



Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for Schools

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Mr Russell Hobby, General Secretary
National Association of Head teachers
1 Heath Square
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18 February 2016

Dear Russell,

At our meeting on Tuesday (9 February) we discussed your members' concerns about the implementation of the interim frameworks for teacher assessment that have been put in place to support teacher assessment judgements against the new 'secure fit' model.

I recognise that in this first year pupils and teachers will still be adapting their approach, in particular to the unfamiliar teacher assessment frameworks. I also understand the concerns that you have raised with me that it will take time for teachers to understand the detail of the new teacher assessment arrangements and the higher standard. You raised the specific issue of Key Stage 2 writing, where teacher assessment judgements form part of the floor standard.

You asked me to reconsider the decision by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to set an earlier deadline for schools to report their teacher assessment judgements this year. For Key Stage 1 this is 13 June which is 2 weeks earlier than it was last year and for Key Stage 2 this is 22 May, which is four weeks earlier. The rationale for setting the earlier deadline this year was to ensure that all schools submit their teacher assessment data at the same time, after their own internal validation processes have been completed, but prior to any external moderation taking place. This move would mean fairer and more robust arrangements for the collection of teacher assessment data. However, I am prepared, for this year only, to relax the deadlines in recognition of the unique circumstance of teachers working with a new framework to new standards. I have asked the STA to amend their Assessment and Reporting Arrangements to reflect an amended deadline for KS1 and KS2 of 30 June and to communicate the change to all primary schools.

I have also asked STA to produce a 'clarification' document which will minimise any misunderstandings regarding assessment arrangements for the 2016 national curriculum tests and teacher assessments. Specifically, we will aim to eliminate misunderstanding leading to unnecessary, additional workload. We will ensure that NAHT have sight of a draft and are able to comment prior to publication which is planned for the beginning of March.

You also subsequently raised concerns from your members about the standard for Key Stage 2 writing that is demonstrated in the exemplification materials published

on the 8 February 2016. I remain committed to the high standards that we have set for the primary phase and it is important to note that the exemplification materials were provided in draft by teacher panels from a selection of schools. The materials were produced by pupils currently in Year 2 or Year 6 as part of normal class work. These materials were reviewed by a drafting expert team and in discussion with the teacher panel prior to finalisation by STA. STA will of course, review and evaluate all materials at the end of the academic year.

We will, however, shortly be publishing the revised Schools Causing Concern guidance following our consultation, which will set expectations for Regional Schools Commissioners and local authorities when they take action to tackle underperformance. Where a warning notice is considered, the guidance will set out a range of factors, for instance performance trends, that RSCs and local authorities will want to consider in determining whether to act.

I have made Sir David Carter, National Schools Commissioner, aware that RSCs should be mindful of the impact of these new arrangements in making decisions about issuing warning notices and tackling underperformance following this year's results. I have also written to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector asking that his inspectors take into account national performance and the contextual factors you have outlined when considering a school's performance on writing at Key Stage 2. All organisations holding schools to account should be aware of the changes being introduced in 2016 and will consider the impact of this in making any decisions about performance or intervention on the basis of 2016 data alone. This should give schools the confidence to engage fully with the vision of the new curriculum and to rise to the new standards.

I hope that taken together these measures will reassure your members that I am aware of the challenges that they face this year and I would be grateful for your support in communicating the amended arrangements.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb', written in a cursive style.

Nick Gibb MP