



Better without Baseline

Children are more than a score

This autumn children starting primary school face new tests, under the name of **Baseline Assessment**.

What is **Baseline Assessment**?

For a long time, teachers have carefully observed children when they enter reception, to identify their learning needs. Now the Government is changing the system. It says that all reception-age children should be formally assessed within the first few weeks of school. But the purpose of the test is not just to identify needs – it is to score children.

This score will be a ‘baseline’. The results of tests that children take in later years will be compared with their baseline score and their school will be judged according to the progress the children have made.

What do teachers think?

The National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers both oppose Baseline Assessment – as do most experts in early years education. Yet the Government is putting heavy pressure on schools to impose it.



What is wrong with Baseline

It is educationally harmful.

Settling in and ensuring young children's emotional security are the first priorities, as well as the teacher getting to know the children. Young children learn and grow in rich, complex ways and early years teachers are skilful at supporting that journey whatever a child's development or circumstances. These are things that a single number score from a Baseline Assessment cannot reflect. Requiring teachers to make simple yes/no judgments about children's development encourages them to focus on a narrowed range of learning, and ignores the individuality of each child.

It may be damaging to children.

It would be disastrous if the score that children obtain in baseline tests affects the way that teachers relate to them. Yet we know that this is a real danger in any testing system. Scores become labels. And labels set limits to learning.

g with Assessment?

It is unreliable.

The Government says that it needs to test four year olds so that it can make judgments seven years later, at Key Stage 2, about how effective their school has been. Yet we know that tests do not reliably predict children's future progress – and can't therefore be used to judge a school's effectiveness.

It is costly.

We are told that these are hard times for education. Yet baseline tests – which replace assessment that teachers carried out themselves at no extra cost – have been contracted out to private companies. The bill will come to around £5 million a year.

What you can do

Send a clear message to Government:

Baseline Assessment is bad for children, and for schools. Schools have a right to opt out of it and that is what they should do.

- Sign the petition to tell Government to scrap the new system.
www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk
- Talk to head teachers, governors and the media. Write to your MP.
- Organise a meeting: get in contact with your local campaign group organised by teachers and early years specialists.
www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk

Everyone but the Government knows that the testing of children has gone too far. The pressures on children and teachers are intense. Opposing Baseline Assessment is a step towards stopping a system that is out of control.

