

Reception baseline assessment (RBA)

The reception baseline assessment (which we'll call RBA from this point) is an assessment of a child's early ability carried out by a teacher. It is being introduced by the Department for Education. Through activity-based observation, the teacher (or other qualified staff member known to the child) will gather a snapshot of each child's current level of learning during the first few weeks of their school life, shortly after they have started Reception year. The result of each child's RBA is later used in conjunction with the year group's Key Stage 2 SATs results for the government to measure the overall progress primary schools make with their pupils. The aim is to ensure primary schools are held to account so they can succeed in providing a good education for their pupils.

Where will the RBA apply?

The RBA will be introduced to all state-funded schools, but for the moment at least, this only applied to schools in England. However, changes to the curriculum in Wales may mean that something similar to the RBA is introduced there in the near future. See [Education is changing](#) for more details on the overhaul of Welsh education.

When will the RBA be introduced?

It will be taken by all pupils starting Reception from September 2020. Thousands of schools are taking part in a pilot in autumn 2019 (the pupils involved in the 2019 pilot will still take their SATs when they reach the end of KS1 in Year 2).

What does the RBA check for?

The RBA looks at the stage of a child's early learning in:

- Language (knowing how words are used)
- Communication (sharing ideas and being understood)
- Literacy (reading words)
- Mathematics (understanding quantities and recognising numbers)

This splits down further to:

1. Mathematics tasks (worth 45-55% of available marks)

- early number (recognising numbers)
- early calculation (basic addition/subtraction)
- mathematical language
- early understanding of shape

2. Literacy, communication and language (LCL) tasks (worth 45-55% of available marks)

- early vocabulary (the words the child uses)
- phonological awareness (sounding out letters, syllables, rhymes)
- early reading
- early comprehension (understanding completely).

How long does the assessment take?

The RBA takes around twenty minutes to complete, though it is not timed. The Department for Education recommendations suggest that teachers separate the assessment into two ten-minute instalments.

What happens during the assessment?

Within the first six weeks of a child starting school, their teacher (or another qualified member of staff the child knows) will oversee the RBA, which is an activity-based assessment. Children will be familiar with the environment in which they take the assessment as well as with the staff member, to make sure they are at ease. It is hoped that most children will not be aware that they are being assessed. Children won't use a digital platform, but instead will provide answers to the teacher during the course of short, practical tasks in the following ways:

- Oral response (speaking) 30–40%
- Pointing 25–35%
- Ordering or moving objects 25–35%.

At the same time, the teacher will record 'yes'/'no' results on a laptop, tablet or similar device. They influence the pace of the assessment, using pauses if they detect that the child has lost concentration. The assessment is interactive, so the line of questions can adapt to ensure that children are not repeatedly asked to do tasks they are unable to successfully complete on their own. The assessment can be stopped at any time, and if cut short, the score will be based on a partial assessment.

How is the RBA scored?

The maximum number of marks available is 45. However, as questions change to suit the ability of the pupil, the total marks available for each child to achieve is variable. The smallest total number of marks available for a child to be assessed against is 26.

Can parents help children to prepare for the RBA?

There is no need to help your child to prepare for the assessment. Your child should not even be aware that they are being assessed. Continue to support your child's learning at home in the usual way. We have many resources on the website to help with [supporting learning at home](#).

How will the results be used?

1. Schools

Teachers receive a short overview of how each child has performed in the assessment that may be useful to them in understanding each child's learning needs during their early education.

2. The Department for Education

The government will use RBA data to measure pupils' progress throughout their primary education, from the start of Reception to the end of Year 6. The DfE will not use the data to track individual pupils. It will only use the data once the initial RBA cohort reaches the end of Year 6 and takes their KS2 SATs, so that they can then work out where children are in academic attainment at the end of primary school compared to the start, and then see how school has helped them to progress. As it is not an assessment of individual pupils, children will not be disadvantaged, whatever their developmental level at the start of their schooling, and nor will they be labelled or have their results used against them.

Can parents see the results?

You're not able to see your child's results. The Department for Education will keep the data, but they will only share it with an individual school, because it is not intended as a measure of each pupil's progress. Teachers don't see individual scores, but they will receive short narrative statements, which helps them to understand the learning needs of individual pupils. This will also help them to collaborate with parents who can reinforce what children learn in the classroom by supporting learning at home. In this way, there is continuous assessment and support throughout a child's educational journey at primary school.

Why is the RBA being introduced?

The government wants to measure children's progress throughout the whole course of their primary school education. Before the introduction of the RBA, children's attainment was measured for the first time through taking SATs at the end of KS1, which ignores the efforts of teaching staff in the academic progress a child makes in the three academic years between Reception and Year Two.

Where does this leave SATs?

Pupils will no longer have to take SATs at the end of KS1 from September 2022, once they are in a cohort that has taken the RBA (note that this does not apply to pupils on the 2019 pilot, who will still take their KS1 SATs in May 2022). Pupils will still take SATs at the end of their primary phase as they complete KS2, in order to measure the progress they have made throughout the course of their primary education.

Which tests will my child take?

Check out the table below to understand which assessment your child will take.

Starting Reception	Take Reception Baseline Assessment?	Take KS1 SATs?	Take KS2 SATs?
2019	No (unless on pilot)	Yes (May 2022)	Yes (May 2026)
2020	Yes (September 2020)	No	Yes (May 2027)
2021	Yes (September 2021)	No	Yes (May 2028)

DfE introductory video

See below for a short introductory video from the Department for Education.

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