



Key stage 2 English writing teacher assessment - FAQs

General

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

No. While teachers will still be assessing 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.

This is not the same as the 'best fit' model used under national curriculum levels. The more flexible approach to English writing retains an expectation that pupils are secure in the fundamentals of the subject represented by the 'pupil can' statements. However, as a summative judgement, there is scope for teacher discretion to ensure that a judgement about a pupil reflects their true overall attainment.

How many times does a teacher or moderator need to see evidence of a 'pupil can' statement?

There is no requirement to see a specific number of examples to evidence a statement – the focus is on whether the evidence is sufficient to support the judgement. Some 'pupil can' statements are likely to be evidenced less frequently due to the context of the work, for example, the integration of dialogue in narratives to convey character and advance the action (key stage 2 (KS2) expected standard English writing). Teachers and moderators should also take account of the qualifiers (some/many/most) when judging whether there is sufficient evidence to meet a statement.

What type of evidence should be provided by teachers, to support teacher assessment judgements?

Teachers should not produce evidence specifically for local authority moderation. A sample of evidence from the pupil's classroom work must support how teachers reached their judgements. Photographs of practical work are not required as evidence.

Local authorities may find it useful to refer to the exemplification materials to support external moderation visits. The materials show what meeting the 'pupil can' statements might look like for each standard. However, moderators should not expect or require teachers to provide specific evidence similar to the examples in the exemplification documents. Evidence will come from day to day work in the classroom and can be work taken from textbooks.

Writing: references to a particular weakness

Does ‘a particular weakness’ refer to a learning difficulty?

The same overall standard must be applied equally to all pupils. A particular weakness may relate to a specific learning difficulty, but it is not limited to this, nor does a specific learning difficulty automatically constitute a particular weakness. The teacher’s judgement about a pupil’s overall attainment will come from their classroom work and teachers should be able to justify their decisions during moderation.

Writing: general

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?

Teachers should not look to ‘produce’ evidence. It should be evident in a pupil’s work what they can and cannot do. The ‘pupil can’ statements are designed to represent the key elements of the national curriculum, and do not require every specific writing device or form of punctuation to be evidenced. Every requirement within the frameworks is expected only when it is relevant within the context of that piece of writing. For example, the spelling of words from appendices within the national curriculum relates only to those which pupils have used.

Teachers should be able to find evidence relating to each of the statements in the standard awarded. This can come from a range of sources, provided the writing has been completed independently. Some statements will be met less frequently across the range of a pupil’s writing, for example, the integration of dialogue in narrative to convey character and advance the action.

Does the ‘KS2 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 reductive way. Description of settings, characters and atmosphere can be depicted in various ways, for example, through the use of descriptive noun phrases, or through characters’ thoughts, actions, reactions and relationships with others. Teachers and moderators may refer to the exemplification materials for examples of what this might look like, and should return to the national curriculum programme of study for English writing, for guidance.

What should a teacher expect to see when assessing ‘the range of punctuation’ in English Appendix 2 in a pupil’s writing at KS2?

Across the collection of a pupil’s writing, a teacher should see that a pupil has employed the different punctuation taught at KS2, detailed in Appendix 2 of the national curriculum, within the context of their writing.

Pupils working towards the expected standard should evidence that they can use capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas for lists and apostrophes for contraction mostly correctly.

In the frameworks for the ‘expected’ and ‘greater depth’ standards, specific punctuation marks are now included only as examples. Pupils should demonstrate mostly correct use of the range of the punctuation taught at KS2, but this does not mean that every punctuation mark needs to be evident

across their writing. To be awarded the 'greater depth' standard, pupils need to use punctuation precisely to enhance meaning and avoid ambiguity when necessary.

Teachers need to assess only the punctuation a pupil uses in their writing. At KS2, the punctuation taught is stated in Appendix 2 of the national curriculum programme of study for English writing. Pupils should evidence the range of this punctuation, where applicable, in the course of their writing.

What does 'distinguishing between the language of speech and writing' mean? Does this mean the pupil needs to use spoken dialogue in their writing?

Pupils working at 'greater depth' should be able to consistently distinguish between speech (for example, playground language, informal conversation...), and written language (for example, that used for stories, reports, persuasion...).

The statement does not relate to using spoken dialogue in writing, but to whether the pupil, when writing in more formal contexts, can avoid the language that they might otherwise use in speech, for example, the use of contracted forms, slang, idiomatic phrases, non-standard English. Pupils should be able to make judgements about the appropriateness of the language they use, according to the context of the writing.

For KS2 writing, do pupils still have to demonstrate that they can manage shifts between levels of formality through selecting vocabulary precisely and by manipulating grammatical structures?

There is no requirement for pupils to manage shifts between levels of formality within a single piece of writing, however, pupils working at 'greater depth' must demonstrate the ability to manipulate grammar and vocabulary according to the context of the writing. The emphasis on 'assured and conscious control' refers to the fact that choices made in their writing are deliberate and considered.

Levels of formality exist on a continuum, from the very formal to the very informal. This amended 'pupil can' statement requires pupils to control the level of formality, according to the effect that they are trying to achieve, which will typically link to the purpose and audience of the piece (for example a formal letter). This control may take different forms, for example, the sustained formal writing of a report, or the shift to informal dialogue within a more formal narrative. The KS2 exemplification of 'working at greater depth' provides examples of how a pupil might meet this statement.

How can a teacher demonstrate if the pupil's control is 'assured and conscious'?

'Assured' means that a pupil can write with confidence, and 'conscious' refers to the fact that choices made (for example, in manipulating grammar and vocabulary) are deliberate and considered. It is possible that edits may help to evidence a pupil's 'conscious' level of control over their writing, and the tone they wish to communicate.

Handwriting

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, and this is reflected in the 'pupil can' statements for the expected standard. Pupils judged to be working 'at the expected standard', or 'at greater depth within the expected standard', must evidence joined handwriting, although not necessarily in every piece of writing. There is no requirement for handwriting to be joined for the 'working towards' standard.

Spelling

In terms of spelling at KS2, if a teacher only assesses the words that a pupil uses, what if they do not use any from the statutory word lists in their writing?

The frameworks refer to the spelling lists. These are the statutory word lists within the spelling appendix to the national curriculum (English Appendix 1) and not the spelling rules and guidance.

At KS2, the word lists for years 3 and 4 and years 5 and 6 are statutory. They should be assessed on an ongoing basis and should generally be evident in pupils' writing across the curriculum.

Pupils may choose to use words from the statutory word lists in their day-to-day writing. These words are likely to be evident across different curriculum subjects. Where words from these lists are used, teachers should refer to the relevant qualifiers and assess the evidence against the 'pupil can' statement accordingly.

Spelling tests or exercises may be used as evidence for the 'pupil can' statement. If pupils do not use any of the words from the statutory lists in their day-to-day writing, evidence from these tests and exercises alone is sufficient.

There is no requirement for a pupil to evidence correct spelling of all the words on the statutory word lists.

However, if there is no evidence that pupils can spell words from the statutory word lists, in accordance with the relevant qualifiers, the 'pupil can' statement would not be met.

If a pupil spells words from the statutory word lists correctly, but misspells other words, including those taught in key stage 1 (KS1), can they still be awarded the appropriate standard?

Yes. A pupil's writing should meet all of the statements within the standard at which they are judged. In the KS2 teacher assessment framework for English writing, the 'pupil can' statement for spelling refers to spelling correctly most words from the year 3/year 4 working towards the standard or year 5/year 6 expected standard word lists. However, in this type of scenario, teachers can use their discretion to ensure that a particular weakness does not prevent an accurate judgement being made of a pupil's attainment overall.

A particular weakness can relate to a part or the whole of a statement (or statements), if there is good reason to judge that it would prevent an accurate judgement being made. This could include a pupil misspelling some words taught in KS1. A teacher's professional judgement about whether the pupil has met the standard overall should take precedence.

The 'pupil can' statement for spelling refers to spelling correctly 'most words from the year 3/year 4 'working towards' or year 5/year 6 'expected standard' word lists. There are approximately 100 words on each list. Does this mean that most of those 100 words must be spelt correctly, or that, where words from the list are used, they are spelt mostly correctly?

Teachers should refer to the guidance within the framework where qualifiers are used, they have consistent meaning - 'most' indicates that the statement is generally met with only occasional errors. Given that teachers need to base their judgement on a broad range of evidence (which will come from day to day work in the classroom), where words from the list are used, they should be spelt mostly correctly.

Disabilities/dyslexia

Do pupils with dyslexia have to meet the 'pupil can' statements relating to spelling?

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, but it is not limited to this, nor does it automatically constitute a particular weakness which would prevent an accurate overall judgement.

It is possible that a teacher judges a pupil with dyslexia to be working at a particular standard overall despite not yet meeting, for example, the statement or statements relating to spelling. In such cases, the evidence overall should convince the teacher that the pupil has met that standard. The focus should be on whether it would prevent an accurate judgement overall, and teachers should use their discretion on a pupil by pupil basis.

A pupil is dyslexic all of the time, not on occasion. Can I still judge that a pupil has met the standard if they miss out on spelling statements entirely?

We are clear that spelling, of course, remains a fundamental part of the national curriculum which will equip pupils with the skills they need to succeed in secondary school and beyond. It is therefore an important part of the teacher assessment frameworks in English writing. However, teachers can use their discretion if they feel a particular weakness in spelling would prevent an accurate judgement of the standard described overall. A teacher's professional judgement about whether the pupil has met the standard overall takes precedence.