

SUFFOLK AND ESSEX - SHOULD SATS BE SCRAPPED? PARENTS REIGNITE DEBATE ON KS2 RESULTS DAY



Suffolk and Essex parents have added their views to the debate about SATs tests, as KS2 results are out

Parents across Suffolk and north Essex are receiving their children's eagerly-awaited KS2 SATs results today.

But their arrival has sparked a fresh debate about whether youngsters should sit the tests at all.

National statistics are out today - but a full regional breakdown won't be available until September.

However, the initial results reveal 65% of pupils across the UK have reached the 'expected standard' for all tests combined.

It comes as 97% of primary school teachers voted in support of scrapping "high stakes" SATs tests for 10 and 11-year-olds.

The National Education Union (NEU) polled more than 54,000 of its primary members last month, with the vast majority coming out in support of a "sensible alternative" to the tests - which are said to be damaging children's health, and restricting their learning.

In response to the ballot, schools minister Nick Gibb said SATs had been pivotal in raising standards in primary schools and that abolishing them would be a backwards step.

What exams are children expected to sit?

Primary school pupils take national curriculum assessments in year 6 at the end of KS2, when most will reach 11 by the end of the school year.

They take tests in reading, maths, and grammar, punctuation and spelling, and receive a statutory teacher assessment (TA) in writing and science.

Today's results explained

Before 2016, SATs were measured in levels. But now, children's results are measured in 'scaled scores'.

A score of 100 means that your child is working at the expected standard.

According to interim results published by the Department for Education today, 65% of pupils across the UK met this target in all tests combined - up from 64% in 2018.

In reading, 73% achieved it, down from 77%, while 79% met the standard in maths, up from 76%.

In grammar, punctuation and spelling tests, 78% met the standard (the same as in 2018), and 78% achieved it in 78%, also unchanged from last year.

What are 'expected standards' and scaled scores?

Pupils' raw scores are converted to a 'scaled score' between 80 and 120, of which 100 represents the 'expected standard'.

Tests are developed to the same specification each year.

However, because the questions must be different, the difficulty of tests may vary.

This means experts need to convert the total number of marks a pupil gets in a test (their 'raw score') into a scaled score, to ensure they can make accurate comparisons of performance over time.

The number of marks pupils needed in each test to reach the 'expected standard' are as follows:

Maths - 58 out of 110

Grammar, punctuation and spelling - 36 out of 70

Reading - 28 out of 50

What will I see on my child's report?

Your child will receive a scaled score, as well as an indication of whether or not they have reached the national standard.

The letters 'NS' on a report mean the expected standard was not achieved.

While the letters 'AS' mean the expected standard has been achieved.

What have parents said about SATs tests?

Suffolk and Essex parents have been adding their views to the debate on KS2 results day.

Katie Gardener, who opened her daughter's results today, said she doesn't think SATs should be scrapped.

"I say that having just opened my daughters results today who actually enjoyed the testing process," she said.

"Schools need to be accountable for the results they produce and if they consistently fall below the expected standards, then it should be followed up."

However, Irene Wragg feels the learning children are required to do for SATs is not retained long term.

"They do not need the pressure and, sadly, many of them are not taught per se anymore, just coached to get good results. Nothing long term retained."

Mark Green thinks that in one school year, there can be almost a year in age difference.

"It's unfair to test kids of primary age. Branding them and their abilities. Just wrong."

Yet parent Kerry Stiff said: "No I don't think they should be scrapped, my daughter took hers earlier this year and said she actually quite enjoyed them.

"Good for preparing them for exams when they are older."

Kirsty Watling said the "entire education system needs to be overhauled".

"Unnecessary testing at young age, lack of 'real world' skills being taught, and a test heavy environment that breeds nervous/stressed out kids. It's 2019. Surely we can do better than cramming EVERY child in to the same box. It's time to individualise learning to bring out the talents in ALL children," she added.

And Dawn Evans said: "Either way, it doesn't matter. Results do not matter. As long as they try their best, I don't care what an exam paper says."

