# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Online personalised assessments** |
| **DATE** | **03 September 2019** |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education** |

As children across Wales return to school, we are embarking on year two of the roll out of online personalised assessments.

In December 2018, in line with Our National Mission*,* the Numeracy (Procedural) personalised assessments were launched. The assessments were available for schools to schedule at any point during 2018/19, and by the end of the summer term over 268,000 learners in years 2 to 9 had successfully taken assessments.

Following extensive development and trialling in schools across Wales, reading assessments in English and Welsh will launch during the autumn term.

The purpose of the personalised assessments is to support learners’ learning, teachers’ teaching and parents’ understanding. The personalised assessments adapt the difficulty of questions to match the responses of the learner, adjusting to provide appropriate challenge for each individual. Schools then receive tailored information about each learner’s skills that they can use to plan future teaching.

Benefits of the new assessments also include next-day feedback, automatic marking which reduces teacher workload, and the flexibility for the assessments to be used at a time which suits the school.

Now that we are entering the second year of the Numeracy (Procedural) assessments, schools will not only be able to have access to information on learners’ skills, but will also be able to see learners’ scores shortly after the assessments are taken rather than having to wait until the end of the school year. This is because the scores for procedural numeracy will be automatically generated, based on the all-Wales data from year one of the assessments.

In introducing these innovative assessments we need to make sure we get it right, which is why we are phasing the roll-out. This means we can receive ongoing feedback from schools to make improvements along the way. As a result, we have been able to make changes to improve the experience of taking and administering the assessments.

Over the summer we undertook a review of the procedural numeracy question bank.

Consequently, and in response to feedback from schools, the question bank has been updated and some refinements made in terms of learner experience.

Development work has also been undertaken on the site to integrate learner reports and scores into the system so that learner progress can be automatically generated within the website. This brought to light a minor issue with the calculation used to produce the age-standardised scores. Consequently, some changes have been made to the age-standardised scores that were issued before the end of the summer term. This does not affect the information provided on the skills of each individual learner, which is the primary purpose of the assessment; it is only a minor adjustment to the age-standardised score. These changes are not due to any fault in the automated assessment system, as the necessary standardisation took place off-line. We have now ensured that additional checks are in place. We have also communicated these changes to regional education consortia and schools.

As we move into year two of the phased transition to personalised assessments, the assessment website will be closed during September whilst it is configured with data for the new academic year. I understand that some schools may have wanted to access the assessment site from the start of term, however it is essential that the site is closed so that it is configured correctly.

The development of the Numeracy (Reasoning) assessments is also underway ready for introduction in 2020/21. Adding the assessment of numerical reasoning skills to this suite of assessments is the most ambitious element of the project and will be a world first.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the practitioners who have volunteered to be part of the development of the assessments, through teacher panels and trialling in schools, and for the valuable feedback they have provided.

I will keep members updated on our ambitious and innovative programme as it continues to progress.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.