

Dear colleagues,

A message from _____

We are writing to offer our support for the National Education Union's continuing campaign to reform the primary assessment system.

We know that pupils, teachers and support staff in both primary and secondary schools are affected by the problems with high-stakes testing. The narrowing of the curriculum, the pressure placed on pupils and the over-reliance on a broken system of data harvesting, affects the whole system.

- 1) Studies, including one by the OECD, show that British children are among the unhappiest in the developed world. The exam-driven nature of our education system is a key factor in this growing mental health crisis.
- 2) The high-stakes nature of SATs forces schools to concentrate on English and maths. This, combined with the funding crisis, has led to a narrowing of the curriculum at primary level, despite the best efforts of teachers.
- 3) The relentless focus on exams squeezes out pastoral support in areas such as behaviour, social and communication skills and emotional wellbeing, although we know individual teachers will do their best to compensate for this.
- 4) For educators, professional judgement of a child's capabilities is eschewed in favour of external tests.
- 5) Due to the nature of the tests, some students may feel they have been labelled as failures at a young age, potentially disengaging them from education.
- 6) Academic research concludes that the Government's proposed Reception Baseline Assessment is flawed, unjustified, and wholly unfit for purpose. The test would be detrimental to children, parents, teachers, and the wider education system in England.

We believe SATs, Baseline, and other primary high-stakes tests are unwanted and unnecessary, since teachers constantly assess students separately to standardised tests in order to allow them to progress educationally.

In short, SATs, Baseline and other primary high-stakes tests are used to measure and judge schools, rather than help teachers to support their pupils.

We support your fight for a well-rounded and child-centred alternative, whether it be a moderated teacher assessment system or a system of sampling, as used in Norway and other places. However, any system that replaces SATs must not add to the already unsustainable workload of teachers.

Together we will continue to push for an education system that trusts teachers, has a wide-ranging creative curriculum and puts concern for student welfare at its centre.

Yours sincerely,
