

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLICY, DELIVERY AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
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28 July 2025

Dear Principal

**Irish- medium Education (IME) Statutory Key Stage Assessment Arrangements
2025-26**

My apologies for writing during the summer period but I did not want to delay in advising you of these arrangements. I will reissue the correspondence at the beginning of the term.

As set out in TransformED NI, a strategy for educational excellence in Northern Ireland, the Department is currently progressing a review of statutory Key Stage Assessment (the Review). In June 2025, an Independent Panel of education experts was established. The panel will report early in 2026. The Review will include a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement particularly with Irish-medium stakeholders. A Call for Evidence and teachers' survey will issue in September and I would encourage you to complete both and also to engage with the Review. If you would be interested in meeting with panel, please contact keystage.assessment@education-ni.gov.uk

Whilst this review is carried out, it is important to have consistent and reliable interim arrangements, providing an accurate picture of how our pupils are performing.

Earlier this year, the Minister announced interim arrangements for English-medium schools for the three-year period from 2025-26. The new system-level sample assessments will evaluate the literacy and numeracy of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and will be introduced and delivered by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

Over recent months, CCEA has been engaging with sectoral representatives to develop similar proposals for the Irish-medium sector, which have now been agreed by the Minister of Education.

All pupils in all Irish-medium schools in Years 4, 7 and 10 will participate in new Key Stage assessments during each year of the interim arrangements. Pupils in Irish-medium schools will complete two tests at Key Stage 1 (Irish and Numeracy) and three tests at Key Stage 2 and 3 (Irish, Literacy (English) and Numeracy) to reflect the introduction of English as a formal area of learning in Year 4. The tests will be provided by and marked by CCEA. Pupils will sit the written assessments in early March 2026. The Department will meet the costs of substitute cover for the invigilation of the assessment. There will not be an assessment in relation to the cross-curricular skill of Using ICT.

This approach will ensure appropriate and accurate data is available to inform the future development and support of Irish-medium education. As in the English-medium sector, outcomes will not be published at pupil or school level nor used for school accountability purposes. Schools will be able to access their own outcomes for internal planning and self-evaluation purposes.

Participation in the system level check will be a legal requirement and will be specified in the Assessment Documentation produced by CCEA under The Education Levels of Progression Order (Northern Ireland) 2012.

Please be assured that the assessments will be very low stakes at pupil level meaning there will be no need for schools to engage in test preparation.

As noted above, this letter will be reissued on the first week of the 2025-26 academic year and CCEA will provide further details, including timelines and guidance for schools in the coming months.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Kingon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a prominent 'K'.

SUZANNE KINGON
DEPUTY SECRETARY