National curriculum tests

Key stage 2

English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework

National curriculum tests from 2016

For test developers

Standards & Testing Agency

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Key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test framework:
national curriculum tests from 2016
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1. Overview

This test framework is based on the national curriculum programme of study (2014) for English, introduced for teaching in schools from September 2014 and first assessed in the summer term 2016. The framework specifies the purpose, format, content and cognitive domains of the key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests; it is not designed to be used to guide teaching and learning or to inform statutory teacher assessment.

This document has been produced to aid the test development process.

1.1 Purposes of statutory assessment

The main purpose of statutory assessment is to ascertain what pupils have achieved in relation to the areas of the national curriculum (2014) describing grammar, punctuation and spelling.

The main intended uses of the outcomes as set out in the Bew Report and the Government's consultation document on primary assessment and accountability are to:

- hold schools accountable for the attainment and progress made by their pupils
- inform parents and secondary schools about the performance of individual pupils
- enable benchmarking between schools, as well as monitoring performance locally and nationally.

2. What is a test framework?

The purpose of the test framework is to provide the documentation to guide the development of the tests. The framework is written primarily for those who write test materials and to guide subsequent development and test construction. It is being made available to a wider audience for reasons of openness and transparency.

Some elements of the statutory national curriculum are not possible to assess using the current form of testing; they will need to be assessed by teachers as part of their statutory assessment of the complete national curriculum.

The framework includes those parts of the programme of study as outlined in the national curriculum (2014) that will be covered in the test (the content domain). The cognitive processes associated with the measurement of the construct of grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling are also detailed in the cognitive domain.

The test framework also includes a test specification from which valid, reliable and comparable tests will be constructed each year. This includes specifics about test format, question types, response types, marking and a clear test-level reporting strategy.

By providing all of this information in a single document, the test framework answers questions about what the test will cover, and how, in a clear and concise manner. The framework does not provide information on how teachers should teach the national curriculum.

The test development process used by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) embeds within it the generation of validity and reliability evidence through expert review and trialling. Given the nature of the evidence collected, it is not anticipated that any additional studies will be required in order to demonstrate that the tests are fit for purpose. The test framework does not provide detail of the validity and reliability of individual tests; this will be provided in the test handbook, which will be published on the DfE's website following the administration of the test.

The test framework should be used in conjunction with the national curriculum (2014) and the annual 'Assessment and reporting arrangements' (ARA) document.

3. Nature of the test

The key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test forms part of the statutory assessment arrangements for pupils at the end of key stage 2.

The test contributes to the assessment of pupils in English and is based on the relevant sections of the national curriculum statutory programme of study (2014) for English at key stage 2, including those elements of content introduced at key stage 1 that are intended to be consolidated during key stage 2. The programmes of study are set out for spoken language, and reading and writing. There are two statutory appendices (Appendix 1: Spelling and Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation). Relevant content from the programme of study and the appendices will be assessed in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

The test will cover the aspects of spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary from across the key stage 2 English national curriculum that lend themselves to paper-based, externally marked testing. Writing composition will be subject to teacher assessment.

3.1 Population to be assessed

All eligible pupils who are registered at maintained schools, special schools or academies (including free schools) in England and are at the end of key stage 2 will be required to take the key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, unless they have taken it in the past.

Some pupils are exempt from the tests. Further details are in the ARA, which can be found on the GOV.UK website at www.gov.uk/sta.

3.2 Test format

The key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test comprises two components, which will be presented to pupils as two separate test papers. The test is administered on paper. The spelling paper is administered aurally by a test administrator. The total testing time is approximately 60 minutes as the spelling test is not strictly timed.

Table 1: Format of the test

Component	Description	Number of papers	Number of marks	Timing of component
Paper 1: questions	grammar, punctuation and vocabulary	1	50	45 minutes
Paper 2: spelling	spelling (20 words)	1	20	15 minutes (not strictly timed)
	Total	**2**	**70**	**60 minutes**

4. Content domain

The content domain sets out the relevant elements from the national curriculum programme of study (2014) for English at key stage 2 that are assessed in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. The tests will, over time, sample from each area of the content domain.

Although the majority of the test content is drawn from the statutory appendices, some areas of content are sampled from across the programme of study for English.

The following tables detail content from the national curriculum (2014) that is assessed in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. These are derived from the English programmes of study for writing – vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, Appendix 1: Spelling and Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Elements from the curriculum are grouped into content areas (eg 1 – Grammatical terms / word classes), each of which is made up of subdomains (eg 1.1 – Nouns, 1.2 – Verbs). The elements are also assigned to a numerical referencing system.

For the purposes of the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, the areas covered under 'vocabulary' are the parts of the content domain that relate to words and word-building. This includes synonyms and antonyms, prefixes and suffixes, and word families.

Explanatory notes for Tables 2 and 3

The 'Relevant coverage' column is quoted directly from the national curriculum (2014) for the English programme of study and statutory appendices.

[T] indicates that the statutory appendix to the national curriculum (2014) requires the terminology to be taught, as well as the application of the feature, which may appear elsewhere in the programme of study. In order to assess the full curriculum, grammatical terms that are used in the programme of study, but which are not required terminology, may appear in the wording of items within the tests. However, children will not be expected to generate this terminology in their responses.

[S] indicates content introduced at key stage 1 that is intended to be consolidated throughout key stage 2.

4.1 Paper 1: questions

Table 2: Content domain for Paper 1

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
G1: Grammatical terms / word classes	
G1.1: Nouns[TS]	
G1.2: Verbs[TS]	
G1.3: Adjectives[TS]	
G1.4: Conjunctions[T]	expressing time, place and cause using conjunctions (e.g. *when, before, after, while, so, because*)
G1.5: Pronouns[T]	cohesion[T] appropriate choice of pronoun or noun within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition
G1.5a: Possessive pronouns[T]	
G1.5b: Relative pronouns[T]	
G1.6: Adverbs[TS]	the use of *–ly* in Standard English to turn adjectives into adverbs[S] expressing time, place and cause using adverbs (e.g. *then, next, soon, therefore*) indicating degrees of possibility using adverbs (e.g. *perhaps, surely*)
G1.6a: Adverbials[T]	
G1.7: Prepositions[T]	expressing time, place and cause using prepositions (e.g. *before, after, during, in, because of*)
G1.8: Determiners[T]	use of the forms *a* or *an* according to whether the next word begins with a consonant or a vowel
G1.9: Subject and object[T]	

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
G2: Functions of sentences	
G2.1: Statements[TS]	how the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as a statement
G2.2: Questions[TS]	how the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as a question, e.g. the use of question tags
G2.3: Commands[TS]	how the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as a command
G2.4: Exclamations[TS]	how the grammatical patterns in a sentence indicate its function as an exclamation (exclamations starting with *what* or *how*, e.g. *What a good friend you are!*)
G3: Combining words, phrases and clauses	
G3.1: Sentences[TS] **and clauses**[T]	the boundary between independent (main) clauses
G3.1a: Relative clauses[T]	relative clauses beginning with *who*, *which*, *where*, *when*, *whose*, *that*, or an omitted relative pronoun
G3.2: Noun phrases[TS]	expanded noun phrases for description and specification[S] noun phrases expanded by the addition of modifying adjectives, nouns and preposition phrases to convey complicated information concisely
G3.3: Co-ordinating conjunctions[S]	co-ordination using *or, and* and *but*
G3.4: Subordinating conjunctions[S] **and subordinate clauses**[T]	subordination using *when, if, that* and *because*[S] extending the range of sentences with more than one clause by using a wider range of conjunctions, including *when, if, because, although*
G4: Verb forms, tense and consistency	
G4.1a: Simple past[T] **and simple present**[TS]	simple past tense and simple present tense
G4.1b: Verbs in the perfect form	use of the present perfect form of verbs using the perfect form of verbs to mark relationships of time and cause
G4.1c: Modal verbs[T]	indicating degrees of possibility using modal verbs
G4.1d: Present and past progressive[S]	use of the progressive form of verbs in the present and past tense to mark actions in progress

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
G4.2: Tense consistency	tense (past, present)[T] correct choice and consistent use of present and past tense throughout writing
G4.3: Subjunctive verb forms	recognising subjunctive forms
G4.4: Passive[T] and active[T]	use of the passive to affect the presentation of information in a sentence
G5: Punctuation	
G5.1: Capital letters[TS]	capital letters for names of people, places, the days of the week, and the personal pronoun *I* capital letters to demarcate sentences
G5.2: Full stops[TS]	full stops to demarcate sentences
G5.3: Question marks[TS]	question marks to demarcate sentences
G5.4: Exclamation marks[TS]	exclamation marks to demarcate sentences
G5.5: Commas in lists[TS]	commas to separate items in a list
G5.6a: Commas[T] to clarify meaning	commas to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity[T] in writing
G5.6b: Commas[T] after fronted adverbials	
G5.7: Inverted commas	direct speech[T], inverted commas[T] (or 'speech marks')[T] inverted commas and other punctuation to indicate direct speech, (e.g. a comma after the reporting clause and end punctuation within inverted commas)
G5.8: Apostrophes[TS]	apostrophes to mark singular possession in nouns[S] apostrophes to mark plural possession the grammatical difference between plural and possessive *–s* apostrophes to mark contracted forms[S]
G5.9: Punctuation for parenthesis	brackets[T], dashes[T] or commas[T] to indicate parenthesis[T]
G5.10: Colons[T]	colon to mark the boundary between independent clauses colon to introduce lists

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
G5.11: Semi-colons[T]	semi-colon to mark the boundary between independent clauses semi-colons within lists
G5.12: Single dashes[T]	dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses
G5.13: Hyphens	how hyphens can be used to avoid ambiguity
G5.14: Bullet points[T]	punctuation of bullet points to list information
G6: Vocabulary	
G6.1: Synonyms and antonyms[T]	how words are related by meaning as synonyms and antonyms
G6.2: Prefixes[T]	how the prefix *un–* changes the meaning of verbs and adjectives[S] formation of nouns using a range of prefixes (e.g. *super–, anti–, auto–*) verb prefixes (e.g. *dis–, de–, mis–, over–* and *re–*)
G6.3: Suffixes[TS]	the suffixes *–ment, –ness, –ful , –less* and *–ly*[S] formation of nouns using suffixes such as *–ness, –er*[ST] formation of adjectives using suffixes such as *–ful, –less*[ST] converting nouns or adjectives into verbs using suffixes (e.g. *–ate, –ise, –ify*) singular[TS] plural[TS] regular plural noun suffixes *–s* or *–es* (e.g. *dog*, *dogs*; *wish*, *wishes*), including the effects of these suffixes on the meaning of the noun[s]
G6.4: Word families[T]	word families based on common words, showing how words are related in form and meaning
G7: Standard English and formality	
G7.1: Standard English	standard verb forms (e.g. *I did / I done*, *We were / was*, *He was / were*, *isn't / ain't*) pronouns (*them / those, that / what, anything / nothing*) adverbs using *–ly* (*run quickly / quick*)
G7.2: Formal and informal vocabulary	the difference between vocabulary typical of informal speech and writing, and vocabulary appropriate for formal speech and writing, e.g. *ask for / request*

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
G7.3: Formal and informal structures	the difference between structures typical of informal speech and writing, and structures appropriate for formal speech and writing
G7.4: The subjunctive	recognise vocabulary and structures that are appropriate for formal speech and writing, including subjunctive forms

4.2 Paper 2: spelling task

This paper consists of 20 target words, presented within 20 distinct, contextualised sentences. The test administrator reads the words and sentences to pupils from a script.

The range of strategies and morphological awareness tested is drawn from the statutory spelling appendix to the national curriculum programme of study (2014). The test may include the example words and words drawn from the key stage 2 word lists provided as appendices to the national curriculum (2014), but will not be limited to these and is likely to draw on other words that assess the content described in Table 3. The appendix to the national curriculum programme of study (2014) should be consulted for definitions of the terms used.

There are three sections of the key stage 2 statutory spelling appendix that will be assessed only in Paper 1:

- possessive apostrophe with plural words
- use of the hyphen
- contractions.

Table 3: Content domain for Paper 2

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
S37	common exception words
S38	adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable
S39	the /i/ sound spelt *y* other than at the end of words
S40	the /ʌ/ sound spelt *ou*
S41	prefixes
S42	the suffix *–ation*
S43	the suffix *–ly*

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices
S44	words with endings sounding like /ʒə/ or /tʃə/
S45	endings that sound like /ʒən/
S46	the suffix *–ous*
S47	endings that sound like /ʃən/, spelt *–tion*, *–sion*, *–ssion*, *–cian*
S48	words with the /k/ sound spelt *ch*
S49	words with the /ʃ/ sound spelt *ch*
S50	words ending with the /g/ sound spelt *–gue* and the /k/ sound spelt *–que*
S51	words with the /s/ sound spelt *sc*
S52	words with the /eɪ/ sound spelt *ei*, *eigh*, or *ey*
S53	endings which sound like /ʃəs/ spelt *–cious* or *–tious*
S54	endings which sound like /ʃəl/
S55	words ending in *–ant*, *–ance*, *–ancy*, *–ent*, *–ence*, *–ency*
S56	words ending in *–able* and *–ible* words ending in *–ably* and *–ibly*
S57	adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in *–fer*
S58	words with the /i:/ sound spelt *ei* after *c*
S59	words containing the letter string *ough*
S60	words with 'silent' letters (i.e. letters whose presence cannot be predicted from the pronunciation of the word)
S61	homophones and near homophones (Years 3 and 4) homophones and other words that are often confused (Years 5 and 6)

4.3 Elements of the national curriculum that cannot be assessed in this format

Table 4 below identifies areas that are difficult to assess fully in a paper-based format. Some of the points below may be partially assessed.

Table 4: Elements of the curriculum that cannot be assessed

National curriculum reference	Explanation
English Appendix 2, Year 3, text: introduction to paragraphs as a way to group related material headings and subheadings to aid presentation	These statements are better suited to being assessed as part of teacher assessment of writing. They could be partially assessed in a test in terms of asking pupils how texts are organised (both in paragraphs and through headings); it would not show how well the pupils use this skill in their own writing, without a longer writing task.
English Appendix 2, Year 4, text: use of paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme	This statement is better suited to being assessed as part of teacher assessment of writing. This could be partially assessed in a test in terms of asking pupils how texts are organised (both in paragraphs and through headings); it would not show how well the pupils use this skill in their own writing, without a longer writing task.
English Appendix 2, Year 5, text: devices to build cohesion within a paragraph linking ideas across paragraphs using adverbials of time, place and number or tense choices	These statements are better suited to being assessed as part of teacher assessment of writing. They could be partially assessed in a test in terms of asking pupils what devices are working to ensure cohesion; it would not show how well the pupils use cohesive devices in their own writing, without a longer writing task.
English Appendix 2, Year 6, text: linking ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices: repetition of a word or phrase, grammatical connections, e.g. the use of adverbials and ellipses layout devices	These statements are better suited to being assessed as part of teacher assessment of writing. This could be partially assessed in a test in terms of asking pupils what devices were working to ensure cohesion; it would not show how well the pupils use cohesive devices or manipulate their own writing for effect, without a longer writing task.

4.4 British English conventions

In spelling, punctuation and grammar, variations exist between British English and conventions used in other English-speaking countries. The test will only credit pupils for using British English conventions, which will relate in particular to the aspects detailed below.

4.4.1 Grammar and punctuation

Some irregular past tense forms are favoured in British English; in particular, the past participle of 'to get' will be considered creditworthy in the test when formed as *got* rather than *gotten*.

In keeping with the British English convention, both single inverted commas and double quotation marks are considered creditworthy for punctuating speech, provided they are used consistently within any single response.

For the purposes of the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, a colon used within a sentence should always be followed by a lower-case letter, unless the word is a proper noun or the pronoun *I*.

4.4.2 Spelling

Where there is a difference between British English spellings and those found in other varieties of English, it is the British English spelling that will be creditworthy. This applies to words such as *colour, catalogue* or *theatre,* for which there are no alternative spellings in a standard dictionary of British English, unless they are clearly marked as an American variant.

There are other words for which alternative spellings are acceptable within British English (e.g. *organise* / *organize*). These are shown as equal alternatives in a standard dictionary of British English, and are not marked as a variant from any other country. Either spelling of such words is considered creditworthy in the test.

4.4.3 Vocabulary

In order to be creditworthy, vocabulary used in pupils' responses must appear in a standard dictionary of British English. Where there is any difference in meaning between the dictionary definition and that used in other varieties of English or in slang, the dictionary definition will be favoured.

4.5 Further definitions and guidance

4.5.1 Sentences with different forms: questions

For the purposes of the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, a question is required to include one of the following syntactical forms:

- an initial interrogative pronoun (e.g. *Which is your favourite?*)
- subject–verb inversion (e.g. *Is this your favourite? Do you like this one?*)
- a correctly punctuated question tag (e.g. *This is your favourite, isn't it?*).

A sentence that has the syntax of a statement, but to which a question mark has been added, is not considered to be a creditworthy question form (e.g. *This is your favourite?*), although it is recognised that they may be used in spoken language.

4.5.2 Sentences with different forms: exclamations

An exclamation is a sentence that has a particular syntax. Exclamations begin with *What* or *How* and are usually demarcated by an exclamation mark, eg:

- What a lovely day it is!
- How exciting this term has been!

A sentence that ends in an exclamation mark, but which does not have one of the grammatical patterns shown above, is not considered to be creditworthy as an exclamation (e.g. exclamatory statements, exclamatory imperatives, exclamatory interrogatives or interjections).

An exclamation mark is a punctuation mark that can end a statement, command or exclamation, or be placed after a phrase or single word (e.g. an interjection). An exclamation mark shows that the writer wants to indicate a certain effect, such as heightened emotion e.g. 'Be my friend!' [command] and will be considered creditworthy.

4.5.3 Spelling of responses within Paper 1

Correct spelling is required for the award of the mark for the majority of questions in Paper 1, especially in the following cases:

- **verb forms** – the whole word must be correctly spelt for the award of the mark
- **contractions** – the full contraction must be correctly spelt and the apostrophe correctly placed for the award of the mark
- **prefixes and suffixes** – the whole word (i.e. the root and the prefix and / or suffix) must be correctly spelt for the award of the mark
- **plurals** – the whole word must be correctly spelt in responses to questions assessing plurals for the award of the mark. The use of an apostrophe in the formation of a plural will prohibit the award of the mark, unless this is a legitimate use to indicate a possessive plural.

4.5.4 Punctuation of direct speech

As is consistent with the statutory appendix to the national curriculum, the punctuation of direct speech will only be deemed creditworthy if:

- closing punctuation is placed inside the final inverted commas
- a comma is used after a fronted reporting clause (if applicable).

4.5.5 The use of the serial comma

The mark will not be awarded if a serial comma is used in a list of single items, e.g.

We bought apples, cheese, and milk.

However, the serial comma is acceptable if it used for the avoidance of ambiguity, e.g.

My favourite sandwiches are ham, beef and mustard, and tuna.

4.5.6 Accuracy in copied sentences in Paper 1

Where pupils are required to copy (or 'rewrite') a given sentence, the meaning and key words of the sentence must be preserved. Minor copying errors, such as a change of article, are tolerated. Misspellings are not penalised unless in plurals, contractions, or words requiring a prefix and / or suffix, where this is the assessment focus of the question.

4.5.7 Capital letters

Where they are required, capital letters must be clear and unambiguous for the award of the mark. Where letters do not have unique capital letter forms, this means that the height of the capital letter will be similar to the height of letters with ascenders and will be clearly greater than the height of letters that do not have ascenders. For example, in the word 'What', the height of the capital letter 'W' should be a similar height to, or taller than, the 'h'.

Where pupils need to write, rewrite or complete a sentence, capital letters within a sentence will be marked as incorrect, unless used to start a proper noun or the pronoun 'I'. This includes where an entire word is capitalised, for example, for emphasis. Incorrect use of capital letters negates an otherwise correct response and will be marked as incorrect.

Where pupils are asked to write a short response that is not part of a sentence (for example, if they are asked to write a word or phrase in a box or table), the use of capital letters will not be taken into account when deciding whether the mark should be awarded. The only exception to this is if the word is a proper noun; in this case, a capital letter will be required for the award of the mark.

5. Cognitive domain

The cognitive domain seeks to make the thinking skills and intellectual processes required for the key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test explicit. Each question will be rated against the four strands of the cognitive domain listed in Table 5 below to provide an indication of the cognitive demand.

The cognitive domain will be used during test development to ensure comparability of demand as well as difficulty for tests in successive years.

Table 5: Cognitive classifications

Classification	Description	Ratings scale
Cognitive level	a three-point scale indicating the degree of cognitive complexity associated with the operation required by the question	1 (low) – 3 (high)
Response strategy	a four-point scale, subcategorising the selected and constructed question formats used for the test according to their respective levels of demand	1 (low) – 4 (high)
Abstraction rating	a three-point scale, indicating the familiarity of the question's vocabulary and context for the test population	1 (low) – 3 (high)
Strategy support rating	a three-point scale, indicating the level of support offered within the question and the extent to which pupils need to organise and strategise their own responses	1 (low) – 3 (high)

A detailed explanation of each of the four dimensions follows in sections 5.1–5.4.

The square brackets [ ] in the following tables are used to identify examples of content in questions. These could be substituted for a range of features.

5.1 Cognitive level

The cognitive level is classified within a three-point taxonomy.

Table 6: Cognitive level

Question dimension	Knowledge and comprehension (low)	Application and analysis	Synthesis and evaluation (high)
Explanation	remembers learned information and demonstrates an understanding of the facts identifies linguistic features and understands their use	applies knowledge to given linguistic contexts categorises and analyses examples of language	compiles component ideas or proposes alternative solutions makes comparisons and judgements about the uses of language and punctuation
Example question stems	What is the name of the punctuation mark below? Circle two [verbs] in this sentence.	Complete the sentence below with an [adverb] that makes sense. Categorise these [types of pronoun]. Rewrite the sentence below [using Standard English].	What would be the effect of replacing this [full stop] with a [semi-colon]?

5.2 Response strategy

The response strategy is considered within a scale that ranges from closed to extended response formats, subcategorised into a number of types.

Table 7: Response strategy

Response format	Selected response	Constructed response: data transformation	Constructed response: prompted	Constructed response: independent
Explanation	selecting the correct response or identifying a feature from a given field of data	transforming a given word, phrase or sentence	inserting a word or phrase within a given target sentence, following a specific prompt	open response, without a prompt or frame within which to write
Example item stems	Tick to show [which sentence is correctly punctuated]. Circle all the [nouns] in the sentence below.	Rewrite the sentence below, changing it to [past] tense. Replace the underlined words with a [contraction].	Add an [adjective] to complete the sentence.	Write a statement [to answer the question below]. Explain why a [pair of brackets] is needed in the sentence below.

5.3 Abstraction rating

The abstraction rating is an indicator of the familiarity of the question for the test population. It takes into account the concreteness or abstractness of the concepts involved and the likely familiarity of the vocabulary and context for the test population.

Table 8: Abstraction rating

Abstraction rating	1	2	3
Description	The vocabulary and context can reasonably be assumed to be highly familiar to the majority of pupils taking the test.	The vocabulary and context may fall outside the pupil's immediate personal experience, but are nonetheless familiar through coverage in the primary national curriculum, pupils' literature or the media.	The vocabulary and context will be the least familiar and are likely to be outside the direct experience of those sitting the tests.
Examples of contexts or vocabulary	school-based situations domestic and family scenarios food, animals, items of clothing colours public transport hobbies, e.g. swimming	topics covered in other primary national curriculum subjects, e.g. science and nature, significant periods of history visits, e.g. school trips, parks, libraries, transport, beaches	low frequency spellings / vocabulary appropriate adult scenarios, e.g. workplaces that pupils rarely encounter

5.4 Strategy support rating

The strategy support rating indicates the extent to which the pupil must arrive independently at an understanding of the question requirements, response method and answer format.

Table 9: Strategy support rating

Strategy support rating	1	2	3
Description	indicates questions that provide a high level of support, such as by providing an exemplar response [that shows the method]	indicates questions that provide some level of support, such as a target sentence that contextualises the pupil's response	indicates questions that do not include any support, and in which the pupil is therefore required to interpret the vocabulary, method and expected answer format independently

6. Test specification

This section provides details of each test component.

6.1 Summary

The test comprises two components, which will be presented to pupils as two separate papers.

Table 10: Format of the test

Component	Description	Number of papers	Number of marks	Timing of component
Paper 1: questions	grammar, punctuation and vocabulary	1	50	45 minutes
Paper 2: spelling	spelling (20 words)	1	20	15 minutes (not strictly timed)
	Total	**2**	**70**	**60 minutes**

6.2 Breadth and emphasis

The content and cognitive domains for the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test are specified in sections 4 and 5. The test will sample from the content domain in any given year. Although every element may not be included within each test, the full range of content detailed in this document will be assessed over time. Consolidation of the key stage 1 material is assumed within the key stage 2 programme of study and therefore material from key stage 1 may appear within the key stage 2 test. The questions in each test will be placed in an approximate order of difficulty.

The following sections show the proportion of marks attributed to each of the areas of the content and cognitive domains in a test.

6.2.1 Profile of content domain

Table 11 shows the proportion of marks allocated to each element of the content domain. This allocation will allow coverage of the relevant areas of the national curriculum (2014) over time. The content domain is subdivided into four elements: grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling.

Table 11: Profile of marks by content area

Paper	Content domain reference	Number of marks	Percentage of total mark
Paper 1: questions	grammar	25–35	36–50%
	punctuation	10–20	14–29%
	vocabulary	3–7	4–10%
Paper 2: spelling	spelling	20	29%
	Total	**70**	

6.2.2 Profile of cognitive domain

The cognitive domain for the test is specified in section 5. Questions in Paper 1 of the test are rated in terms of demand against each of the four strands of the cognitive domain. The content domain may be tested through questions across any combination of the four cognitive dimensions.

In Paper 1, any element of the content domain may be tested through any of the levels of cognitive demand. However, the majority of questions will be drawn from the 'knowledge and comprehension' or 'application and analysis' levels.

Any element of the content domain may be assessed through any of the subtypes of response strategy given in section 5.2. The majority of questions in any test will be selected response.

Questions from across the content range may provide pupils with strategy support at levels 1, 2, or 3 as defined in the table in section 5.4.

Question contexts will draw from abstraction levels 1 and 2 only.

In Paper 2, the majority of sentence contexts will also be drawn from abstraction levels 1 and 2. However, where low-frequency vocabulary is selected in order to test a particular spelling pattern, it may be necessary to introduce a surrounding context sentence that is less familiar to the test population; these infrequent examples will have an abstraction rating of '3' (eg phenomenon).

6.2.3 Question selection and organisation

Questions in Paper 1 are, as far as possible, placed in order of difficulty. The difficulty of individual questions is determined quantitatively from trialling data.

The words for the spelling task are selected from a large bank of pre-tested content. The words are selected to take account of pupils' developing ability to spell a wide range of words accurately and to apply the strategies specified in the content domain. The words are presented in order of spelling difficulty.

Pre-testing is used to determine how each spelling word functions statistically. Words included in the task are selected to ensure an appropriate range of difficulty so that pupils at the end of key stage 2 are able to demonstrate performance and standards are maintained.

6.3 Format of questions and responses

6.3.1 Paper 1: questions

The questions in Paper 1 of the test are categorised into two broad formats:

- **selected response** – requiring selection of the correct answer
- **constructed response** – requiring the pupil to write a short answer of their own within a specified format.

The proportion of each format that will appear in any single test is given in Table 12.

Table 12: Profile of marks by response strategy

Question type	Range of marks	Percentage of Paper 1 marks
Selected response	33–42	66–84%
Constructed response	8–17	16–34%

These formats are further categorised into the following subtypes:

Table 13: Question subtype

Question type	Rubric subtype
Selected response	'Identify…'
	'Match…'
Constructed response	'Complete / correct / rewrite…'
	'Write…'
	'Explain…'

In Paper 1, most responses will require only a tick, circle, line or very short written response. Some test questions do require a full sentence to be written. As the questions become harder throughout the test, these questions are more likely to appear toward the end of the paper. This allows pupils every opportunity to gain more straightforward marks easily.

The stems in Table 14 are indicative of the rubric used in live test questions for each subtype, although actual questions may differ from, and are not limited to, the examples given. The question types below can be asked using selected or constructed response types.

Table 14: Question stems in Paper 1

Question stem type	Definition	Common examples
Identify	These questions test pupils' knowledge of particular terminology, language or punctuation features by requiring them to identify the correct response from a given selection. In most cases, they will have to tick, underline or circle the response.	Tick one word to complete the sentence below. Circle all the [nouns] in the sentence below. Which sentence [is punctuated] correctly?
Match	These questions require the pairing of two different elements printed on the page, so that the pupils indicate their response by drawing a line, and do not need to write.	Draw lines to match each sentence to [its type].
Complete / correct / rewrite	These questions usually require pupils to insert or generate a specified type of response within a given structure, either to complete the target sentence or to correct an error within it.	Rewrite the sentence below, changing it to [past tense]. Copy the sentence below. Add [commas] where necessary.
Write	These questions require pupils to generate their own examples of specified language, or to label given language with a technical term.	Write a statement [to answer the question below].
Explain	These questions require pupils to express their understanding of particular terminology and language features by requiring them to analyse and explain, in their own words, how or why that element is used.	The sentence below has [an apostrophe] missing. Explain why it needs [the apostrophe]. Why is the [colon] used in the sentence below?

6.3.2 Paper 2: spelling

Paper 2 consists of 20 target words. Spellings will be presented within 20 distinct, contextualised sentences. The teacher / test administrator will read the words and sentences to pupils from a script.

6.4 Marking and mark schemes

The tests will be externally marked on screen by trained markers.

The mark schemes will give specific guidance for the marking of each question, together with general principles to ensure consistency of marking.

The mark schemes will provide the total number of marks available for each question and the criteria by which markers should award the marks. Where multiple correct answers are possible, examples of different types of correct answer will be given in the mark schemes. Where applicable, additional guidance will indicate minimally acceptable responses and unacceptable responses.

For all questions, the mark schemes will be developed during the test development process and will combine the expectations of experts with examples of pupils' responses obtained during trialling.

For multi-mark questions, if the correct answer is not reached and, therefore, full marks cannot be awarded, the mark scheme will provide details of how partial credit can be awarded.

The mark schemes will contain the following information:

- a content domain reference
- the mark allocation
- square bullets indicating the required responses or acceptable points
- round bullets exemplifying pupils' responses from the trials
- for multi-mark questions, the examples awarded higher marks will usually be placed before the examples awarded lower marks.

6.5 Reporting

The raw score on the test (the total marks achieved out of the 70 marks available) will be converted into a scaled score. Translating raw scores into scaled scores ensures performance can be reported on a consistent scale for all pupils. Scaled scores retain the same meaning from one year to the next. Therefore, a particular scaled score reflects the same standard of attainment in one year as in the previous year, having been adjusted for any differences in difficulty of the test.

Additionally, each pupil will receive an overall result indicating whether or not he or she has achieved the required standard on the test. A standard-setting exercise will be conducted on the first live test in 2016 in order to determine the scaled score needed for a pupil to be considered to have met the standard. This process will be facilitated by the performance descriptor in section 6.7, which defines the performance level required to meet the standard. In subsequent years, the standard will be maintained using appropriate statistical methods to translate raw scores on a new test into scaled scores with an additional judgemental exercise at the expected standard. The scaled score required to achieve the expected standard on the test will always remain the same.

6.6 Desired psychometric properties

While the focus of the outcome of the test will be whether a pupil has achieved the expected standard, the test must measure pupils' ability across the spectrum of attainment. As a result, the test must aim to minimise the standard error of measurement at every point on the reporting scale, particularly around the expected standard threshold.

The provision of a scaled score will aid in the interpretation of pupils' performance over time as the scaled score that represents the expected standard will be the same year-on-year. However, at the extremes of the scaled score distribution, as is standard practice, the scores will be truncated such that above or below a certain point, all pupils will be awarded the same scaled score in order to minimise the effect for pupils at the ends of the distribution, where the test is not measuring optimally.

6.7 Performance descriptor

This performance descriptor describes the typical characteristics of pupils whose performance in the key stage 2 tests is at the threshold of the expected standard. Pupils who achieve the expected standard in the tests have demonstrated sufficient knowledge to be well-placed to succeed in the next phase of their education, having studied the full key stage 2 programme of study in English. This performance descriptor will be used by teachers to set the standards on the new tests following their first administration in May 2016. It is not intended to be used to support teacher assessment, since it only reflects the elements of the programme of study that can be assessed in a paper-based test (see content domain in section 4).

6.7.1 Overview

Pupils working at the expected standard will be able to engage with all questions within the test. However, they will not always achieve full marks on each question, particularly if working at the threshold of the expected standard.

Questions will range from those requiring recall of facts to those requiring synthesis and evaluation. There will be a variety of question formats including selected response, short answer and constructed response where no strategy is provided within the question.

Question difficulty will be affected by the strands of the cognitive domain such as how abstract the task is and the extent to which support is given in the question to help pupils organise their response. This should be borne in mind when considering the remainder of this performance descriptor, since pupils working at the threshold of the expected standard may not give correct responses to all questions. This will be true even when the performance descriptor determines that a skill should be within a pupil's capacity if working at the expected standard.

The following sections describe the typical characteristics of pupils in Year 6 working at the threshold of the expected standard. It is recognised that different pupils will exhibit different strengths, so this is intended as a general guide rather than a prescriptive list.

6.7.2 Grammar and vocabulary

Pupils working at the expected standard are able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with a range of word classes, their terminology and their use: nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions and determiners
- recognise and write different types of sentence: statements, questions, commands and exclamations
- demonstrate familiarity with terms relating to a sentence, including subject and object
- distinguish between co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions and use them to link clauses appropriately
- identify and use main clauses and subordinate clauses (including relative clauses) in a sentence
- identify and use expanded noun phrases for description and concision
- identify and use fronted adverbial phrases to denote time and place (e.g. *Later that day*, *I met Tina*.)
- select pronouns appropriately for clarity and cohesion (e.g. ***The pupils*** *will be visiting the* ***activity centre***. ***They*** *will try all the activities* ***it*** *has to offer*.)
- distinguish between formal and informal language and structures and standard and non-standard forms of English
- use Standard English when appropriate
- select and use regular and irregular verb forms that express present and past time, including the progressive and perfect forms (e.g. *We are hoping to win. I had swum across the lake*.)
- choose tenses accurately and mostly consistently
- ensure correct subject–verb agreement
- identify and use the active and passive verb forms
- identify modal verbs to express future time and degrees of possibility (e.g. *I might go to the park. They should be home soon*.)
- identify, form and expand contractions accurately
- select appropriate synonyms and antonyms for a wide range of words
- use prefixes and suffixes to change the meaning of words, for example, to change words into different word classes
- recognise and use words from the same word families.

6.7.3 Punctuation

Pupils working at the expected standard are able to:

- demarcate sentences accurately, using capital letters and full stops, question marks or exclamation marks as appropriate
- use commas to mark clauses or phrases, including fronted adverbials (e.g. *The cottage, which had a blue door, looked warm and cosy. Despite these facts, people choose to eat unhealthy food*.), usually consistently
- use inverted commas to denote speech and place these correctly in relation to internal punctuation
- use apostrophes correctly for omission and singular possession, and mostly accurately for plural possession
- identify and use punctuation to indicate parenthesis
- identify and use, with some consistency, colons, semi-colons, single dashes and hyphens.

6.7.4 Spelling

Pupils working at the expected standard are able to spell both monosyllabic and polysyllabic words accurately, including common exception words, common homophones and near-homophones.

7. Diversity and inclusion

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the principles by which national curriculum assessments and associated development activities are conducted. During the development of the tests, STA's test development division will make provision to overcome barriers to fair assessment for individuals and groups wherever possible.

National curriculum tests will also meet Ofqual's core regulatory criteria. One of the criteria refers to the need for assessment procedures to minimise bias: 'The assessment should minimise bias, differentiating only on the basis of each learner's ability to meet national curriculum requirements' (Regulatory framework for national assessment, published by Ofqual 2011).

The end of key stage 2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test should:

- use appropriate means to allow all pupils to demonstrate their skills in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling
- provide a suitable challenge for all pupils and give every pupil the opportunity to achieve as high a standard as possible
- provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, irrespective of gender, disability or special educational need, social, linguistic or cultural backgrounds
- use materials that are familiar to pupils and for which they are adequately prepared
- not be detrimental to pupils' self-esteem or confidence
- be free from stereotyping and discrimination in any form.

The test development process uses the principles of universal design, as described in the 'Guidance on the principles of language accessibility in national curriculum assessments' (New language accessibility guidance, published by Ofqual 2012).

In order to improve general accessibility for all pupils, where possible, questions will be placed in order of difficulty. As with all national curriculum tests, attempts have been made to make the question rubric as accessible as possible for all pupils, including those who experience reading and processing difficulties, and those for whom English is an additional language, while maintaining an appropriate level of demand to adequately assess the content. This includes applying the principles of plain English and universal design wherever possible, conducting interviews with pupils, and taking into account feedback from expert reviewers.

For each test in development, expert opinions on specific questions are gathered, for example, at inclusion panel meetings, which are attended by experts and practitioners from across the fields of disabilities and special educational needs. This provides an opportunity for some questions to be amended or removed in response to concerns raised.

Issues likely to be encountered by pupils with specific learning difficulties have been considered in detail. Where possible, features of questions that lead to construct irrelevant variance (for example, question formats and presentational features) have been considered and questions have been presented in line with best practice for dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.

7.1 Access arrangements

The full range of access arrangements applicable to key stage 2 assessments as set out in the ARA will be available to eligible pupils as required.

7.2 Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Pupils with English as an additional language should be registered for the national curriculum tests. If a pupil's limited ability to communicate in English means that he or she is unable to access the test, then they will be working below the level of the English tests and should not take them, as set out in the ARA.

7.3 Compensatory marks

Compensatory marks for spelling will be available for eligible pupils. Consistent with the ARA, these will be based on the mean average scores that pupils achieved during live administration.

Appendix: Glossary of terminology used in the test framework

cognitive domain	Cognitive processes refer to the thinking skills and intellectual processes that occur in response to a stimulus. The cognitive domain makes explicit the thinking skills associated with an assessment. The cognitive domain, as shown in this framework, also identifies other factors that may influence the difficulty of the questions.
component	A section of a test, presented to pupils as a test paper or test booklet is called a component. Some tests may have two or more components that each pupil needs to sit to complete the test. The English grammar, punctuation and spelling test comprises two components.
construct irrelevant variance	Construct irrelevant variance is the variation in pupils' test scores that does not come from their knowledge of the content domain. It can result in pupils gaining fewer marks than their knowledge would suggest or lead to the award of more marks than their knowledge alone would deserve. The former can occur, for example, when questions in a mathematics test also unintentionally measure reading ability. The latter often occurs when unintended clues within questions allow pupils to answer correctly without having the required subject knowledge.
content domain	The body of subject knowledge to be assessed by the test
distribution	The range of possible scaled scores
domain	The codified definition of a body of skills and knowledge
mark scheme	The document explaining the creditworthy responses or the criteria that must be applied to award the mark for a question in the test
national curriculum programme of study	The national curriculum programme of study is the statutory description of subject knowledge, skills and understanding for a given key stage. The key stage 1 and 2 programmes of study are published online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-primary-curriculum
performance descriptor	A performance descriptor is a description of the typical characteristics of pupils working at a particular standard. For these tests, the performance descriptor will characterise the minimum performance required to be working at the appropriate standard for the end of the key stage.

raw score	A raw score is the unmodified score achieved on a test, following marking. In the case of these tests it is the total marks achieved. For example, if a pupil scores 27 out of 60 possible marks, the raw score is 27. Raw scores are often then converted to other measures such as percentile ranks, standardised scores or grades.
scaled score	A score which has been translated from a raw score into a score on a fixed, defined scale is a scaled score. This allows performance to be reported on a consistent scale for all pupils, which retains the same meaning from one year to the next. Therefore, a particular scaled score reflects the same level of attainment in one year as in the previous year, having been adjusted for any differences in difficulty of the specific tests.
standard	The required level of attainment in order to be classified into a particular performance category
standard error of measurement	The standard error of measurement is a reliability estimate that allows the user to determine a confidence interval around a test score. It is a measure of the distribution of scores that would be attained by a pupil had that pupil taken the test repeatedly under the same conditions.
standard setting	The process of applying the standard to a particular test to determine the score required for a pupil to be classified within a particular performance category
test framework	A document that sets out the principles, rationale and key information about the test, and containing a test specification
test specification	A detailed description of what is to be included in a test in any single cycle of development
truncate	To shorten by removing ends

References

Independent review of key stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability (2011), Lord Bew.
www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-2-ks2-testing-review

Standards & Testing Agency

About this publication

Who is it for?

This document is aimed primarily at those responsible for developing the key stage 2 national curriculum test in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. It may also be of interest to schools with pupils in key stage 2 and other education professionals.

What does it cover?

The test framework provides detailed information to ensure an appropriate test is developed, including the:

- content domain
- cognitive domain
- test specification
- test performance descriptor.

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