The KS1 SATs Explained: A Parent's Plain-English Guide to Year 2 Tests

Key points

- Key Stage 1 (KS1) is the first stage of primary school, covering Years 1 and 2 for children aged about 5 to 7, and 'SATs' (Standard Assessment Tests) is the everyday name for the national tests taken at its end.
- The Year 2 English assessments cover reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS), and they are usually short papers with a mix of questions, not formal exams with exam-hall conditions.
- The Department for Education decided in 2023 that the KS1 tests would be non-statutory, which means schools are not required to take them, so how each school runs them can differ.
- Your child's teacher forms their own judgement of their progress across the year from everyday classwork, and this teacher assessment is what matters most for the school's view of your child.
- Teachers use the results to plan support and next steps in class, and KS1 results are not published in school performance tables or used to compare schools.
- Children often see these activities as normal lessons, so a relaxed, encouraging attitude at home usually helps far more than any practice sessions.

Things to try at home

- Share a favourite book and take turns reading a page each, then ask 'What do you think will happen next?' to chat about the story.
- Play a 'capital letter and full stop spotter' game with a cereal box or magazine, pointing out where sentences start and stop.
- Make up silly sentences together, such as 'The cat wore wellies to the moon', and check whether they start with a capital and end with a full stop.
- Try a word hunt on a walk, spotting signs or shop names and sounding out the letters together, celebrating each word they find.
- Retell a story over dinner by asking 'Who was in it, and what happened first?', which builds understanding without any pressure to get answers right.

Find out more

- GOV.UK (Department for Education): search for 'National curriculum assessments at key stage 1' for the official guidance on KS1 assessments.
- Your child's class teacher or headteacher: ask how the school is running the Year 2 assessments this year and how they will share your child's progress with you, as practice varies between schools.