

## **About Kids**

Kids is a national charity, founded in 1970, that provides a wide range of services to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families in England. We support children at all ages and stages of childhood, from babies through to young adults, whatever their disability, and each year we support around 18,000 disabled children, young people and family members. Services include play and social opportunities that help children with SEND to grow and expand their horizons while having fun – like after school activities and holiday play schemes; information, advice and support that helps families to navigate the world of SEND including SENDIASS and Mediation; and learning and development services from early years nurseries and family groups to projects helping secondary-school aged children, like ‘Autism in Schools’.

## **Kids’ response to the Government’s Curriculum and Assessment Review**

As a steering group member of the Disabled Children’s Partnership (DCP), we fully endorse their submission. As a member of the Speech and Language Alliance, Kids also fully endorses their submission.

Kids welcomes the commitment ‘to ensure that the curriculum appropriately balances ambition, excellence, relevance, flexibility and inclusivity for all children and young people’.

To make this a reality for every child or young person with SEND, first, the revised curriculum must be fresh, exciting, creative and rigorous. For example, we need increased opportunities for sport and physical exercise for every child, and a guarantee that adaptations will be made to provide every child with SEND equal access to sport and physical exercise.

Second, certain conditions must be in place for the curriculum to be accessible to and inclusive of every child and young person with SEND. For example the importance of specialists, including educational psychologists, occupational health and mental health practitioners, must be recognised and resourced, to enable teachers to deliver the new curriculum in a way that works for every child.

Third, listening to and acting on the views and voices of children and young people is a critical success factor. Here we present the views of young people with SEND around assessments. This input has been facilitated by Kids’ Young People’s Participation team. They work as part of the Participation, Information and Advice Consortium funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

# Call for evidence - Assessments

This input around assessments comes from young people with SEND<sup>1</sup> and those who are experts by experience<sup>2</sup>, with over 50 responses covering representation from 7 out of 9 regions of England<sup>3</sup>

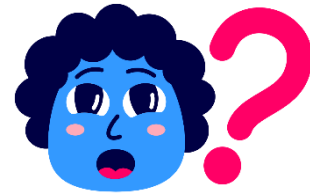
Young people shared insight into their understanding of assessments and the variety of assessments that they undertake (including identifying that they don't just happen within education). A focus on educational assessments was introduced and the assessment types and different levels young people know about and those they have experienced.

The most common type of assessment that young people had taken were exams, but many had also done coursework and practical assessments. Some who inputted were completing their educational assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic, where there was an increase in teacher assessed grading, although not all young people were aware of it. Voting revealed that the preferred assessment type is practical/performance, followed jointly by teacher assessment and coursework.

Assessments can bring about a variety of feelings which we explored below.

Negative words, images and gifs shared to describe how assessments make young people feel (those in bold were said multiple times)

- ❖ **Worried**
- ❖ **Anxious**
- ❖ **Stressed**
- ❖ **Overwhelmed**
- ❖ **Doubt yourself**
- ❖ Boo Hoo
- ❖ Nervous
- ❖ Pressured
- ❖ Don't like the time pressure
- ❖ Am I doing it right?
- ❖ Not good enough if I get bad scores
- ❖ It negatively affects my mental health
- ❖ Frustrated
- ❖ Tired



<sup>1</sup> Aged 9 – 25 years

<sup>2</sup> Aged 25+

<sup>3</sup> South East, South West, London, East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands, York and Humber

# Call for evidence - Assessments

A limited number of the responses were positive; the only emotions shared were clever and happy (as a young person shared they were comfortable with their coursework assessment).

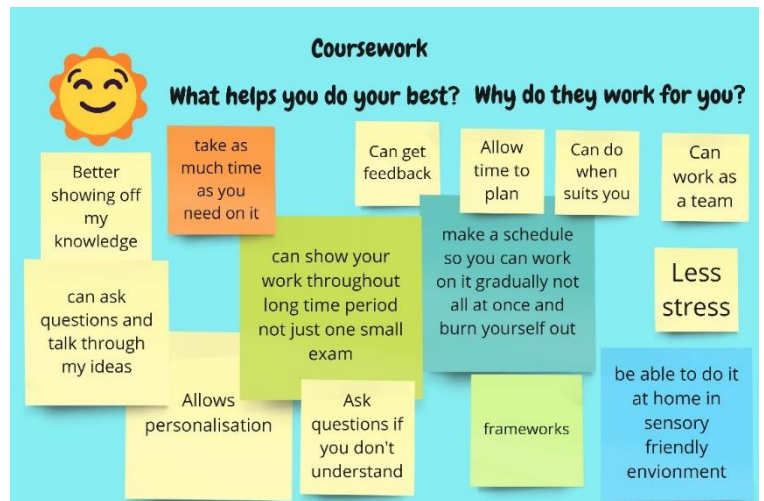
One young person said that **“how you feel depends on the type of assessment because we feel more comfortable with some than others”**, with many others agreeing with this statement.

The following information was collected across different in person and online sessions with members/groups from The Collective. Information has been sections in to types of assessment with additional input / comments from other stakeholders submitted at the end (pg 10)

## Coursework

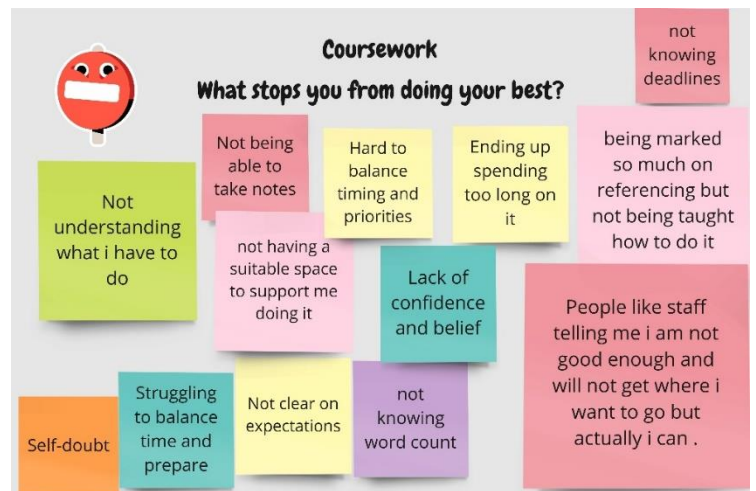
What works:

- I struggle with writing so would prefer to do this on a computer and not writing myself.
- Have more time/ no time limit
- I can work at my own pace
- Teachers can tell us how to be more successful
- No pressure
- Key structures/ planning frameworks
- Opportunity to have as a conversation



What doesn't work:

- Makes me confused.
- I have to attend extra coursework classes for extra support when I want to be at home
- I guess you have to do it in class and leave it there so its definitely your work
- Lack of scribe

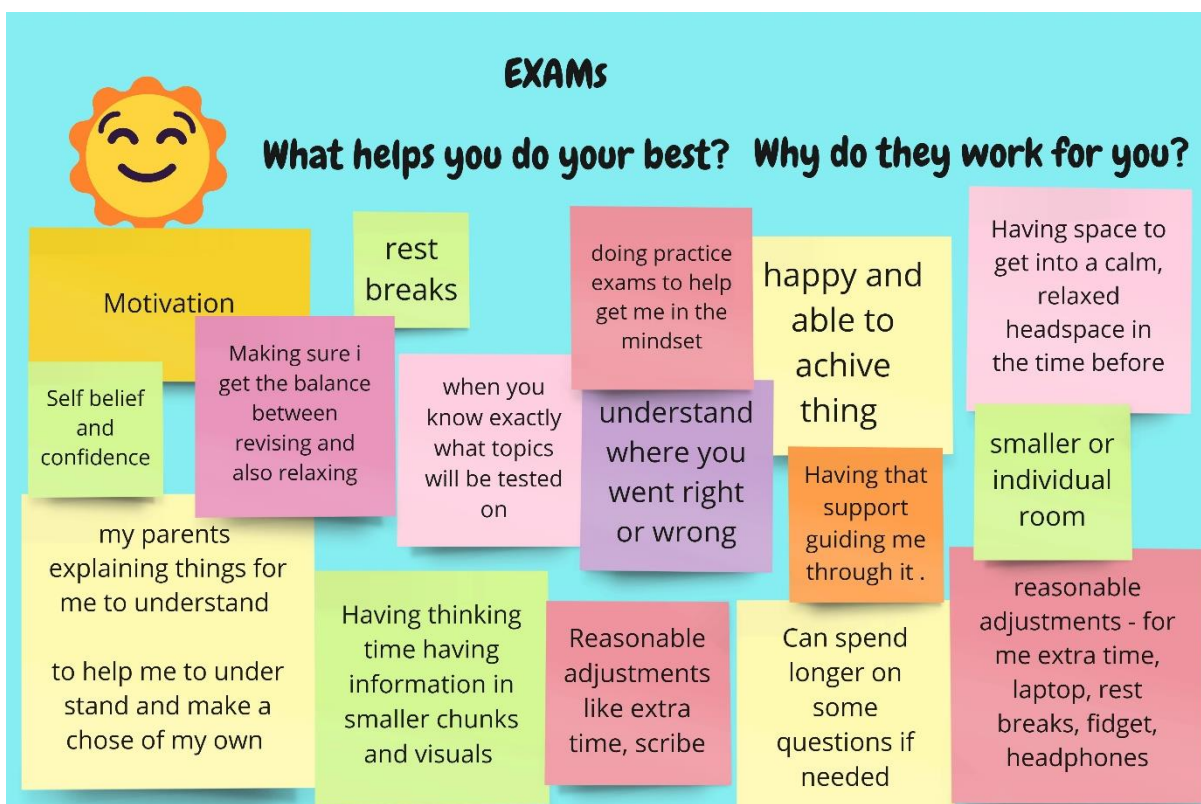


## Exams

# Call for evidence - Assessments

## What works:

- Extra time or even no time limit
- Thinking time
- I had someone that would read the questions for me, which helps me better understand. But writing it down is still a struggle.
- I wish someone could write for me as that is what makes me most anxious in exams.
- More practice leading up to the exam.
- Practice being in the exam room so you know what it is like
- I'm used to it – its what we have always done
- It's a short time – once its over your free
- Smaller/ individual exam rooms
- Rest breaks
- Fidgets
- Headphones
- Knowing exactly what topics you're being tested on
- Information in smaller chunks
- Visuals
- Can spend longer on some questions if needed
- Having support guiding you through it



## What doesn't work

- I panic too much - need to ask for help but don't want to
- It makes me nervous and anxious



## Call for evidence - Assessments

- I struggle to be quiet for that long
- Easily distracted
- So overloaded with all the subjects – it was all too much.
- I have failed all my exams – all that time and effort for what?? I failed anyway
- I then have to go to college to fail them all again as exams just don't work for me. I am good at being independent in other ways just not in exams and written work. Set up to fail.
- Lack of support
- Lack of scribe
- My teacher said that SATS don't matter
- I worry about getting things wrong
- The schools say that that exams are really important
- The build up to exams is nerve-racking
- Some exams are really hard
- Subjects I'm good at, the exams are easier
- If I'm having a bad day – it wont go well and then its all over
- Too much pressure for GCSE's
- I go blank in exams, after I'm disappointed in myself because I knew more answers
- Not given notice
- The way things are worded

"I was given extra time but it still wasn't enough"

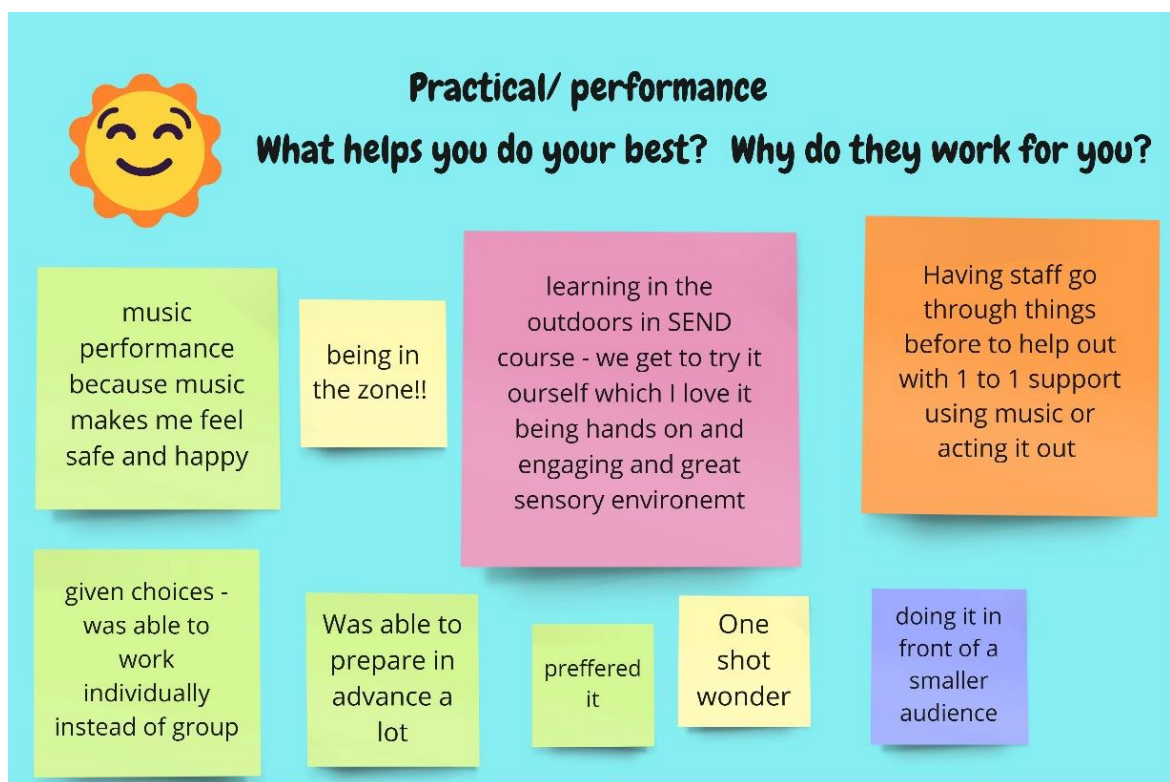


### Practical / performance

What works:

## Call for evidence - Assessments

- No writing involved
- Independent living course they would assess by watching me.
- When you finish the activity they praise you there and then to say you have passed, there is no waiting – ticked to say you can do it and completed it.
- I do drama and love it. I will have to do a performance and this is the best bit, not the exam and the writing
- Its easier to show something that write about it
- It would be easier for me to speak what I want to say so this is better for me I think
- I think this and teacher observation is best
- I like performing



**Practical/ performance**  
**What helps you do your best? Why do they work for you?**


- music performance because music makes me feel safe and happy
- being in the zone!!
- learning in the outdoors in SEND course - we get to try it ourself which I love it being hands on and engaging and great sensory environemt
- Having staff go through things before to help out with 1 to 1 support using music or acting it out
- given choices - was able to work individually instead of group
- Was able to prepare in advance a lot
- preffered it
- One shot wonder
- doing it in front of a smaller audience

### What doesn't work:

- I was fine in my drama class but when I had to go on stage to do my performance I froze and found it hard in front of an audience
- I'd worry about teacher favouritism

## Call for evidence - Assessments

- Speaking/ listening – for those non-verbal/ eye gaze users



### Practical/ performance

#### What stops you from doing your best?

science practicals I wasn't allowed to do them because of my disabilities which wasn't fair so I just had to watch everyone else. They should have given me reasonable adjustments to help me do it instead of not at all

Being anxious

inaccessible

Making a fool of myself

when they mark you down for no eye contact or tone of voice which is traits of my autism isn't fair

Not knowing what is happening with the practical side and feeling like i will not get there with science one and drama too acting in front on people teachers pressuring you get understanding my disability.

One shot wonder

? Subjective

didn't get the right support

## Essay

What works well:

- Having extra support
- Staying after college for extra help
- I went to the study centre 2 hrs a week for my extra support.
- I love writing paragraphs
- You can express yourself – creative writing
- Key structures/ planning frameworks
- Opportunity to have as conversation



What doesn't work well:

- Difficult
- Do well with the start and middle then feel I rush at the end to finish and run out of things to say.
- Everyone had 2 weeks off and I had to come in and have extra support in the holidays – I did it in the end.
- Having support not in college time – I have to miss out and it is more time away from home and I struggle.
- Run out of steam
- No more writing – please!
- My hands start to hurt if I write for too long
- Lack of scribe



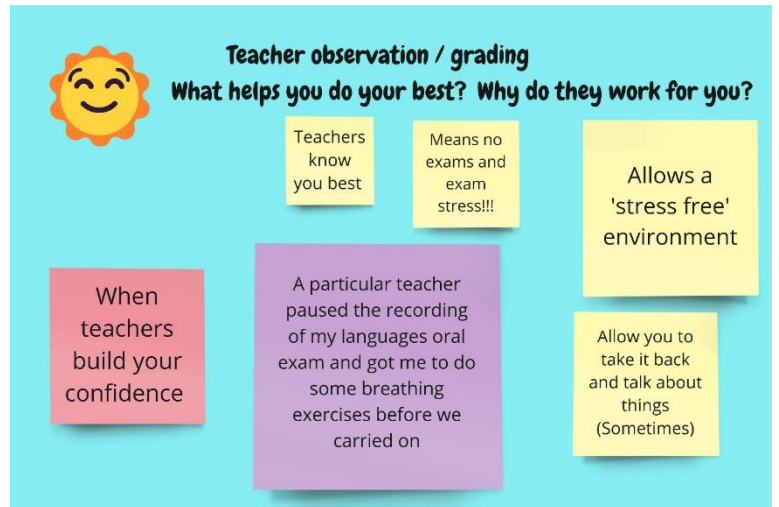


# Call for evidence - Assessments

## Teacher observation / grading

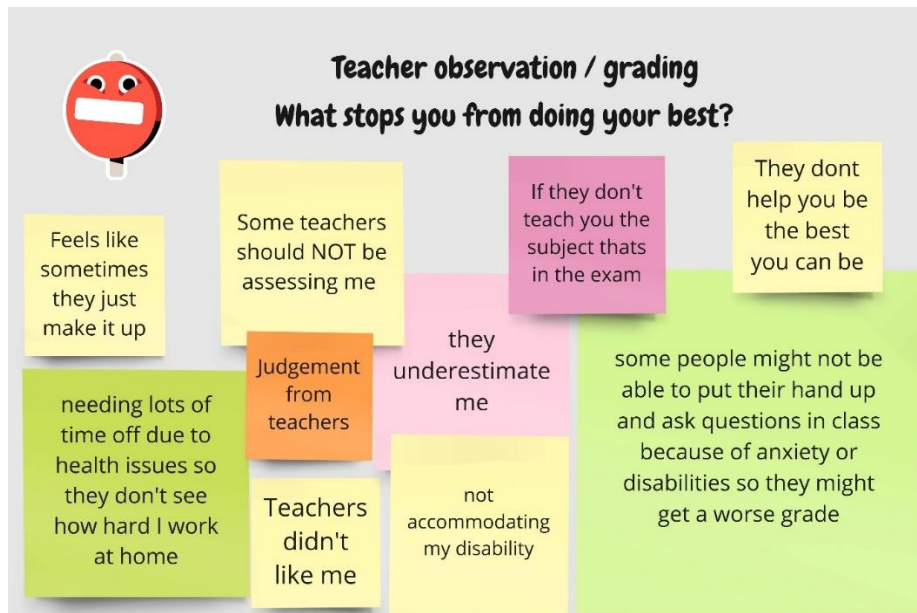
What works well:

- No writing.
- Prefer this as they can watch you and ask questions rather than tests and writing.
- The teacher knows you best and what you can do or what you know. It would be a better form of assessment over time and less pressure.
- They can look at my work or ask me questions
- I'd feel safer speaking to my teacher



What doesn't work well:

- Having to work with a partner who is not taking it very seriously, I worry I will get downgraded as they are not as invested as you.
- I have a teacher who hates me – she would give me a bad grade even if I was good



## General guidance shared from young people

## Call for evidence - Assessments

What works well:

- The right equipment (magnifiers, overlays etc)
- The right support worker to help you understand the subject
- Given the time to have it explained
- The right space, Free from distractions
- Sensory friendly environments – no ticking clocks
- Breaks/ rest when needed
- Break out room
- A schedule that fits me
- Understanding my own needs
- Easy read
- Trained staff who have the right behaviours and methods for me, giving the right support
- Whiteboard to copy words
- Support in place (from the start)
- Learning things that interest me
- Teachers having understanding of my disabilities and each individual
- 1:1 support
- Music
- Mental health support

“prepare me for life”

“empower you that you can achieve anything you put your mind to!”

What doesn't work well:

- The wrong course for me
- Bad transitions
- Course content – the way it's worded can stop me understanding
- Assessment in a way I can't access – not written, would prefer a conversation to give my answers
- Mental health – also stress and pressure
- Wrong support
- Over-estimating me
- Under-estimating me
- Not giving me a chance
- Talk to me, not punish me
- People not understanding the support I need

“make it clear exams not the end of the world and you're amazing no matter what grade you get”

“Just because it's easier for teachers, doesn't mean it's easier for young people.”

Young people expressed that they should be asked what would help them (most had never been directly asked this, and it had always been assumed) and that it should be on an individual basis.



## Call for evidence - Assessments

### Additional input

During this work, we have also received comments from parent carers, teachers and learning support assistants.

“when X answers questions in class he shows a high level of understanding but he needs to be able to get this onto paper to pass the exam”

“I can see how worried and stressed the kids are, it doesn't go away after the exam”

“he works better from the front of the class and will verbally contribute to the lesson. He can give detailed answers but this isn't always reflected and evidenced in his written work”

“Having one shot to pass everything is too much pressure, sometimes you know they have it in them, and it's devastating when they see their results, and you both know they should and could have done better”

“I do everything I can to support him, but he just doesn't do well in exams. He's only applied for 1 course at college. It's no wonder kids lose their aspirations.”

There was also discussion around the need for further development of the way life skills are taught to all students, but especially those with SEND. There is a need for much more opportunity to practice in ways that are real to the students, so they're able to apply these in the future. One individual spent 7 years at college doing life skills – yet there is still not the confidence to apply these in everyday situations.