

What do the National Curriculum Levels mean?

National Curriculum levels

At Key Stages 1, 2, and 3, the National Curriculum is accompanied by a series of eight levels. These are used to measure your child's progress compared to pupils of the same age across the country.

There are eight National Curriculum levels, covering the ages 5-14 years. The lowest is Level 1, which describes the achievements of children at around the age of five. The highest is Level 8, which is attained by the most able pupils at the age of 14. There is also a description of 'exceptional performance' above Level 8, which only a very few pupils are expected to reach.

What does this mean for your child?

It is expected that the majority of 11 year-old children will achieve level 4 by the end of Year 6 (currently around 75% achieve level 4 or above). This is the level the government consider the minimum required for children to be able to access the high school curriculum.

Each level is divided into three sub levels, e.g. 3A, 3B and 3C:

C the child has started to work at the level

B working well within the level

A the child has reached the top of the level and is working towards the next level

Children are expected to work their way through one level every two years (e.g. a child working at level 2B in Year 2 would be expected to reach 3B in Year 4) - so progressing 1.5 sub levels every year. However, children aren't robots and their rate of progress will vary from year to year. For some children, achieving level 3 by the end of Year 6 is a real success. That particular individual may have started school below the national average level but has still achieved good progress throughout their primary school years. A child achieving level 5 at 11 years of age is working at a high level, and only one percent of children nationally achieve level 6 at primary school. High School students who pass GCSE at grade C have achieved level 7.

The table overleaf provides further details by Primary School Year Group.

Table showing National Curriculum levels expected in each primary school year group

	End of Year 2 (Age 7)	End of Year 3 (Age 8)	End of Year 4 (Age 9)	End of Year 5 (Age 10)	End of Year 6 (Age 11)				
Level 6				Exceptional (Top 1% achieve)	Exceptional (Top 1% achieve)				
Level 5A			Exceptional		Beyond expectations Approx' Top 10% achieve 5a or above Approx' Top 15% achieve 5b or above Approx' Top 25% achieve 5c or above	Beyond expectations Approx' Top 10% achieve 5a or above Approx' Top 15% achieve 5b or above Approx' Top 25% achieve 5c or above			
5B		Exceptional		Beyond expectations Approx' Top 10% achieve 5b or above Approx' Top 15% achieve 5c or above Approx' Top 25% achieve 4a/4b or above		At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 3b or above	At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 4c or above		
5A								Level 4A	Exceptional
4B	Exceptional	Beyond expectations	Beyond expectations	At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 3b or above	At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 4c or above				
4C						Level 3A	At level expected	At level expected	
3B	Beyond expectations	At level expected	At level expected	At level expected Approx' Top 75% achieve level 3b or above	Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve				
3C	At level expected	Below expectation				Below expectations	Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve	Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve	
Level 2A			At level expected	Below expectation	Below expectations				Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve
2B									
2C	Level 1	Below expectations	Below expectations	Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve	Below expectations Approx' 25% achieve				