

SATs: MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

- **Effective and substantial reform of SATs and primary school accountability**
- **Developed from an independent review, led by school leaders, teachers, parents and education experts**
- **Pause SATs in the meantime**
- **Put children's learning, wellbeing and achievements at the heart of assessment**
- **Hold schools to account in a fair, accurate and responsive way**

The evidence is clear. Research with heads, school leaders, parents, carers and pupils demonstrates an **urgent need for reform** of SATs and statutory accountability measures in our primary schools.

The Department for Education states that the purpose of SATs is “to measure school performance and to make sure individual pupils have the support that they need as they move into secondary school”.

SATs are reductive, expensive (currently £47 million per year in Standards and Testing Agency costs alone*) and **do not have the confidence of the profession or parents**. Both groups judge that SATs are not an accurate reflection either of school performance or individual pupil attainment and do nothing to support the transition to secondary. They provide a simplistic measure of attainment which lacks context or understanding of external factors and, most importantly, they have done nothing to close the disadvantage gap.

The high stakes nature of SATs also creates: narrowing of the curriculum; teaching to the test; constraints on children's love of learning, natural curiosity and self-motivation; damage to wellbeing and mental health for children and teachers; declining retention rates for teachers; unwarranted pressure on children, teachers and families and, in recent years, **41% of children being labelled as failures** immediately before starting secondary school.

We support a school leader-, teacher-, and parent-led review, chaired by an independent expert, to consider effective and substantial reform of SATs and statutory accountability measures. In the meantime, we call for **SATs to be paused**, as they were in 2020 and 2021 with no ill effects. Year 6 teachers would assess children's performance throughout the year, as they do in every other primary school year.

High standards in education must be maintained.

Criteria for judging standards in schools should emphasise these aspects: maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum that all children can access; supporting love of learning, natural curiosity and independent thinking; good mental health and wellbeing for pupils and staff, and building skills that prepare children for life's opportunities and challenges.

Schools must be held to account, but this needs to be done in a fair, accurate and responsive way.

On-going low-pressure, low-stakes assessment is highly effective, supports all children's learning and provides much richer, more useful data. Reforming the system offers a genuine opportunity for all stakeholders (school leaders, teachers, parents, the DfE) to access better data and use it in better ways.

Limited SATs test data plays too dominant a role in characterising pupils' attainment. It's time to reclaim primary education and put children's learning, wellbeing and achievements at the heart of our assessment system.

An alternative statutory assessment system should be developed** with the involvement of all stakeholders to ensure all schools are able to support learning and accurately capture the attainment of their learners. While an alternative is being developed, all SATs should be halted with immediate effect.

SIGNED BY:

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*This figure does not take into account the significant costs, both financial and human, involved with children who become disengaged or excluded from school and learning. This is because the current high-pressure system tells a large proportion of pupils that they have not reached age-related expectations each year, embedding feelings of failure – and therefore disengagement – from an early age.

**Due consideration should be given to well-researched and expert work already developed by bodies including BERA and ICAPE.

School leaders, sign here:

tinyurl.com/SATsManifesto

more
than a
score