

Introduction

This pack contains three complete sets of tasks for English language assessment.

SET 1 Placement assessment

This set is intended for use with pupils who have arrived in the school recently as the content of the tests is not dependent on any curriculum learning.

It is generally recommended that these tests are best applied some weeks after the pupil has begun language support in order to allow for a settling down period.

SET 2 Progress and achievement assessment including the themes: Myself, Our school, Colours, shapes and opposites

SET 3 Progress and achievement assessment including the themes: People who help us, Myself, Our school, Colour, shapes and opposites, Transport and travel, The local and wider community

Sets 2 and 3 are based on the Units of Work of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (see page 6) and include items related to thematic learning in language support class. These assessment tasks are suitable for use at any stage of language support, both to identify a pupil's progress and to identify when language support may be terminated.

Pupils changing schools

In addition, Sets 2 and 3 are suitable for use with pupils who have transferred from another primary school and who have already received some language support.

Four skills

As language proficiency for educational purposes is dependent on the appropriate development of four separate skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – it is essential that assessment is carried out for all appropriate skills.

Assessment should take into consideration the capabilities of the peer group of native English-speaking pupils and be appropriate to age and class groupings.

Scoring and grading

A sheet is provided for recording assessment (see page 18). All grading is carried out in relation to the three levels used in the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks – A1, A2 and B1.

The lowest level is A1 and, for newly arrived pupils with no existing English language proficiency, this level becomes the first teaching/learning target.

The highest level used in the language support programme is B1. When pupils are capable of performing in the assessment tasks at this level, and of achieving the scores indicated, then their full integration into mainstream learning is possible.

The levels A1, A2 and B1 reflect the first three levels of the six point scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (© Council of Europe). These three levels replace the levels 1, 2 and 3 which have been in use in schools to date. Previous level 1 becomes A1, level 2 becomes A2 and level 3 becomes B1.

In order to achieve an accurate assessment of a pupil's ability, each level has been subdivided into three sub levels. These three levels reflect the concept of the pupil's ability to 'do' a particular task – *with a lot of help, with a little help, and with no help.*

Pupil profile

A sheet is provided for the development of an individual pupil profile of proficiency in English (see page 20). It is inevitable that progress will be made at different rates across the four skills. This sheet allows for successive assessments to be recorded and for progress and achievement relative to the different skills to be immediately apparent.

Primary School Assessment Kit

Assessment tasks

All assessment tasks have been designed as typical classroom activities, therefore it is not necessary to introduce the activity as a test if it is felt that this will cause undue concern to pupils.

Using the levels

All sets begin at level A1 and continue to level B1. When using the Placement Assessment it is recommended that a pupil should begin with A1 and continue until he/she is unable to complete a test sheet. The teacher should avoid continuing with any test as soon as it becomes clear that the pupil is experiencing difficulty proceeding.

For later progress assessment, using Sets 2 or 3, it is suggested that the language support teacher, in the knowledge of a pupil's abilities, may decide to begin the assessment at a higher level. For example, it would be appropriate to continue testing at the point at which a pupil ended on the previous occasion.

If for some reason a pupil's proficiency has dropped in the interim, by absence from school, return to a home country etc., it may be necessary to lower the starting point of the assessment.

Testing and teaching

It is important to note that the tests are designed to assess a pupil's level of proficiency on entry to the school and, following that, to determine progress across broad curriculum themes (units of work). The themes for language support are fully described in the 'English Language Proficiency Benchmarks' which should be used as the curriculum for teaching. It is not appropriate to teach exclusively in relation to the tests.

Introducing new activities under test conditions

If it is thought that a particular task or process in assessment is unfamiliar to a pupil and may cause additional uncertainty, it is recommended that the teacher introduces this in advance.

For example, if a teacher decides to record the assessment of 'speaking' in order to score the pupil's performance afterwards, it may be necessary to introduce the use of a recording device to the class in advance.

Timing

Strict timing has not been indicated on any tests except the scripts for Listening assessment. The times indicated on the scripts for all Listening tests should be strictly adhered to.

For Speaking, Reading and Writing it is appropriate that the teacher administering the tests should judge the matter of timing in relation to the ages and levels of proficiency of pupils. It will be immediately clear when a pupil is unable to continue a test and it is appropriate that the teacher would end the test at that time for the pupil.

Monitoring and recording of pupils' progress

An individual file for each pupil should be maintained by the Language Support Teacher to include all assessments, scoring sheets and pupil assessment profiles. Samples of pupils' written work should also be maintained on the files and dated accordingly.

Maintaining and using the assessment material

Schools are advised to make master copies of relevant pages and have them laminated in order to retain them in the school as a permanent resource.

The curriculum for language support

The 'English language proficiency benchmarks for non-English-speaking pupils at primary level' (Version 2.0 August 2003) are published by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT). The Benchmarks were developed in collaboration with language support teachers and they constitute the curriculum for language support. They focus specifically on the English language necessary for engagement with mainstream class learning and for socialization in the school. Copies of the Benchmarks may be obtained directly from IILT and may also be downloaded from www.iilt.ie.