

Operation Note: embargoed until 00.01 on  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2016



## **CALL TO SUSPEND 2017 SATS LAUNCH OF PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSESSMENT CAMPAIGN**

Organisations from across the world of education are today launching **More Than a Score**, a coalition calling for a better approach to assessment and accountability in primary schools. The campaign, which links parents' groups, child psychologists and psychotherapists, trade unions and experts in early years and primary education, maintains that the current system of standardised testing in England is deeply flawed and results in a narrowed education as schools concentrate on teaching to the test. **More Than a Score** regards the Education Secretary Justine Greening's recent concessions on primary assessment as inadequate, because they fail to tackle the key issues that are damaging primary education: children are more than a score.

**Press Conference: panel, film, launch of website**

**Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016**

**Time: 11.00am – 12.00 mid-day**

**Venue: Mary Ward Centre, 5-7 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9SN**

**Panel members:**

**Duncan Bathgate, Headteacher, Bealings School, Suffolk  
Siobhan Collingwood, Headteacher, Morecambe Bay School,  
Lancashire**

**Gemma Haley, Let Our Kids be Kids supporter**

**Madeleine Holt, Rescue Our Schools co-founder**

**Rosamund McNeil, Head of Education and Equality, NUT**

**Alison Roy, Association of Child Psychotherapists (ACP)**

**More Than a Score** calls on Justine Greening to **suspend arrangements for primary assessment in 2016/17** and to convene a **fully independent and comprehensive review** to produce recommendations for the revision of assessment in the early years and primary schools. The Secretary of State has so far

promised a limited consultation by the government. Meanwhile, this year's Year Six face the very same SATS which last year wrote off almost half of eleven year olds as "not secondary school ready".

**More Than a Score** believes that assessment of children's progress is an essential part of good teaching, but must be seen as separate from systems designed to judge the effectiveness of schools. If this is not done, then children's learning is harmed.

The national curriculum assessments (SATs and teacher assessment) in 2016 generated high levels of stress for both children and teachers. Mismanagement of primary school assessment in 2016 produced highly unreliable data. Despite evidence of deep concern among parents, teachers and head teachers, the government has made no substantial changes to the assessment system in 2017. **More than a Score** seeks a meeting with Justine Greening as soon as possible to discuss its concerns.

**More Than a Score** maintains the current SATs amount to an unrealistic set of standards which have the potential to undermine children's sense of themselves as learners, as well as denying children access to a broad, creative curriculum. There is evidence of an increase in numbers of children suffering from school-related anxiety, mental health problems, and who become disengaged from learning.

Pressure on schools to reach the standards also results in the practical exclusion of large groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), from participation in mainstream learning activities. No mention is made of SEND pupils in the government's recent announcement.

Teachers' morale has also suffered, contributing to increasing problems of recruitment and retention.

Children, teachers and parents deserve better than this.

Supporters can add their names to the **More than a Score** call to action at:

[www.morethanascore.co.uk](http://www.morethanascore.co.uk) (live from 12 midday on 2<sup>nd</sup> November)

**For press inquiries, contact: Madeleine Holt, More than a Score/ Rescue our Schools**

**Email: [morethanscorecampaign@gmail.com](mailto:morethanscorecampaign@gmail.com)**

**Mobile: 07711 796262**

**@morethanscore**

**#morethanscoreUK**

**[www.facebook.com/morethanscore](http://www.facebook.com/morethanscore)**

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## **Quotes:**

Alison Roy, Association of Child Psychotherapists:

"ACP members working as child and adolescent psychotherapists in child mental health teams are seeing more children with anxiety related symptoms. In order for young children to thrive and develop healthy brains, they need time and space to learn about themselves and their environment through play. This should be seen as a priority, as play develops self-confidence, self-awareness and supports psychological well-being. We are concerned therefore, that constant testing could have a detrimental effect on brain development and the mental wellbeing of children."

Let Our Kids Be Kids:

"As damaging psychologically as the testing may be, a major concern is the narrowing of the 2014 curriculum in order to pressure schools into teaching to the tests - this causes far more wide-ranging damage, in terms of switching children off learning, lowering self-esteem, and limiting creative thinking, individuality and the value of experiential learning."

John Coe, National Association for Primary Education:

"We argue for improved assessment of progress which does not harm children's learning. Assessment which does not trust the judgement of the teachers who know the children well and which purports to have faith in snapshot tests of just two aspects of learning is deeply flawed and the inevitable result is a distortion of learning and an unhelpful guide to future progress. We seek to do so much better for the children."

Kevin Courtney, General Secretary of the NUT:

"Primary teachers do not want to endure another year like last year. The NUT warmly welcomes this campaign. We want to see the whole world of education united in making clear to the Secretary of State that assessment in primary schools is working neither for pupils, nor for teachers."

Madeleine Holt, Co-founder, Rescue Our Schools:

"If Britain is to punch above its weight in an uncertain future, we need a highly creative and resilient workforce. Our supporters - parents, teachers and anyone who cares about education - tell us constantly that young children are being deprived of both arts subjects and a creative approach to learning, and becoming increasingly stressed by a test-driven curriculum. We have to stop this, take the politics out of schools, and find a consensus on what a good education looks like."

Nancy Stewart, Vice Chair, TACTYC (Association for Professional Development in Early Years):

"Plans for baseline assessment of children starting school have been put on hold following a misjudged scheme trialled last year. It is imperative now to take an informed look at what kind of assessment will really serve children best from the early years onward."

**Other links:**

Justine Greening's 18<sup>th</sup> October Statement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/primary-education>

Responses to the Statement

**Let Our Kids Be Kids**

<https://letthekidsbekids.wordpress.com/2016/10/21/response-to-dfe-u-turn/>

**NUT**

<https://www.teachers.org.uk/news-events/press-releases-england/justine-greening-announcement-primary-assessment>

**Rescue Our Schools**

<http://www.rescueourschools.co.uk/news/response-to-greening-statement>

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## Supporters of the More Than a Score campaign:



- Association of Child Psychotherapists
- Association of Educational Psychologists
- Association for Professional Development in Early Years (TACTYC)
- Cambridge Primary Review Trust
- Dr Guy Roberts Holmes, education researcher
- Let Our Kids be Kids
- Prof. Merryn Hutchings, education researcher
- National Association for Primary Education
- National Union of Teachers (NUT)
- Dr Pam Jarvis, childhood researcher
- Rescue Our Schools
- Save Childhood Movement
- Slow Education
- United Kingdom Literacy Association

## Background information:

- New SATs were introduced in 2016, to assess progress against the 2014 national curriculum.
- In May 2016 the NUT surveyed its members about the impact of changes to curriculum and assessment in 2015-16. A report of the findings along with full survey results can be found here: <https://www.teachers.org.uk/education-policies/primary/crisis-in-primary-assessment>

- Parents across England withdrew their children from school for a day on 3 May 2016, boycotting the SATs and participating instead in creative educational activities.
- A petition to the DfE launched by parents organisation Let Our Kids Be Kids gained over 47,000 signatures, calling for improvements to 'the increasingly constricted curriculum placed upon our schools and children and as a reaction to the inappropriate and unnecessary testing that currently takes place in our primary schools.'
- The Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry into SATs, scrutinising reforms to primary assessment and their impact on teaching and learning in primary schools. It also covers the wider effects of assessment on primary schools, as well as possible next steps for government policy.