

Level threshold tables

for key stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science



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First published 2006

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ISBN 1-85838-840-6

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Printed in Great Britain

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Introduction

This booklet provides tables for converting marks on the key stage 3 tests into national curriculum levels.

Training and checking marking standards

All test papers are marked by trained markers, who mark the tests using the published mark schemes. A copy of the mark scheme was sent to all schools in the teacher packs for each subject. The procedures below are being followed in 2006.

- All appointed markers have a strong background in teaching the subject. All have attended at least one full day's training in the use of the mark schemes.
- Each marker's marking is checked at least twice, once at the beginning of the marking process and once towards the end.
- For pupils whose total marks fall just below a level threshold, the markers review the original marking as a double-check. Review marking is carried out in black ink.

What to do when the results are received

Return of results

Schools will be notified of their pupils' test results through the return of completed marksheets by 4 July 2006 for mathematics and science, and 23 August 2006 for English. If they have not arrived by the end of the day on 4 July 2006 or 23 August 2006, please contact the NAA external marking agency on 0870 2413540.

Checking results

The marking of pupils' scripts will have been checked carefully before the papers are returned to schools. However, schools may wish to undertake their own checks, particularly for any pupils who receive unexpected results. If it is considered that a pupil has been awarded the wrong level, a review can be requested. Guidance on requesting reviews is given in the *Information for Schools* booklet, which will be sent to schools in the week commencing 26 June 2006.

It is essential that requests for reviews follow the procedures set out in this booklet. This includes clearly identifying where the mark scheme has not been followed accurately in a question or questions. Requests for reviews must reach the NAA external marking agency by 14 July 2006 for mathematics and science, and 15 September 2006 for English at the latest. No reviews can be discussed over the telephone.

Reporting results for key stage 3

The key stage 3 test levels awarded must be reported to pupils' parents within 15 school days of the return of results to schools, alongside the end of key stage teacher assessment levels. If the outcome of a review is pending, schools should report test results to parents as provisional. Parents should also receive a summary giving the proportion of pupils awarded each level in the school this year, as well as nationally in 2005. Please refer to the 2006 key stage 3 *Assessment and reporting arrangements* booklet for full information on reporting to parents (pages 79–82). Schools may, if they wish, return the marked scripts to pupils.

Submitting teacher assessment data

The deadline for submitting teacher assessment subject levels to the NAA data collection agency is 11 July 2006. The date for submission of this information has been set so that national summary data can be made available to schools and LAs as early as possible. To achieve this, teacher assessment data must be submitted promptly. Any queries regarding the submission of teacher assessment data should be directed to the NAA data collection agency, telephone number 0870 2413540.

How the levels are set

The national curriculum tests are written against the programmes of study and are designed to award levels that equate demand to the level descriptions.

QCA has in place a range of procedures, both statistical and judgemental, to ensure that the standards of performance required for the award of each level are maintained consistently from year to year. These procedures include extensive pre-testing of all test papers, obtaining the judgement of panels of teachers and the advice of the marking programme leaders and deputy marking programme leaders once the marking is well under way each year. These procedures have enabled QCA to set threshold scores each year that have maintained standards since 1996.

Setting draft thresholds

QCA sets draft level thresholds with the test development agencies for each subject in January/February preceding the tests in May. The difficulty of the current test is considered by looking at pre-test data, which includes a number of measures designed to identify any variation in the underlying difficulty of the test papers from year to year. The draft level thresholds are used to inform the next stage of the process.

Setting level thresholds

Once the test has been taken and marking is under way, samples of marked scripts from year 9 pupils are collected from external markers. The scripts that fall close to the draft level thresholds are scrutinised in detail by senior markers.

A final level setting meeting is then convened in June to set the final level thresholds using all the evidence available.

The marks obtained by approximately 30,000 pupils in the 'live' tests are collected so that QCA can check the impact of the decisions made in setting the thresholds.

Level thresholds – key stage 3

English tests

The following points explain how the mark scheme is applied by markers.

Reading paper

- For low tariff questions, ie questions awarded either one or two marks, the mark scheme indicates the criteria and principles on which marks are awarded and correct or exemplar responses.
- For three- and five-mark questions, a set of criteria is applied which describes the quality of responses expected.
- Markers are instructed to draw a diagonal line through the response space if the pupil has not attempted the question.
- The maximum mark available is 32.

Writing paper

The longer writing task

- The longer writing task on the writing paper is assessed against the following three strands of criteria:
 - *sentence structure and punctuation* (SSP)
 - *text structure and organisation* (TSO)
 - *composition and effect* (C&E).
- Markers are instructed to tick each page as they mark and to rule a line at the end of the pupil's writing responses.
- The maximum mark available is 30.

The shorter writing task

- The shorter writing task is assessed against the following three strands of criteria:
 - *sentence structure, punctuation and text organisation* (SSPTO)
 - *composition and effect* (C&E)
 - *spelling*.
- The maximum mark available is 20.

Shakespeare paper

The Shakespeare reading task is assessed against a single set of criteria. The maximum mark available is 18.

The marks for the reading paper and the Shakespeare reading task are totalled to give an overall mark for reading out of 50. The marks for the longer writing task and the shorter writing task are totalled to give an overall mark for writing out of 50. The marks for reading and writing are totalled to give an overall mark for English.

The marks for reading, writing and English overall are converted into levels using the tables below.

Reading

Level	Mark range
N	0–9
4	10–15
5	16–25
6	26–33
7	34–50

Writing

Level	Mark range
N	0–6
4	7–13
5	14–24
6	25–33
7	34–50

English overall

Level	Mark range
N	0–11
3	12–16
4	17–29
5	30–50
6	51–67
7	68–100

The award of level 3 for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve level 4 is a compensatory award for English overall only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'. There is no compensatory level 3 award available for reading and writing.

Some test papers will contain two sets of marks, one in red and one in green. In all cases, marks written in green override marks written in red. The two sets of marks occur where markers' marking is routinely and randomly checked by their supervisors.

Pupils who were absent for one or more test papers will be recorded for English overall as 'A' for absent. However, if the pupil sat both reading or both writing components they will receive a reading or writing level.

Level thresholds – key stage 3 mathematics and science tests

The mark schemes, which are provided in the teacher packs and sent to schools with the test materials, give the acceptable answers for test questions and set out the criteria for the award of marks. They also contain guidance on the general criteria used by external markers in the application of the mark schemes.

Where the markers find answers which are not given explicitly in the mark scheme, they use their professional judgement to decide whether or not an answer is creditworthy.

The following method is used to note marks for each question on the mathematics papers.

- 1** means that a creditworthy response has scored one mark
- 0** means that a response is not creditworthy.

The following method is used to note marks for each question on the science papers:

- ✓ means a creditworthy response has scored one mark.

Half marks are not awarded.

Some pupils' test papers may contain two sets of marks, one in red and one in green. This occurs where markers' work is routinely and randomly checked. In all cases the green marks override the red.

Where a pupil has left blank spaces, the marker will cross these through with a diagonal line. For the mental mathematics test, where pupils provided the correct answer, a score of '1' will have been recorded. To calculate an overall mathematics test level, a pupil's score on the mental mathematics test will have been added to the score obtained on the main tier tests.

Pupils who mistakenly completed paper 1 and paper 2 from different tiers, or who have taken the incorrect mental mathematics test tier, will have both papers marked separately. However, because it is not possible to award a level by combining marks from papers from different tiers, in such cases pupils will be awarded 'V' to indicate a 'mixed tier' entry.

Pupils who were absent for one or more test papers will be recorded as 'A' for absent.

The mathematics tests

This table gives the mark ranges for the award of each pupil's statutory test level. (Note: the score for mental mathematics test A or B has been added to the marks achieved on paper 1 and paper 2 of the 4–6 tier, 5–7 tier or 6–8 tier. The score for mental mathematics test C has been added to the marks achieved on paper 1 and paper 2 of the 3–5 tier. No other combination of mental mathematics tests is permitted.)

Level	Tier 3–5	Tier 4–6	Tier 5–7	Tier 6–8
N	0–23	0–25	0–25	0–32
2	24–29			
3	30–62	26–31		
4	63–98	32–55	26–31	
5	99–150	56–82	32–53	33–38
6		83–150	54–86	39–60
7			87–151	61–98
8				99–150

The award of level 2 on the 3–5 tier, level 3 on the 4–6 tier, level 4 on the 5–7 tier and level 5 on the 6–8 tier for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve the lowest level targeted by the respective tier is a compensatory award only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'.

The science tests

The table below gives the mark ranges for each pupil's statutory test level.

Level	Tier 3–6	Tier 5–7
N	0–29	0–41
2	30–36	
3	37–65	
4	66–101	42–47
5	102–133	48–76
6	134–180	77–102
7		103–150

The award of level 2 on the 3–6 tier and level 4 on the 5–7 tier for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve the lowest level targeted by the respective tier is a compensatory award only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'.

About this publication

Who is it for? Headteachers, English, mathematics and science teachers of year 9 pupils

What is it for? This booklet provides tables for converting marks on the key stage 3 tests into national curriculum levels

Related materials Key stage 3 *Assessment and reporting arrangements* QCA/05/1638

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