

Rathgael House

43 Balloo Road

Rathgill

21 April 2026

Assessment Arrangements and The Education (Pupil Reporting) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

Dear Colleague,

I write to inform you that the Minister has published two key documents that set a new direction for how we assess, understand and support pupil learning: the [*Response to the Independent Review of Statutory Assessment*](#) and the new [*Statutory Assessment Policy Framework*](#).

Together, these publications establish a new system of statutory assessment in Northern Ireland which will replace all previous arrangements for Key Stage Assessment.

The new Framework establishes, a clear assessment pathway from Year 1 to Year 10, which aim to provide consistent information on pupil for schools and parents. It introduces a suite of short curriculum-aligned assessments:

- Baseline Check in Year 1
- Phonics Check in Year 2
- Annual reading fluency checks in Years 3–5
- Literacy and numeracy assessments in Year 4
- Multiplication Check in Year 5
- Literacy, numeracy and science assessments in Years 7 and 10.

I would emphasise that these assessments will be extremely low-stakes, do not require preparation or revision and outcomes will not be published at school-level or for school accountability purposes. They will be designed to inform teaching and learning and to provide insights into how the education system is performing at system-level.

Next steps and timescales

The new statutory assessment system will be introduced in a carefully sequenced manner to align with the wider TransformED reforms and ensure system readiness. The broad timescales for implementation are as follows:

- The roll-out of the new curriculum will begin in 2028–29 and will be phased in over three academic years.
- The first new statutory Year 4 literacy and numeracy assessments under the new framework will take place in March 2030 (Year 2 of implementation of the new curriculum).
- The first new statutory Year 7 and Year 10 assessments in literacy, numeracy and science will take place in March 2031 (Year 3 of implementation of the new curriculum).
- The Department will, over the coming months, consider expert advice on the appropriate timescales for introducing the new baseline check, the Year 2 phonics check, the Year 5 multiplication check and the Writing Repository, ensuring each is introduced in a manner consistent with system capacity and high-quality technical development.

This structured, phased approach will ensure that the transition to the new statutory assessment framework is predictable, carefully paced and deliverable, while giving schools and practitioners the clarity and stability they need to plan ahead with confidence.

Interim arrangements

In the interim, the current system-level sample assessments in literacy and numeracy for Years 4, 7 and 10 will continue to operate until the end of the 2028–29 academic year, providing system-level insights during the transition period.

As you are aware, in March 2026 the first representative sample of pupils took part in system-level sample checks in literacy and numeracy via written assessments designed, administered and marked by CCEA. The system level outcomes for 2025-26 will be published in June 2026.

You will note that these sample level assessments have replaced the previous arrangements for Key Stage Assessment and there is no requirement for teachers to assess pupils against the Levels of Progression or to report outcomes to parents or the Department.

In light of these interim arrangements, the Department has amended the legal requirement under the Education (Pupil Reporting) Regulations (Northern

Ireland) 2009 for Principals to provide a specific Level of Progression for each pupil at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 within the annual report.

Yours faithfully,

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

Cynthia Currie

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