

DfE invites bids to develop and run £10m Reception baseline

The Department for Education has put the contract out to tender for a supplier to develop, pilot and oversee the Reception baseline.

The Reception baseline will be statutory in Schools in England from September 2020. The new Reception baseline assessment will be statutory for all pupils in England from September 2020.

The move follows the Government's response to the Primary Assessment review, which proposed the introduction of a new assessment in reception, just two years after it scrapped a previous baseline pilot because the three assessments were found not to be comparable.

The new assessment will be used to establish pupils' prior attainment as the starting point for calculating school level progress measures when pupils reach the end of key stage 2 (KS2).

Key Stage 1 tests will effectively be scrapped and made non-statutory from 2023.

As stated already, the new baseline will not be an observational assessment carried out over time, like the EYFS Profile. It will be carried out and mediated by the pupil's usual teacher or teaching assistant.

The £9.8m contract will run from 30 March 2018 until 31 August 2022. The DfE has previously said it will be looking for one supplier.

The assessment should include an age-appropriate assessment of communication, language and literacy as well as maths and be clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The DfE is also asking potential suppliers 'to explore ways in which it would be possible to assess some form of "self regulation" in their bids, for example persistence with a task or following multi-step instructions.'

The DfE tender notice says that suppliers may plan to adapt an existing assessment or develop an entirely new one as long as they can meet the delivery timeline requirements.

The three organisations that took part in the 2015 autumn term baseline pilot were Early Excellence with its observation-based EExBA baseline, which the majority of schools signed up for; the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) at Durham University, which developed a computer-based baseline; and the National Foundation for Educational Research, with its assessment based on tasks and observation. All of these assessments remain available.

The contract will be awarded to an organisation or consortia of organisations to develop and deliver the reception baseline assessment, including any necessary trialling of the material in the 2018/19 academic year, a national pilot in the 2019/20 academic year for the September intake, as well as for schools that have intakes in January and April.

This will be followed by two years of statutory delivery of the assessment to all reception pupils in England in the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Department may extend the contract for one more academic year until 31 August 2023.