



Principal Moderator's Report for Communication at Key Stage 3

**2015 Session
(Step One)**

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Key Stage 3 Statutory Assessment, Northern Ireland Summary (2015), Communication

Principal Moderator's Report 2015: Communication

1. Introduction

2015 was the third year of statutory implementation of the assessment and moderation arrangements at Key Stage 3. This report deals with the quality assurance moderation of teacher judgements in Reading and Writing within the cross-curricular skill of Communication.

The purpose of external moderation is to confirm to schools and other education partners that the standards which schools apply in teacher assessment are appropriate.

Schools were asked to submit a single school portfolio of pupil work demonstrating secure achievement in Reading and Writing across the range of Levels represented within the school. It was recommended that the representative work should cover a variety of contexts. These arrangements ensured that the focus was on demonstrating school understanding of the standard as opposed to the performance of individual pupils.

Out of a possible 122 schools 36 participated in the moderation of Communication at Key Stage 3 in 2015.

2. Range and Type of Work

In most cases, the school portfolio contained evidence of a wide range of work from Communication within and across the two modes. There were some notable examples of work arising from a range of curriculum areas.

Teacher judgements were not verified at particular levels when the samples provided did not demonstrate evidence of achievement at the Level indicated. For the purposes of moderation, it should be noted that samples presented in the school portfolio should demonstrate secure performance at the Level indicated.

While there may be administrative reasons for a school to use examination conditions to generate evidence of achievement in Communication there was evidence that, at the lower levels in particular, achievement could have been more effectively demonstrated in more personalised, less formal settings.

It should be noted that quality not quantity is important. The key features of performance at the higher Levels can be demonstrated succinctly.

Reading

The most effective assessment tasks/activities across the Levels in Reading allowed pupils to demonstrate personal response. While most Reading assessment tasks were carefully tailored to the requirements of the skills being assessed there was still some evidence of task setting in Reading which was not carefully tailored to the Requirements.

It was clear from the evidence submitted that there is generally a secure understanding of the skills being assessed in Reading particularly at Levels 4, 5 and 6.

It should be noted that to show evidence of Level 3 performance opportunity should be given to 'express opinions and give reasons'. (L3 Requirement 4)

Level 7 achievement is characterised by the demonstration of an ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate. Evaluation involves the ability to take an overview of what has been said and written and to comment on the overall meaning or impact.

Writing

The most effective Writing tasks were those in which audience and purpose were clearly identified. There were some notable examples of personal/creative writing where pupils were clearly inspired by the stimulus used by the teacher.

As with Reading there is increasing evidence of a secure understanding of the Levels of Progression in Writing particularly at Levels 4, 5 and 6. However, where schools' judgements were not verified, generally the Levels not agreed were the peripheral ones and in larger schools these included Levels 3 and 7.

To achieve Level 4 in Writing pupils need to be able to vary word order and use linking words within sentences.

Achievement at Level 6 is characterised by the ability to write to create deliberate effect while at Level 7 the focus is sustained, complex sentences created for impact, punctuation used for effect and the reader fully engaged.

3. Accuracy of Judgements

It was pleasing to note that of the school portfolios submitted the majority demonstrated a secure understanding of the standards within the Levels of Progression in both Reading and Writing. As with last year there was strong evidence of consistent application of the standards which confirms the positive benefits of effective internal standardisation.

It should be noted that even within portfolios from schools which were verified overall, there was sometimes evidence of leniency in the application of the standard at the peripheral levels within the school. For example in a few instances some Level 4 samples provided were moderated at Level 3 and Level 7 samples provided were moderated at Level 6.

Where school portfolios were not verified common reasons included the following:

- the use of assessment tasks/activities which did not allow pupils to demonstrate competence in the skill being assessed;
- the samples provided did not demonstrate secure achievement at the Level indicated; and
- leniency in the application of standards particularly at the peripheral levels within a particular school.

Schools seemed to benefit from attendance at Agreement Trials. The majority of those schools verified this year had attended the recent Agreement Trials.

4. Administration

The portfolios presented were carefully organised with all the appropriate paperwork completed accurately. Many schools went beyond the information required on background detail on tasks/activities.

5. Conclusion

The revised moderation arrangements allowed schools to demonstrate their understanding of achievement in each mode across the levels represented in the school. This enabled schools to present a reduced amount of evidence while still allowing them to award Levels to individual pupils at a later date. We would encourage schools to take note of the points outlined in the report and to take every opportunity to attend CCEA Agreement Trials and other events organised to support the assessment of Communication in 2015/16.

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Date: 2015

Appendix:

<p>Key Stage 3 Statutory Assessment</p> <p>Northern Ireland Summary 2015</p>	
<p>Communication</p>	

		Levels							
		QQ*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Boys	No. of pupils	#	17	85	316	910	1482	1084	316
	%	#	0.40	2.02	7.50	21.59	35.16	25.72	7.50
Girls	No. of pupils	**	7	30	128	552	1208	1271	857
	%	**	0.17	0.74	3.16	13.61	29.79	31.34	21.13
Total	No. of pupils	7	24	115	444	1462	2690	2355	1173
	%	0.08	0.29	1.39	5.37	17.68	32.53	28.48	14.18

NOTES: * QQ = Working towards level 1

** Denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Figure not disclosed under rules of statistical suppression

*Data from 2012/13 onwards are based on the new Levels of Progression; these results are not directly comparable with Key Stage Assessment outcomes from previous years. The Department of Education recognises that these new arrangements will need time to embed and has **recommended caution in analysing data and benchmarking performance at this time.***

2014/15 data have been produced based on submitted returns from approximately 40% of post primary schools. The remaining schools did not submit returns due to industrial action.