



Standardisation questions: 2018 English writing

Local authority training events, November and December 2017

We have produced these questions and answers following the national teacher assessment (TA) standardisation events for local authority (LA) lead moderators and moderation managers, held in November and December 2017.

They answer questions asked during the events, which were not explicitly covered in the scripted training. We have provided them to ensure that all LA representatives attempting the standardisation exercises and cascading the training to pool moderators have access to the same information.

Questions and answers are grouped for ease of reference.

- [Key stage 1 and key stage 2 teacher assessment frameworks](#)
- [Writing: references to a particular weakness](#)
- [Independent writing / success criteria](#)
- [Handwriting](#)
- [Spelling](#)
- [Exemplification](#)
- [Reading](#)
- [Moderation](#)
- [KS1 and KS2 standardisation](#)

Sources of reference

In the first instance, teachers and moderators should refer to the [national curriculum programme of study](#) and the published TA guidance for [key stage 1](#) (KS1) and [key stage 2](#) (KS2), which includes the TA frameworks and exemplification materials.

Key stage 1 and key stage 2 teacher assessment frameworks

Have we moved to a 'best fit' model of TA or not?

No. We have changed the approach to English writing only, to provide teachers with greater flexibility so that they can reach more rounded, accurate judgements of their pupils' work in this subject. While teachers will still assess pupils against all the 'pupil can' statements, they now have the discretion to determine that a pupil meets a standard overall despite a particular weakness in relation to the statements. Previously, under the 'best fit' levels system it was possible for pupils to have significant weaknesses and still be deemed to be meeting the standard.

If the requirement of a 'pupil can' statement is not applicable within a piece of writing, or a pupil chooses not to use it, should teachers encourage them to 'shoe-horn' in the evidence?

No. Teachers should not 'produce' evidence. It should be evident in a pupil's work what they can and cannot do. Every requirement within the frameworks is expected only when it is relevant within the context of that piece of writing.

Does the KS2 'working at the expected standard' statement, 'in narratives, describe settings, character and atmosphere', mean that pupils have to write purely descriptive pieces?

The reference to 'describing' should not be interpreted in a restrictive way. Description of settings, characters and atmosphere can be depicted in various ways.

At KS1, does the pupil have to use all forms of co-ordination in order to be awarded the 'pupil can' statement?

Pupils who are 'working at the expected standard' are likely to use different co-ordinating conjunctions, according to the meaning they wish to convey. However, the emphasis is on being able to join clauses in the context of a piece of writing, rather than demanding the use of specific conjunctions.

Do pupils who are 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' at KS1 have to use all the punctuation that is taught in the key stage?

Yes. The expectation is that pupils can use all of the punctuation taught within the KS1 national curriculum programme of study "mostly correctly".

Writing: references to a particular weakness

The guidance in the frameworks says that teachers should only use their discretion 'on occasion'. What does this mean?

The only consideration is whether a particular weakness prevents an accurate judgement for an individual pupil overall. Teachers should consider this on a pupil-by-pupil basis.

As the 'pupil can' statements represent the key aspects of English writing in the national curriculum these amount to what teachers should expect a pupil to be able to do if they are working at a given standard. Therefore, circumstances where a pupil is convincingly working at a standard, despite not meeting all of the statements, would be 'occasional'.

What evidence does a teacher need to satisfy a moderator that they have used their professional discretion in excluding particular ‘pupil can’ statements?

The teacher needs to demonstrate that they have assessed the pupil against all the ‘pupil can’ statements. If they have used their discretion to judge that a particular weakness would prevent an accurate judgement, then they need to demonstrate that the pupil convincingly meets the overall standard, regardless of this. Typically, this should be evident in a pupil’s work, but a school’s internal moderation processes may also support the judgement. No written evidence of a particular weakness is required and moderators should not request this.

What does ‘a teacher’s professional judgement takes precedence’ mean?

A teacher’s professional judgement about a whether a pupil has met the standard overall takes precedence over the need for the pupil to meet all the ‘pupil can’ statements if the pupil is judged to have a particular weakness.

It does not mean that a teacher’s professional judgement takes precedence over that of a moderator. Teachers must be able to justify their decisions during moderation.

If every child in the sample has particular weaknesses that relate to different statements from the TA framework and these are agreed, would the moderator broaden the sample on the basis that this does not seem ‘occasional’?

Not necessarily. However, if there are concerns that TA judgments are inaccurate, the moderator(s) should expand the sample accordingly.

What is the difference between a pupil’s particular weakness and a weakness in teaching?

A particular weakness is specific to an individual pupil and relates to a teacher having good reason to judge that they have met the standard regardless. If pupils are unable to meet one or more of the framework statements as a result of not having been taught the relevant aspects of the programme of study sufficiently, this would not be considered a particular weakness. The evidence should be clear that a pupil has been taught and assessed against all aspects of the framework, and that the teacher has reached a justified judgement on that basis.

Would a particular weakness prevent the award of a higher standard?

No. A teacher should judge whether a pupil has a particular weakness, which they feel should not detract from an accurate overall TA judgement. This should be based on the pupil’s overall attainment at any standard.

Should moderators ask a school if any pupils have a particular weakness, and select these for moderation?

Moderators do not have to specifically select pupils that have a particular weakness for moderation – such examples will be borne out through their usual professional dialogue and moderation sample.

If a child is secure in the use of capital letters for names and demarcation at KS1, but uses them within words, does this constitute a particular weakness? Can they meet the ‘working at the expected standard’ given all other statements are met across a collection of evidence?

Pupils ‘working at the expected standard’ at KS1 are required to demarcate most sentences in their writing with capital letters and full stops, and use question marks correctly where required. Teachers may find it useful to refer to the [2018 Teacher assessment exemplification: English writing - Working at the expected standard: Kim](#), which includes pieces in which capital letters are misplaced. A teacher may judge the incorrect use of capital letters to constitute a particular weakness that is an exception in terms of a pupil’s overall attainment.

In the particular weakness scenario for KS1, if Geeta cannot proof read effectively, how can this be deemed ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’?

Geeta occasionally fails to identify and then correct spelling and punctuation errors when she is proofreading her work. Her teacher considers that this constitutes a minor particular weakness. This scenario demonstrates that this occasional inconsistency should not prevent the pupil from being judged as ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’

How many pieces of work could be word-processed within a collection for a pupil?

Evidence should come from day to day work in the classroom. There is no limit to the number of word-processed pieces of work a teacher can draw upon when making their judgement. However, pupils must demonstrate their handwriting in their day-to-day writing in order to meet the relevant ‘pupil can’ statement.

Can you clarify the meaning of the term ‘form’ in the ‘pupil can’ statement, ‘the pupil can write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting the appropriate form’, for ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’ at KS2?

The word ‘form’ relates to the features of language, including structural features, which are appropriate to the purpose of, and audience for, the writing.

Do pupils with learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia have to meet the ‘pupil can’ statements relating to spelling and handwriting?

The expectation is that a pupil’s writing should meet all the statements within the standard at which they are judged. However, teachers can use their discretion to ensure that, on occasion, a particular weakness does not prevent an accurate judgement being made of a pupil’s overall attainment. The particular weakness may relate to a specific learning need, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, but it is not limited to this, nor does it automatically constitute a particular weakness which would prevent an accurate overall judgement. The focus should be on whether the particular weakness would prevent an accurate judgement overall. Teachers should use their discretion on a pupil-by-pupil basis.

Independent writing / success criteria

Can I still use success criteria / learning objectives / marking ladders?

Yes, success criteria and learning objectives have a key part to play in teaching and learning. However, in order for a piece of work to be judged as independent, it must be informed by clear learning objectives and limited success criteria, which are not over-detailed and do not over-aid pupils.

At KS2, if pupils use classroom resources such as word banks, can words that they choose to use from these be used as evidence for independent writing?

Where pupils access classroom or other resources to support their writing, teachers should satisfy themselves that the evidence presented is the pupil's independent work. For example, words selected from a word bank and used appropriately may provide evidence for the statement, 'select vocabulary...that reflects what the writing requires' (KS2 'working at the expected standard'), but if the words are directly copied, they would not provide evidence of the pupil's independent spelling.

Handwriting

Do pupils have to use joined handwriting to be awarded 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' at KS1?

In line with the national curriculum, there is no expectation for handwriting to be fully joined at any standard in the KS1 frameworks.

Do pupils have to use joined handwriting to be awarded any of the standards at KS2?

The KS2 programme of study states that joined handwriting should be the norm. Pupils judged to be 'working at the expected standard', or 'working at greater depth within the expected standard', should have evidence of joined handwriting. However, there is no requirement for handwriting to be joined for a pupil to be awarded 'working towards the expected standard'.

The handwriting statement for the KS2 'working at the expected standard' states that the pupil can maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed. How does this link to the scenario for Emmie which states that 'Emmie's writing meets the requirements of the 'working at the expected standard', except for the legibility of her handwriting when she writes at speed...written work on display in the classroom shows that she is more than capable of producing well-formed, joined handwriting that is clear enough to read'? Does this mean that a pupil only needs to join their handwriting for the purpose of displaying it?

This scenario exemplifies one possible context in which a teacher would use their discretion over a particular weakness in writing. In Emmie's case, she can struggle to maintain legibility when writing at speed. The reference to her written work on display is merely used to illustrate that she is capable of producing legible joined handwriting and to allude to the different sources of evidence a teacher can draw upon.

Spelling

For ‘working at the expected standard’ at KS1, do common exception words have to be spelt correctly, or are phonically plausible attempts acceptable?

For ‘working at the expected standard’, pupils are required to spell many of the common exception words correctly.

At KS1, if a pupil uses a challenging word that is beyond the KS1 programme of study, must the root word and the suffix be spelt correctly to meet the statement: *add suffixes to spell most words correctly in their writing (for example, –ment, –ness, –ful, –less, –ly*)?*

In the spelling of words with suffixes, both the root word and the suffix must be correct if the root word uses the rules and patterns taught in the KS1 programme of study. If the root word uses spelling rules and patterns which have not yet been taught, any errors in the root word should be ignored and providing the suffix is applied and spelt correctly, it can be used as evidence for the statement.

Can a pupil be awarded the KS1 ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’ if they only use the -ing, -ed or year 1 suffixes, where the root word changes?

The ‘pupil can’ statement states that the pupil can, after discussion with the teacher, add suffixes to spell most words correctly. The bracketed suffixes are provided only as examples and pupils may choose to use other suffixes taught at KS1 within their writing.

At KS2, if a teacher only assesses the words that a pupil uses, what should they do if the pupil uses none from the statutory word lists in their writing?

The frameworks refer to the national curriculum spelling lists. At KS2, the word lists for years 3 and 4 and years 5 and 6 are statutory. The lists are a mixture of words pupils frequently use in their writing and those which they often misspell. They should generally be evident in pupils’ writing across the curriculum, and can also be assessed using classroom tests. If there is no evidence that a pupil can spell these words correctly then they have not met that statement.

Can a pupil use a dictionary to spell words in the KS2 spelling list?

Pupils should be able to independently spell the words on the statutory word lists. However, they might wish to refer to a dictionary to check their spelling.

At KS2, if child spells words from the years 5 and 6 word list correctly but not words from the years 3 and 4 word list or KS1 common exception words can they be judged to be ‘working at the expected standard’?

To be judged to be ‘working at the expected standard’, the guidance states that teachers should be confident that pupils have met the standards preceding the one at which they judge them to be working at. A pupil at KS2 should be able to spell the words from both the year 3 and 4 word list and the KS1 common exception words, as well as the words from the year 5 and 6 word list.

Exemplification

Do the old interim TA frameworks exemplification materials still exemplify the standards if we look at the work and not the commentaries?

The exemplification materials have been updated for 2018 to reflect the changes to the TA frameworks for English writing. The old materials should not be used.

Why is KS2 terminology used in the exemplification for 'Kim' at KS1?

The commentaries are written for teachers and therefore a range of terminology is used to describe, comment on and evaluate pupils' work. The national curriculum sets out the terminology that pupils must be taught.

Why does the KS1 commentary focus on speech when this is not a KS1 requirement?

We have commented on a wide range of aspects of pupils' composition, whether or not a particular aspect is a statutory requirement at KS1, in order to support teachers to appreciate the qualities evident in a pupil's writing.

Where do the definitions of coherence come from?

See the [2014 English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2: National curriculum in England](#), page 15, Writing – vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, for the definitions.

Reading

At KS1, are teachers expected to time pupils to be sure that they can read at over 90 words per minute?

Some pupils need to read more slowly than others to understand what they are reading but, as a guide, approximately 90 words per minute is a good indicator of sufficient fluency for a pupil learning to read. As stated in the frameworks, the examples do not dictate the evidence required, but show only how the statements might be met.

In English reading, what does 'age-appropriate' reading mean?

This is a question for individual schools to determine the answer to, benchmarking against expectations in the national curriculum. However, as a guide, teachers should compare the books that their pupils read with the texts provided for the KS1 or KS2 statutory reading tests. The sources for the reading tests are listed in the copyright acknowledgements in the published [test materials](#).

Moderation

Should STA be notified if a school is unprepared for a moderation visit?

If a school is unprepared for an external moderation visit, the LA should first establish whether there is good reason for this. If a school deliberately attempts to prevent the LA from carrying out their statutory duties, the LA should notify STA by contacting the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013.

What happens if a school refuses to sign the LA's proposed local agreement?

Local agreements should be drawn up in collaboration with all schools in an LA, so that any local arrangements have been agreed by both schools and the LA. If a maintained school or an academy refuses to accept the local agreement, an LA would still have to moderate their TA judgements, but would have to adhere to STA guidance only, and local arrangements would not apply.

KS1 and KS2 standardisation

Do moderation managers have to complete a standardisation exercise?

No. This is a decision for each LA to make. STA recognises that not all moderation managers are subject experts, and that this role is sometimes commissioned out to a third party.

Successful standardisation would be required for:

- carrying out moderation visits
- quality assuring moderators' judgements
- making final decisions over appeals

If standardisation exercises are available from NCA tools only, does this mean schools can access them?

Standardisation exercises will only be accessible to LA users on NCA tools and should not be distributed to schools. These materials are confidential and should only be used during the standardisation exercise administration window, in order to maintain the integrity of the exercise.

Training materials will be made available for distribution to schools on 22 January 2018 through NCA tools.

Will lead moderators be able to cascade training to their pool moderators in January if they have not successfully completed the first standardisation exercise?

STA strongly recommends that training is cascaded / supported by at least one moderator who has successfully completed the first standardisation exercise, as they have the required knowledge to undertake writing moderation. However, LAs have the legal responsibility for moderation, and each LA is responsible for deciding who cascades the training to their pool moderators. Where no moderators from an LA are successful in the first exercise, the LA may choose to contact a neighbouring LA to work with a moderator who has successfully completed the exercise.