



Monday 14th December 2015

Dear Parents and Carers.

I know many of you would like to know how we are assessing our pupils' progress against the objectives in the new curriculum now that levels are no longer used. There isn't a national assessment system to accompany the new curriculum. Every school is free to choose their own system as long as they track pupil's progress and use assessment to inform future teaching. Last June I attended an assessment conference in Winchester and was very impressed by the system devised by the Hampshire Inspection Service and we chose to adopt it for our school. Many other Island schools have also chosen it so it will be really helpful to see where children are when they move between schools, but we are aware that pupils from the mainland may well have been assessed under a different system.

The Hampshire scheme (HAM) breaks down all the learning objectives to be taught across a year into three **Phases**. Most objectives are introduced through **Phase One** and they are revisited and consolidated throughout **Phase Two and Three**. Staff will assess the children at three points to coincide with the Phases, this will happen in November, February and April. The aim is to make sure all pupils are at **Age Related Expectations (ARE)** by the end of the academic year, and if the Phase assessments identify any gaps in the children's learning teachers will plan carefully to help them catch up.

The system tracks how children make progress across the year, and the expectation is that they will go through different stages when learning new skills. These are as follows:

Apprentice Stage – the child has learnt a new skill with a great deal of support from their teacher. They can only use this skill in one context.

Competent Stage – the child can use this skill with support from their teacher and they are starting to apply it to other contexts with a great deal of help.

Mastery Stage – the child can apply their skill independently to a wide range of contexts because they have a secure grasp.

Ideally children will move through these stages throughout the year and eventually develop **Mastery** within their curriculum. This will enable them to meet **Age Related Expectations**, ready to begin the next year curriculum in September.

Some children with additional needs will struggle with this and they will experience a personalised curriculum depending on their strengths and areas for development. They may follow the curriculum for the year below in a particular subject, but they will still go through the three stages, aiming for **Mastery**.

This November teachers collected evidence for their first assessment at **Phase One**. They assessed how their pupils are developing at **Apprentice Level**, and possibly a few who are showing **Competence**. The next assessment will be at the end of February and they will have a clearer picture of how children are progressing. Hampshire advisors have been in to school to support us and have reassured us that we are where we should be with this new assessment.

If you think this sounds complicated we would agree, but we are slowly developing it to meet the needs of our school. It will become much clearer when we complete a year and experience the new assessment materials. The key thing to ask your child's teacher is how well they are progressing at each phase. If they are judged to be **'secure'** it means they are performing well at **Apprentice** level. Hopefully this will still be the case in February when they are assessed as **Competent learners**, and if all goes well they will end the year with **Mastery** of the curriculum for their year. If they are **'close to'** it means they need extra support to catch up before the next assessment but they are predicted to do so. Pupils who are **'below'** are not predicted to reach **Age Related Expectations** by the end of the year, and this can happen for a variety of reasons including learning difficulties, additional needs, and those who have had large gaps in their primary education due to home education. The important thing is that they are tracked carefully to make sure they are making good progress with additional support.

I hope this helps to explain how we are assessing our pupils. We know this system will evolve over time as it is constantly being updated by Hampshire, and St Helens staff will continue to attend training regularly. This is an introductory letter so look out for further information specific to each class in the New Year. Please don't hesitate to come and see me if this is completely baffling and you would like a further explanation and I will do my best to enlighten you.

Yours sincerely

Jane Loader

Headteacher