

Kirsty Williams AC/AM  
Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-05-891  
Ein cyf/Our ref: KW/07336/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM  
Chair, Petitions Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
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18 October 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 14 October following the Petitions Committee meeting on 1 October seeking my views on the points raised by Dr Tanya Beer in her additional evidence, in particular her concerns that teachers are required to take time to familiarise pupils with the question style of formal tests.

As outlined in my original response in June, we are moving away from paper based testing, to online personalise assessments. These assessments are being phased in over a three year period with Numerical (Procedural) introduced last year, Reading being available during this academic year and Numerical Reasoning during 2020/21. This means that, during the 2019/2020 academic year, only one national paper based test will be in place, this is for Numerical Reasoning.

The personalised assessments are based on the skills in the school curriculum set out in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework. They have been developed and designed with expert input and with learners' wellbeing in mind; and they provide a more flexible and less formal approach than the paper-based tests to assessing learners' skills. Teachers can choose to assess learners individually, or in small groups, at a point during the school year that best suits the learner and/or the class.

The assessments can be taken on a PC, laptop or tablet, in accordance with what learners use every day in the classroom and are familiar with. There is no time limit, so learners can work through the questions at their own pace and teachers are also able to give breaks to learners at any point. As outlined in my previous response, all of these flexible features are particularly relevant to provide an assessment experience suited for younger learners.

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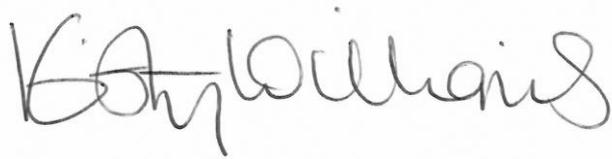
Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

There is no requirement for learners to practise either the paper based tests or the online assessments, and I expect all schools to follow our guidance to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum throughout the school year. In order to ensure that learners feel comfortable with how the questions work, they are able to undertake a short familiarisation assessment online. Guidance on how assessments should be administered and information on how teachers can support learners is provided via written guidance, videos and targeted webinars.

These assessments are not 'high stakes' and should not be used to measure school performance. They provide useful, timely feedback for teachers, learners and parents on learners' skills, and can form part of an overall suite of information that is available to each teacher to inform their teaching and classroom planning.

Yours sincerely

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

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