

KEY STAGE
3

2003

Level threshold tables

for
key stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science

This booklet provides tables for converting marks on the key stage 3 tests into national curriculum levels.

Schools will be notified of their pupils' test results through the return of completed marksheets by 8 July 2003. If they have not arrived by that date, please contact your external marking agency.

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Guarding standards

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Introduction

Training and checking marking standards

All test papers are marked by trained markers who mark the tests using the published mark schemes, sent to all schools in the teacher packs for each subject. The procedures below are being followed in 2003.

- All appointed markers have a strong background in teaching the subject. All attended at least one full day's training in the use of the mark schemes. All English markers attended two days of training.
- Each marker's marking is checked at least twice; once at the beginning of the marking process and once towards the end.
- For pupils whose total marks fall just below a level threshold, the markers review the original marking as a double-check.

What to do when the results are received

Return of results

Schools will be notified of their pupils' test results through the return of completed marksheets by 8 July 2003. If they have not arrived by the end of the day on 8 July 2003, please contact your external marking agency.

Checking results

The marking of pupils' scripts will have been checked carefully before the papers are returned to schools. However, schools may wish to undertake their own checks, particularly for any pupils who receive unexpected results. If it is considered that a pupil has been awarded the wrong level, a review can be requested. Guidance on requesting reviews is given in the *Schools' Guide* booklet (pages 11–19), which was sent to schools in April by the external marking agencies.

It is essential that requests for reviews follow the procedures set out in this booklet. This includes clearly identifying where the mark scheme has not been followed accurately in a question or questions. Requests for reviews must reach the external marking agencies by 18 July 2003 at the latest. No reviews can be discussed over the telephone.

Reporting results for key stage 3

The key stage 3 test levels awarded must be reported to pupils' parents by the end of the 2003 summer term, alongside the end of key stage teacher assessment levels. If the outcome of a review is pending, schools should report test results to parents as provisional. Parents should also receive a summary giving the proportion of pupils awarded each level in the school this year as well as the national proportions for 2002. Please refer to the 2003 key stage 3 *Assessment and reporting arrangements* booklet for full information on reporting to parents (pages 50–54). Schools may, if they wish, return the marked scripts to pupils.

Submitting key stage 3 teacher assessment data

The deadline for submitting teacher assessment subject levels to the data collection agency is 10 July 2003. The date for submission of this information is such that national summary data can be made available to schools and LEAs as early as possible. To achieve this, teacher assessment data must be submitted promptly. The Optical Mark Reader (OMR) forms sent to schools in April 2003 should be used for this. Any queries regarding the completion of these forms should be directed to the data collection agency, telephone number 01709 704 699.

Year 7 progress tests

The level thresholds for the year 7 progress tests will be sent to schools by 8 September 2003.

How the levels are set

The national curriculum tests are written against the programmes of study and are designed to award levels that equate demand to the level descriptions.

QCA has in place a range of procedures, both statistical and judgemental, to ensure that the standards of performance required for the award of each level are maintained consistently from year to year. These procedures include extensive pre-testing of all test papers, cross key stage pre-tests, obtaining the judgement of panels of teachers, and the advice of the chief and deputy chief markers once the marking is well under way each year. These procedures have enabled QCA to set threshold scores each year which have maintained standards since 1996.

Setting draft thresholds

QCA sets draft level thresholds with the test development agencies for each subject in the January/February preceding the tests in May. The difficulty of the current test is considered by looking at pre-test data, which includes a number of measures designed to identify any variation in the underlying difficulty of the test papers from year to year. This year, because of the changes to the tests, a number of further judgemental exercises were carried out at this stage to ensure standards were maintained. The draft level thresholds are used to inform the next stage of the process.

Setting level thresholds

Once the test has been taken and marking is under way, samples of marked scripts from year 9 pupils are collected from external markers. The scripts that fall close to the draft level thresholds are scrutinised in detail by senior markers.

A final level setting meeting is then convened in June to set the final level thresholds using all the evidence available. In 2003, additional judgemental exercises were carried out in English due to the significant changes to the English papers.

The marks obtained by approximately 30,000 pupils in the 'live' tests are collected so that QCA can check the impact of the decisions made in setting the thresholds.

Due to the changes to the tests in 2003, the final level thresholds in this booklet may vary considerably from the 2002 level thresholds. This is to ensure that standards are maintained and that a pupil who would have achieved a certain level in last year's tests would achieve the same level in the new tests. For English, levels have been set for reading and writing for the first time.

Level thresholds – key stage 3

English tests

The following points explain how the mark scheme is applied by markers.

Reading paper

- For low tariff questions, ie questions awarded between 1 and 3 marks, the mark scheme indicates the correct responses for which marks are awarded.
- For 5-mark questions, a set of criteria is applied which describes the quality of responses expected.
- Markers are instructed to draw a diagonal line through the response space if the pupil has not attempted the question.
- The maximum mark available is 32.

Writing paper

- The longer writing task on the writing paper is assessed against the following three strands of criteria:
 - sentence structure and punctuation (SSP);
 - text structure and organisation (TSO);
 - composition and effect (C&E).
- Markers are instructed to tick each page as they mark and to rule a line at the end of the pupil's writing responses.
- The maximum mark available is 30.

Shakespeare paper

- The shorter writing task on the Shakespeare paper is assessed against the following three strands of criteria:
 - sentence structure, punctuation and text organisation (SSPTO);
 - composition and effect (C&E);
 - spelling.
- The maximum mark available is 20.

The Shakespeare reading task is assessed against a single set of criteria. The maximum mark available is 18.

The marks for the reading paper and the Shakespeare reading task are totalled to give an overall mark for reading out of 50. The marks for the writing paper (longer writing task) and the shorter writing task on the Shakespeare paper are totalled to give an overall mark for writing out of 50. The marks for reading and writing are totalled to give an overall mark for English.

In 2003, the thresholds set for English take account of the unfamiliarity of the new format for the English tests.

The marks for reading, writing and English overall are converted into levels using the tables below.

Reading

Level	Mark range
4	10–15
5	16–26
6	27–33
7	34+

Writing

Level	Mark range
4	6–13
5	14–22
6	23–32
7	33+

English overall

Level	Mark range
'N' awarded for the test	0–10
3	11–15
4	16–29
5	30–49
6	50–66
7	67+

The award of level 3 for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve level 4 is a compensatory award for English overall only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'. There is no compensatory level 3 award available for reading and writing.

Some test papers will contain two sets of marks – one in red and one in green. In all cases, marks written in green override marks written in red. The two sets of marks occur where markers' marking is routinely and randomly checked by their supervisors.

Pupils who were absent for one or more test papers will be recorded as 'A' for absent.

Level thresholds – key stage 3 mathematics and science tests

The mark schemes, which are provided in the teacher packs and sent to schools in April, give the acceptable answers for test questions and set out the criteria for the award of marks. They also contain guidance on the general criteria used by external markers in the application of the mark schemes.

Where the markers find answers which are not given explicitly in the mark scheme, they use their professional judgement to decide whether or not an answer is creditworthy.

The following method is used to note marks for each question on the mathematics papers.

1 means that a creditworthy response has scored one mark.

0 means that a response is not creditworthy.

The following method is used to note marks for each question on the science papers:

✓ means a creditworthy response has scored one mark.

Half marks are not used.

Where a pupil has left blank spaces, the marker will cross these through with a diagonal line. For the mental mathematics test, where pupils provided the correct answer, a score of '1' will have been recorded. To calculate an overall mathematics test level, a pupil's score on the mental mathematics test will have been added to the score obtained on the main tier tests.

Pupils who mistakenly completed paper 1 and paper 2 from different tiers, or have taken the incorrect mental mathematics test tier, will have both papers marked separately. However, because it is not possible to award a level by combining marks from papers from different tiers, in such cases pupils will be awarded 'V' to indicate a 'mixed tier' entry.

The mathematics tests

This table gives the mark ranges for the award of each pupil's statutory test level. (Note: the score for mental mathematics test A or B has been added to marks achieved on paper 1 and paper 2 of the 4–6 tier, 5–7 tier or 6–8 tier. The score for mental mathematics test C has been added to the marks achieved on paper 1 and paper 2 of the 3–5 tier. No other combination of mental mathematics tests is permitted.) The maximum mark available for paper 1 and paper 2 is 60 for each paper, and the maximum mark available for mental mathematics is 30.

Level	Tier 3–5	Tier 4–6	Tier 5–7	Tier 6–8
N	0–27	0–23	0–25	0–32
2	28–33			
3	34–67	24–29		
4	68–101	30–54	26–31	
5	102+	55–82	32–53	33–38
6		83+	54–85	39–59
7			86+	60–96
8				97+

The award of level 2 on the 3–5 tier, level 3 on the 4–6 tier, level 4 on the 5–7 tier and level 5 on the 6–8 tier for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve the lowest level targeted by the respective tier is a compensatory award only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'.

The science tests

The table below gives the mark ranges for each pupil's statutory test level. The maximum mark available for the 3–6 tier is 180. The maximum mark available for the 5–7 tier is 150.

Level	Tier 3–6	Tier 5–7
N	0–33	0–35
2	34–40	
3	41–71	
4	72–103	36–41
5	104–132	42–72
6	133+	73–104
7		105+
8		

The award of level 2 on the 3–6 tier and level 4 on the 5–7 tier for pupils who narrowly fail to achieve the lowest level targeted by the respective tier is a compensatory award only. Pupils who score fewer marks than required for a compensatory level will be awarded 'N'.

 Curriculum and Standards	
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