level your child is working at) to help plan the next stage of your child's learning.

## English

The English test examines how well your child:

- **reads** – how well do they understand themes, ideas, characters and events in something they've read?
- **writes** – can they engage a reader, and what is their grasp of punctuation and vocabulary?
- **spell** – can they spell 20 words in a ten-minute spelling test?

## Maths

This test is designed to find out how well your child uses mathematical skills, such as:

- times tables
- using a protractor to measure angles
- calculating the perimeter and area of shapes
- solving problems from information in graphs and tables
- solving problems involving ratios and proportions.

## Science

Your child's understanding of scientific ideas and the use of scientific evidence will also be tested. This could include:

- naming the major body organs and knowing where they are
- classifying materials by their different properties
- commenting on the design of a simple experiment
- making changes to and drawing simple electrical circuits.

## Helping your child through Key Stage 2

Even when they are familiar with the National Curriculum, some parents are still unsure of how they can help their child. Your contribution to your child's education can make a real difference to their development.

Your child's teacher will be happy to suggest ways you can encourage them. Check out the tips below too.

- Make sure your child has a quiet place to do their homework, so that they can focus on the task they've been set.
- Take an active interest in what they're learning. Ask them what they've learned that day, and find interesting ways of applying their new knowledge at home.
- Visit [www.parentscentre.gov.uk/discover/](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/discover/) for suggestions of activities you can do that are related to specific areas of your child's study.
- Don't forget to praise your child regularly – even for the smallest achievements.
- When tests finally come round, make sure your child gets a good night's sleep beforehand and give them a good, nutritious breakfast before they head off for school. Make sure they arrive well on time, so they don't go into the test rushed and stressed.

## Getting advice from your child's teacher

If you think your child is finding schoolwork difficult, you can contact their teacher for advice. They will be able to tell you how your child is doing at school and suggest ways of tackling any issues that come up. Stay in touch with the teacher, so that you can both monitor how your child progresses.

Your child's teacher will also be able to give you more advice on helping your child with the National Curriculum.



## Want to find out more?

For face-to-face help and advice on Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum or tests, contact your child's school.

**Other organisations can also offer help and support.**

**[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)**

Information on key stage tests. A factual guide to all the compulsory tests that your child will complete at ages of 7, 11 and 14, and to the assessment carried out by teachers on children between the ages of 5 and 14, is available at: **[www.qca.org.uk/testguide](http://www.qca.org.uk/testguide)**

**[www.nc.uk.net](http://www.nc.uk.net)**

Outlines the National Curriculum.

**[www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk)**

Information on how to help your child learn. Contains information on key stages and different types of assessment.

## Can't get onto the internet at home?

Visit your local library which will have computers and internet access.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from: DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.  
Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Fax: 0845 60 333 60 Email: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com) Please quote ref: PKHSM1

©Crown copyright 2005

Produced by the **Department for Education and Skills**. Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non-commercial or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged.

PPBEL/DESTEAM/0705/PKHSM1/120