



Frequently Asked Questions regarding National Standards

We have spent considerable time this year discussing and developing the implementation of the National Standards. As you will be aware, we have chosen to report only with regards to reading this year. We feel that this has been a wise decision, especially as many of the resources and support is only just being rolled out to schools. This focused approach has allowed us to take an indepth look into the way we teach, assess and report reading across the school. As we have moved through this process, we have put together a list of frequently asked questions to assist you in understanding this reading report. We are very aware that this is a 'first go' for all of us. Please be confident though, that although National Standards and the report form are new, the ways in which we teach and assess reading are not.

What are National Standards?

National Standards in reading, writing and maths show what all New Zealand children are expected to be able to do by the end of each stage during Years 1 - 8, as part of what they learn at school.

Why have National Standards?

National Standards give teachers, children, parents, families and whānau a clear idea of what children need to learn and show where they are at in reading, writing and maths. When everyone understands where children are at, then everyone can be clear about how to best support their learning – both at home and at school.

How does the teacher work out where my child is at?

To work out where each child is at in reading in relation to the National Standards, teachers will make an overall teacher judgment using a range of assessments, including:

- * what they have seen in the classroom
- * talking about learning with children
- * children's assessment of their own and each others' work
- * results from formal tests.

Teachers will use the overall teacher judgment to work out each child's next learning steps and to set goals for their learning.

What will the report show?

School reporting will clearly show your child's progress and achievement, what the teacher and school will do to help your child reach their goals, and what you can do at home to support your child's learning.

Who has set the standards?

The standards have been developed by the Ministry of Education team who developed The New Zealand Curriculum, in consultation with educational experts. As part of the development, consultation took place throughout the

country during 2009 with more than 6,000 people – including teachers, principals, parents, families and whānau.

How have the standards been set?

The standards have been set at a level that most children are expected to be able to achieve, if they are learning at their full potential. Children who are at or above the standards are able to meet the demands of The New Zealand Curriculum and are on track to leave school with a worthwhile qualification, such as NCEA level 2 or 3.

What about children who are learning English?

If your child is learning English as a new language, the teacher may first use the English Language Learning Progressions to assess their progress in reading and writing, and report to you.

What happens with my child who has special education needs?

National Standards have been developed for all children in Years 1-8, including those with special education needs. However, children with very significant education needs will also continue to be supported through an individual education programme or plan.

What about subjects other than reading, writing and maths?

Doing well in reading, writing and maths gives children the skills they need to do well in all curriculum areas at school. Schools will continue to teach all subjects in the curriculum but reporting is likely to be more narrowed, focusing primarily on literacy and numeracy.

What about the self-esteem of children who are not achieving?

National Standards aim to improve achievement by reporting children's learning gaps early, so that focused support can be given at school and home to help them reach their next learning steps.

What do the different formalised assessments show?

Running Records

Teachers use Running Records to get reliable information about their students' reading skills and fluency. A student reads aloud while the teacher records exactly what the student reads or does. After completing the record the teacher scores it. Through observation, scoring, and interpretation, the teacher gains an insight into a student's reading behaviour. Running Records are mainly used until a student becomes a fluent reader.

6 Year Net

A 6 Year Net involves observing students who have been at school for a year as they carry out specific tasks associated with identifying letters, understanding print concepts, reading text, recognising words, writing vocabulary, and hearing and recording sounds in words. It helps teachers to identify students who appear to be making slow progress, and may require more help such as Reading Recovery.

STAR (Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading)

STAR helps teachers to make more accurate judgments about different aspects of a student's reading ability in years 3 to 9. STAR assesses word recognition, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension, and vocabulary.

STAR helps teachers to:

- * identify students who need extra help
- * group students with similar needs and ability
- * assess new students
- * pinpoint difficulties that individuals or groups of students have
- * evaluate a particular teaching programme
- * validate judgments of their students' abilities compared to the rest of the country.

PATs (Progressive Achievement Tests)

Teachers use PATs to assess listening comprehension in years 3 to 9 and to assess reading vocabulary, reading comprehension and maths in years 4 to 9. PATs are marked according to specific standards, which give three types of results: stanines, percentiles and raw data. The stanine and percentile marks give teachers a snapshot of the student's progress compared to their New Zealand peers (by age and by class). The raw data helps teachers understand the areas they need to focus on and what students need to learn next.

What are Print Concepts? (referred to in 6 Year Nets)

These are concepts that show how much a child knows about how books, text, and pictures work. For example, reading from left to right and top to bottom, and making connections between the text and illustrations.

What is Reading Recovery?

Reading Recovery is a one-to-one teaching programme for students who have made slow progress learning to read and write in their first year at school. It is a 12 to 20 week programme undertaken for half an hour daily. Each student's reading and writing is assessed close to their sixth birthday (6 Year Net) and the lowest scoring students take part in the Reading Recovery programme at school depending on funding from the Ministry of Education.

What is the difference between STAR and PAT?

The STAR test provides additional reading information for teachers and students about their knowledge of word recognition, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension, vocabulary.

PAT is two separate tests one that looks in depth at reading comprehension and the other at vocabulary knowledge.

Both PAT and STAR are conducted in formal tests conditions with pen and paper. The children read a booklet and complete an answer sheet with minimal support. They both provide good information to support teacher judgments and inform learning programmes.

I have noticed that for the first 3 years of my child's time at school, they are assessed according to how many months they have been at school. When they reach Year 4, they are assessed at the end of the year regardless of how long they have been at school. Why is this?

Because students in New Zealand generally start school on their fifth birthday, the first three standards need to be used after one, two, and three years at school. According to the Ministry of Education guidelines, your child's year level, by Year 4, becomes more significant than the time they have spent at school.

Why does the rate of progress change after my child has been at school for 12 months?

In the early stages of reading children are expected to progress quickly through the levels as they are learning to decode words. The books very gradually get more difficult. After a year at school, the focus becomes more on comprehension skills, learning new information and higher order thinking. The text is more complex and so children spend longer at each reading level.

How do I know my child has made progress?

Your child's teacher will comment on progress that has been made, but (at this time) we are unable to track back regarding the National Standards as some of the ways we assess have been modified and the National Standards are new. National Standards have shifted the goalposts, in fact they are 'new goalposts'. As we continue to report with regards to the National Standards in coming years, you will be able to monitor progress that your child is making on the graphs.

How do I get more information about what to help with?

This report will be a part of your child's portfolio/e-portfolio. There is extra assessment information/learning goals contained within this. Please be aware that assessment data is only current for a short period of time. Keep in touch with your child's learning by popping in to the classroom, checking out the learning on the class blog/e-portfolio and talking to your child's teacher. If you want to have more than a couple of minutes chat, please make an appointment that is suitable for both parties.

Why is my child bringing home books that are at a different level to where they have been assessed against the standards?

As your child learns to read, teachers choose books, not according to its level, but rather the content and the difficulties within the text. Remember that your child is learning to read, not learning to read a level.

Why is my child not getting lots of extra help like Reading Recovery, Jolly Phonics or Tape Assisted Reading Programme?

Our focus is always on every child experiencing success, being challenged and gaining rich feedback about how they are progressing as learners. Many children go through their years at school without requiring any extra support programmes with their learning. However, there are some children who need extra help and we do our very best to ensure that their learning needs are met, often through the use of our Teacher Aides, nearly all of whom are paid for from school donation. Please also note that the Ministry of Education

determines the number of places a school gets on Reading Recovery (and that we also have to use part of our own staffing to match it).

Why does this report not give me any information about my child's social interactions at school?

This report is designed only to report on the National Standards of Reading. The End of Year report is likely to remain similar to what you are used to and will cover Writing, Maths/Numeracy, Attitudes (social and personal) as well as a General Comment about your child.

Is it possible to see the results from the whole class?

This report is about *your* child compared to the National Standards, rather than against all of the children at Russell Street School. If you are interested in seeing whole school data, this information is collected and reported to the Board of Trustees each year, which can be accessed through our school website.

Why is my child's report so blunt?

The way in which we are now required to report is a result of the National Government's new regime. We are required to report in plain English detailing exactly where your child sits in relation to the National Standards. Parents' feedback to the Ministry of Education during the development phase supported this notion. Please make an appointment with your child's teacher if you want to discuss progress, next steps and how to support your child.

Why do the National Standards graphs not show percentiles like the Plunket growth charts?

The Plunket growth charts show where your child sits compared to other children at the same age. From this you know whether your child is average, above or below. The National Standards are not like this. They are not a comparison against other children rather they are a standard (a list of skills, knowledge and understanding that is deemed important at that stage of learning) which has been set that we want ALL children to meet.

If I want more detail, what should I do?

Teachers will always make themselves available. Please feel welcome to make an appointment with the class teacher at any stage. We also have planned a series of three workshops for parents about learning to read, getting hooked on reading and reading to learn. Look out for information on these.

My child's last report showed that my child was reading at an average level for his age but this one shows he is below standard. How come?

Yes, children can be reading at an average level for NZ children of the same age BUT also be below standard. This is because the standards themselves are 'aspirational' (something to be aimed for). We have already been told that it is expected that 50% of children are expected to be below the reading standard (after 12 months at school). So, 50% will be at or above the standard. A recent example in the TNB (showing times tables recall) helps to explain this.

The tick in the graph is below the blue band but it says that my child is meeting the standard. How can this be?

The advice we have from the Ministry of Education says that it should be the 'best fit'. i.e. if a child is close to meeting the standard (and is well past the last standard) then we must judge them as being 'at the standard'. In reality they are 'quite close', or 'slightly below'.

The same can apply to children who get a tick slightly above the standard. We must judge them as being 'at the standard' as they are closer to this standard the one they are aiming for next.