

STEC Review and Guidance Basic Number Screening Test (5 th Edition) May 2026	
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Age Range:	5:07 – 14:11

Test Content: what tests does it include and what do they measure/evaluate?

The assessment consists of a short manual (48 pages) and parallel pupil response forms (A and B).

Written responses are written in a response booklet with verbal instructions from the assessor. It is designed for identifying pupils for intervention and measuring their progress following support. It can be included in the graded computation section of the report format.

Administration time: 30 minutes 1:1. It can also be administered in a group, 40 minutes. (Publisher's timings)

Instructions are given for both individual and group administration with a script for each question. The instructions and script are identical for both forms A and B, meaning that papers can be alternated between pupils to avoid copying.

The publisher states that when administering the test to a group, it is easier if the test is given with someone else present, in addition to the teacher who is reading the instructions. This additional person can then keep an eye on how pupils are doing and will be able to identify those who have reached their ceiling. Once everyone has finished you can stop the test.

A pupil who has not answered three successive questions correctly can be stopped at that point if, in your judgement, the pupil has reached their ceiling.

Marking is straightforward with one mark per question.

Norms and Standardisation

One overall score is recorded. The test covers three areas which are identified in the teacher's marking column:

36% number concept
44% number operations
20% fractions and decimals

Size and Spread of Standardisation Sample

Green

>500 (General Population)

>100 overall and >50 (SpLD Specific)

Appropriate representation of age range, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, gender

8,962 pupils aged 5:0 to 15:11 from 78 schools across England, Wales and Scotland.

The 2022 standardisation was undertaken after schools had returned to face to face teaching following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors found, although recognise that it is not conclusive, that all years of primary are nearly back in line with the previous national 2019 standards, albeit the 2022 KS2 national data shows that 71% of Year 6 pupils achieved the working at threshold, compared to 79% in 2019.

Table 6.1 Overall effectiveness of state-funded schools at their most recent inspection

	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Ofsted Annual Report (2021) ³	19%	67%	10%	3%
BNST sample of schools (2022)*	13%	65%	11%	2%

% of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) 19% in line with national average (19%).

SEN over-represented in the BNST cohort (24%) compared with national average 12%.

Number of pupils on free school meals 27%, compared with national average 20%.

Exclusions?

Some secondary classes were omitted from the sample because the schools only included those from the lowest sets.

Validity and Reliability

Content Validity

The authors assumed that validity is not a serious issue as the test “directly samples the attainment it is measuring”. The authors also collected teacher judgements for the pupils taking part in the trial, (working below, at or above age-related expectations) which were reviewed alongside pupils’ standardised scores in the test.

How does the nature of the test differ from other tests which cover similar areas?

The test is designed to assess pupils in primary and secondary schools who may be struggling in maths.

It is linked to the English national curriculum and was standardised in the UK.

What additional qualitative diagnostic information might the test potentially offer?

The cover page of the response form lists these into four categories breaking operations into +/- and \times/\div which could provide further qualitative information beyond the overall score.

Construct Validity

Other than the previous edition of the test, the test has not been compared to other similar tests. However, it would be difficult to find a suitable test to make a direct comparison.

Validity Of Diagnostic Criteria

The test is not designed to identify SpLDs

Reliability

The authors have carried out one test to compare the reliability of Form A and Form B variants of the test.

Table 6.7 Reliability measures

	Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha α)	Spearman–Brown coefficient	Standard error of the mean	90% confidence interval for mean test total score	95% confidence interval for mean test total score
Form A	0.91		0.17	25.60–26.14	25.55–26.20
Form B	0.92		0.17	25.90–26.44	25.85–26.49
Forms A and B		0.99			

SUMMARY**Points to consider:**

- A couple of questions which were confusing in the previous edition were removed
- Additional questions have been added at the beginning and end which extends the age range up to KS3. (This has increased the administration time by ten minutes).
- It covers number, calculations and fractions from Year 1 to Y6 with additional questions from KS3.
- References to the National Curriculum are given in each question to support intervention.

- The inclusion of a breakdown of topic areas in the marking on the front cover will provide additional qualitative information, although this is not standardised.
- The range of standardised scores has been lowered to 60 (previously 70)
- The test does not rely on reading ability. Instructions are given verbally.
- Parallel forms are directly comparable – each contains the same calculation/question but with different number/pictures used, making it suitable for group administration
- The mark scheme is simply written and includes reference to the National Curriculum year group content.
- Scoring is simple- 1 mark for each correct answer
- Untimed test, with an indication that group administration should be 40 minutes and individual testing 30minutes.
- The test covers number, calculation and fractions. It does not fit neatly into a test list category.
- Only standardised up to 14:11.
- It only provides one area of the report format and is therefore not co-normed with other assessment areas.