Learning by Questions

TOGETHERNESS

NHS

# Spill the Beans on SATs

2026 Edition

A guide for year 6 kids...
and their parents who always have a million questions!

# So, here we are...

**You're in year 6 at primary school and finally feel like you've got it all figured out when... wham! They tell you you've got to do SATs tests in maths and English next May.**

You're not even sure what they are, why they matter, or how you are going to juggle them between drumming practice and comic-book club?!

Worse than that even, your parents are asking a zillion questions you don't have the answers to!

Well, don't worry. Learning by Questions (who make super cool digital lesson resources) and Togetherness NHS (well-chill emotional health team) have teamed up to help you not just get through the SATs, but to smash them.

## They've got all the secrets...and they're ready to spill the beans!

Mr Done

Headteacher, Masefield Primary School

Dr Hazel MBE

Clinical Psychologist and Child Psychotherapist

Miss Bartlett

Teacher, blogger and SATs analysis nerd

Mrs Heys

Subject & Curriculum Advisor



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# What on earth are SATs?

SATs is a short way of saying

**Standard Assessment Tests,**

and the important word to notice here is **standard.**

What is a standard?

A ‘standard’ (according to the dictionary) is a level of quality or attainment. Ooh la la!

There are official standards for all sorts of things. Food standards, hygiene standards, workplace safety standards and more help to ensure good quality across all these things.

We use standards to make sure that we’re doing the best we can do. This includes what you’re learning in school.

The people in charge of our education system ask themselves - have our children reached the standard of learning we want at the end of primary school? To find out, they make everyone in year 6 all across the country, do tests in maths, GPS (grammar, punctuation and spelling) and reading.

# Tests are trash...

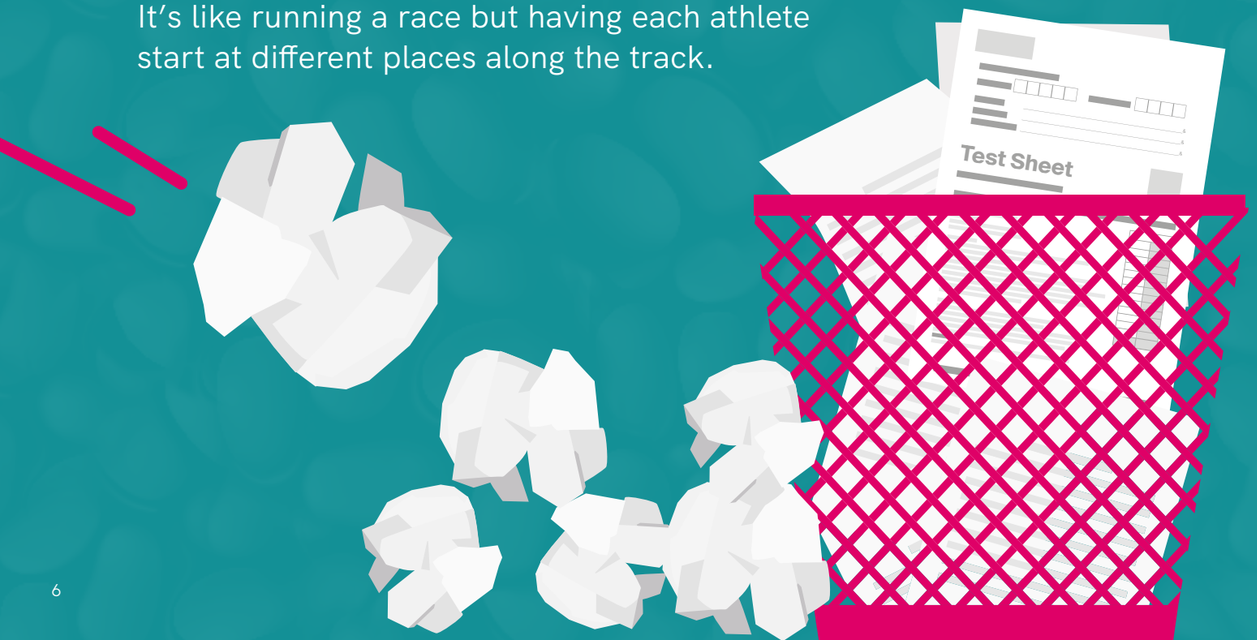
# or are they?

## It's easy to come up with a list of reasons why testing you and your friends is rubbish:

1. You're only 11. Some of you are only 10!  Too young to be under pressure.

2. The tests are limited to maths and English. They do not show if you have a talent for art, score goals in football, or sing like Swifty.

3. Not all year 6 children are starting from the same place. Some children will have lots of support and resources and others won't. It's like running a race but having each athlete start at different places along the track.






## But here's a list of reasons why we believe you can

# slay these tests:

**1**

**You're an expert at getting better at things. Minecraft castle anyone?**

**2**

**You get to show-off what you know.**

**3**

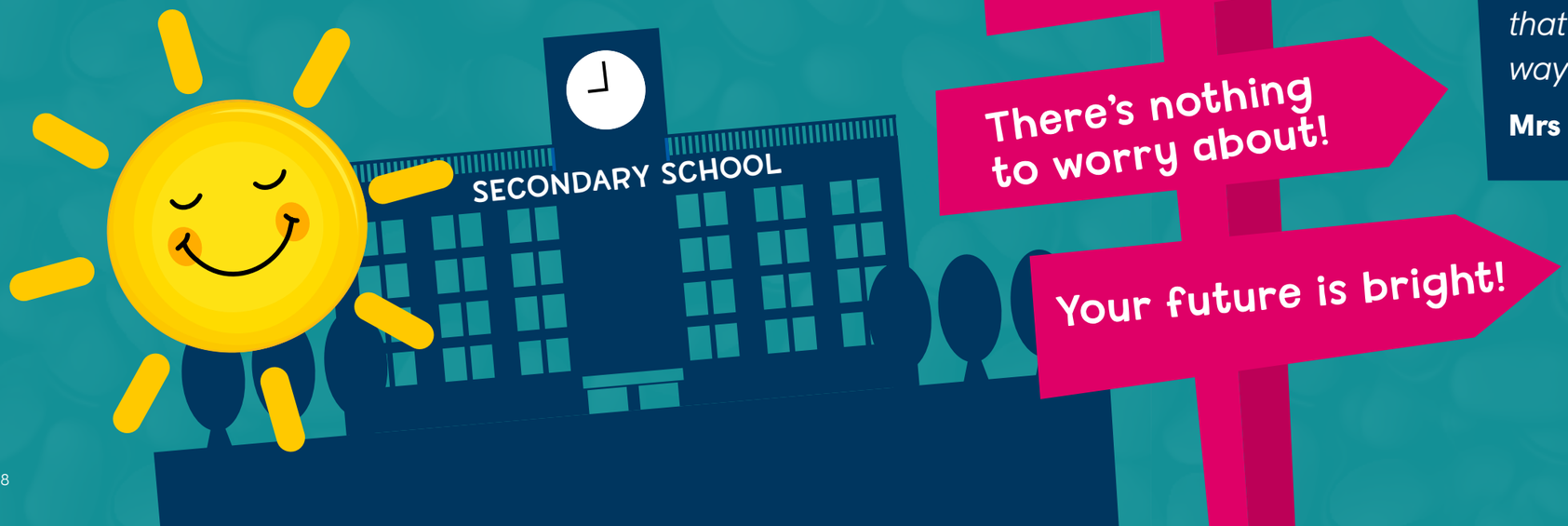
**They're good training for secondary school and ultimately for your GCSEs too.**

# Is it going to affect my start at secondary school?

**The important thing to understand is that the people in charge of these tests aren't looking at you specifically.**

They are looking to see how your school is getting on. In many ways, these SATs are more stressful for your teachers!

Your individual marks won't be seen or known by anyone else except your school and your secondary school.






## Here's why there's nothing to worry about:

1. Secondary schools understand that SATs are a tiny snapshot of what you're capable of and only in certain subjects.

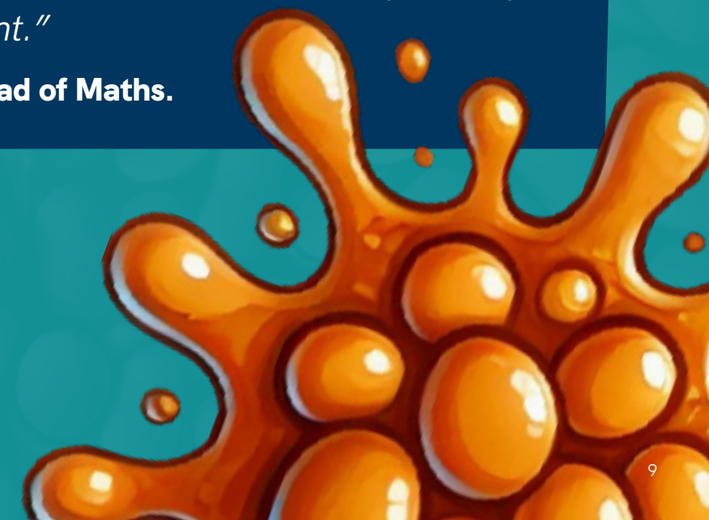
2. Even if you smash the SATs, there will be a long summer holiday before you start secondary school and it's possible to forget a lot in that time. Your new teachers will want to give you some mini-assessments to see where you're at when you're in their classroom.

3. SATs results are not the only information your teacher will pass on - they'll also get an assessment from your teacher that gives a lot more information about you.

**If you don't believe us, let's ask Mrs Heys; she has been the Head of Maths at secondary schools...**

*"SATs tell secondary school teachers what you did in a set of exams at the end of primary; that's it. They don't reflect how well you perform in lessons, who you are or what you are capable of in secondary school - that's up to you and that journey starts here. You can shape it any way you want."*

**Mrs Heys, Head of Maths.**



# Are they going to be hard?

**We're going to be honest with you: some of the questions can be tough.**

We bet that you could ask lots of adults questions on a SATs test and they wouldn't get them right.

## But we're going to let you into a few secrets that will definitely help you.

1

You do the tests in year 6, but they are NOT year 6 tests. At least half the questions are from things you've learned in years 3, 4 and 5.

2

If everyone in the country finds it hard, the expected standard marks will come down.

3

The expected standard marks are usually around 50%. So if you get half of all the questions right, you could technically get 'expected standard' (NB: *technically* is not *definitely* - you should aim for more than this!)

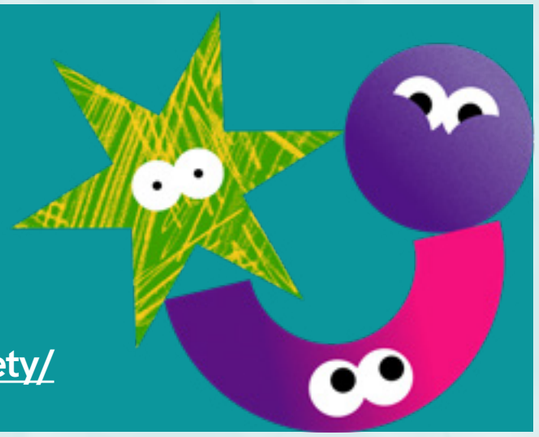
# Human beans

**We are all human ~~beans~~ beings. Being a human means that we have lots of big feelings... anger, sadness, love, joy and also anxiety.**

When these feelings get too big, it can be hard to have enough space in our heads to think. Our heads are too full up with feelings.

But a bit of anxiety can be your friend: to get you into **your thinking zone.** It can make you feel more alert and more able to think, which is very helpful for SATs.

When we are **too** anxious it is very hard to think clearly. It is also hard to think if we are too chilled out. Like Goldilocks' porridge, it needs to be just right, not too hot and not too cold. Or her beans: not too many, not too few.



Watch the video to find out more about anxiety

or visit togetherness.co.uk/anxiety/



## Your thinking zones explained...

When your head is too full of feelings, it can be hard to sit and think. Your thoughts feel crowded and busy.

**You're outside your thinking zone.**

When your feelings aren't very switched on, it can be hard to think. You might feel a bit too chilled out to focus.

**You're outside your thinking zone.**

When your feelings are just right for you, your brain is ready. You can focus, think and do your best.

**Congratulations, you're in the thinking zone!**

# Getting in the zone

## How do you get in the thinking zone if you're feeling too full of beans?

### The quickest way is to slow down your breathing.

Breathe slowly in, hold and breathe slowly out. Repeat this a few times. This is called downregulating.

### Another way is to relax your muscles.

You can start with your hands. Make a fist, hold it and then relax. You can do this with other muscles, tense and relax until you feel you're in the zone.

## So what if you've got too few beans? You're feeling like you have no energy.

### If you have relaxed too much and feel sleepy, you've got too few beans for SATs!

You might find it helpful to do some star jumps.

### What can you do?

This is called upregulating. You probably have worked out already what helps you. Before you sit down and start your SATs… dance, run, jump. Get your body moving when you're doing your SATs, but try not to disturb your neighbour. Tap your fingers, tap your toes, tap your teeth together, wiggle your muscles.

### Looking after your beans every day and on the day.

Human feelings fizz up and down all the time, every day. Healthy habits can help you spend more time in your thinking zone.

# How am I going to get through it?

## Healthy habits to keep beans in check and get the best from yourself.

### You're going to snooze right through it!

We kid you not. One of the best things you can do for your brain and prepare yourself is get some really good sleep—at least 8-10 hours every night. Give yourself some cozy wind-down time before bed and no screens at least an hour before snoozing.

### You're going to eat your way through it!

If you want your brain to function at its best, you have got to feed it. Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious food. Chicken nuggets alone will not get you there!

### You're going to dance/swim/dog-walk your way through it!

Exercise keeps your body and your mind healthy. However you like to move your body, find time every day and break up study time.

### You're going to talk through it!

One of the most helpful ways to keep your beans under control is to share them with others. Talk about what's filling up your head with your favourite people—the ones who listen to you and seem like they might understand.

### The best way through it, is your way through it.

When it comes to a challenge, it's sometimes tempting to copy what your friends are doing and compare your results with theirs. But we are all different and unique. Find techniques that work for you and embrace them.

### Prepare and practice.

As we've said before, nothing scary happens after SATs, so your goal is simply to do your best. It's normal to be a bit nervous. It's even helpful to have a few butterflies because it means you're ready for a challenge. Preparing with some extra homework and practice will help you feel confident on the day. And looking after yourself will keep those beans in check.

### What if I'm really, really worried?

If even after all this preparation and self care, you're still feeling overwhelmed it might be helpful to speak to your parents or teacher about some extra help.

**Are you ready?
Our teacher friend, Miss Bartlett, will tell you all you need to know.
Let's start with maths...**

# How do I prepare for the test? (Maths)

| KS2 Maths SATs papers analysis by @_MissieBee | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
| % require to 'pass' | 52 | 55 | 53 | 53 | 51 | 49 | 53 |
| % of questions from Years 3-5 curricula | 58 | 53 | 52 | 63 | 58 | 56 | 62 |

**If you look at the table above, you can see that in previous years you could achieve expected standard in your maths SATs if you managed to get just over 50% of your answers correct.**

And, you can see that more than half of the maths paper was on things you will have learned in years 3 to 5.

As this is the case most years, it's unlikely to change very much for your SATs. This means that we need to make sure you remember the maths you learned last year and the two years before that. (Don't worry - we'll help!)

## But maths is massive, right?

## How do you know which topics to revise?

| KS2 Maths SATs papers analysis by @_MissieBee *Percentage of questions by content domain* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
| Number & PV | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 13 |
| Calculations 1 | 22 | 29 | 30 | 38 | 33 | 41 | 35 |
| FDP 2 | 14 | 14 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 24 |
| Ratio & prop. | 9 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Algebra | 9 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| Measurement | 14 | 13 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 11 |
| Shapes | 9 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Pos. & direction | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Statistics | 11 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |

This table shows you all the topics they will test in maths, and what percentage of the paper had those types of questions.

## You will see that the two biggest topics every year are:

**Calculations**
(A fancy word for using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solve maths problems!)

**Fractions, decimals and percentages**

So it makes sense to practise these two topics as much as you can, and make sure that what you've already been taught about them is really solid in your mind.

On the next page, we've pulled together some online, interactive quizzes you can do on a mobile phone or any internet connected device. Start with the year 3 versions. If they are too easy, move on to year 4 and so on.

# Power up and get prepared...

# As you answer the questions, you'll see that little messages pop up with feedback on them. Pay attention to those - they are helping you, like a mini teacher on your shoulder.

| Topic | Objective | Year group version | Access the resource |
|---|---|---|---|
| Calculations | Number facts | Year 3 | Open the year 3 number facts task on the LbQ website |
| Calculations | Multiplication & division | Year 3 | Open the year 3 multiplication & division on the LbQ website |
| **If you've tried the ones above and found them ok, time to move on...** | | | |
| Calculations | Number facts | Year 4 | Open the Year 4 number facts on the LbQ website |
| Calculations | Multiplication & division | Year 4 | Open year 4 multiplication & division on the LbQ website |
| **Great! Keep going!** | | | |
| Calculations | Number facts | Year 5 | Open year 5 number facts task on the LbQ website |
| Calculations | Multiplication & division | Year 5 | Open year 5 multiplication & division on the LbQ website |
| **Nice work. You're ready for fractions, decimals and percentages!** | | | |
| Fractions | | Year 3 | Open year 3 fractions on the LbQ website |
| Fractions | | Year 4 | Open year 4 fractions on the LbQ website |
| Fractions, decimals & percentages | | Year 5 | Open year 5 FDP on the LbQ website |

If you've managed to complete all that, then you've given yourself a really excellent base for your maths SATs exam. Give yourself a pat on the back!

# How do I prepare for the test? (GPS)

## Just like maths, if you score above 50% in your SPaG test then you'll probably get the expected standard.

These are the percentages needed to achieve the expected standard over the last few years:

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EXS % | 51 | 54 | 51 | 50 | 51 | 50 | 50 |

Hopefully this makes you feel a little better about what you're trying to achieve. And just like maths, there are certain topics that come up time and time again. The main two are:

### Grammatical terms and word classes:

- ☐ nouns
- ☐ verbs
- ☐ adjectives
- ☐ conjunctions
- ☐ pronouns
- ☐ possessive pronouns
- ☐ relative pronouns
- ☐ adverbs
- ☐ adverbials
- ☐ prepositions
- ☐ determiners
- ☐ subject and object

**(Phew!)**

### Punctuation:

- ☐ capital letters
- ☐ full stops
- ☐ question marks
- ☐ exclamation marks
- ☐ commas in lists
- ☐ commas to clarify meaning
- ☐ commas after fronted adverbials
- ☐ inverted commas
- ☐ apostrophes
- ☐ punctuation for parenthesis
- ☐ colons
- ☐ semi-colons
- ☐ single dashes
- ☐ hyphens
- ☐ bullet points

**(Double phew!)**

**It would be a great idea to go through this list and tick off the ones you feel super confident about. This will help you identify where you need to put your focus.**



If you're still overwhelmed, then go back to the basics. Here are some year 3 and 4 quizzes that might be a good refresher:

### Year 3 Sentences and clauses

Open the year 3 sentences and clauses quiz on the LbQ website.

### Year 3 Verb tenses, progressive and perfect verb forms.

Open the Year 3 verb tenses, progressive and perfect verb forms on the LbQ website.

### Year 3 Apostrophes for contractions and singular possession

Open the year 3 apostrophes for contractions and singular possession on the LbQ website.

### Year 3 & 4 Capital letters

Open the year 3 and year 4 capital letters on the LbQ website.

# Top tip!

**One thing you can do to improve your English scores all round is to read. Reading for pleasure is the single most impactful thing you can do to improve your outcomes.**

# Which brings us nicely onto...

# How do I prepare for the test? (Reading)

**The reading test has three different extracts (pieces of writing) with questions on each one. Two of the extracts are usually fiction and one is usually non-fiction.**

There will be questions on each extract.
The questions are designed to check different skills:

**Vocab** - do you know what certain words mean?

**Retrieval** - can you search to find answers in the text?

**Summarise** - can you pull lots of small ideas together to explain the overall meaning?

**Infer** - can you 'read between the lines' and work out what the implied meaning is?

**Predict** - can you make supported suggestions about what might happen next?

**Identify** - can you explain why a writer might choose certain words or phrases?

These skills are very tricky to revise eg: you either know the meaning of the word 'parched' or you don't. So in order to do well on the reading test you need to do two things:

1. You need to read as much and as widely as you can. Try reading something you never would normally pick up.

2. Become a super-sleuth. Use the information in the rest of the sentence, or the rest of the paragraph to make an educated guess.

**Here are a couple of year 5 reading quizzes to whet your appetite:**

**If you've enjoyed the Wicked movie, then you might like to try 'Dorothy Frees The Munchkins'.**

**Or if something monstrous appearing in the newspaper pricks your attention then try 'Monster Mayhem in the News'**

## Top tip!

**Poetry has not appeared in the SATs reading test since 2018, so it might appear this year. It may well be worth practising some poetry.**

**This year 6 example on the Jabberwocky is challenging but don't forget those detective skills!**

# Hasta la Vista, year 6!

## Year 6 isn't all about the SATs... or at least it shouldn't be.

It's your last year at your primary school, and you should be making the most of it. No doubt there are a few school trips and maybe even a theatre production on the other side of the tests for you to enjoy.

Your teachers care about you so much and want to see you thrive. Yes, in your SATs, but more than that. They want to see you shine as a young person, a nearly-teenager who is ready for their next big chapter: secondary school.

**So take a few deep breaths, take responsibility for yourself and your learning, and you'll show them how ready you are.**

**We wish you all the luck in the world!**

**Team LbQ and Togetherness.**

# Spill the Beans on SATs is brought to you by...

TOGETHERNESS

NHS

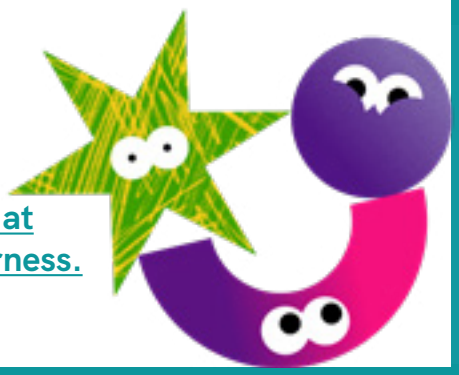
## About Togetherness

Togetherness is a trusted **NHS emotional health** package raising wellbeing by sharing life-changing ideas from **psychology, psychotherapy and health.** Research over nearly 30 years has shown that the model behind Togetherness **improves closeness and reduces conflict in relationships,** as well as having a positive impact on anxiety and depression.

Togetherness helps **parents and young people** to understand more about **big feelings, how the brain works and relationships for happier, healthier lives.** More than **90% of learners say they find the Togetherness pathways helpful.**

Togetherness pathways are interactive and available anytime, anywhere online for easy step-by-step learning to help **protect mental health.**

Open the Togetherness learning page at www.togetherness.co.uk/learn



Learning by Questions

## About Learning by Questions

Learning by Questions (LbQ) is a **multi-award-winning educational resource** used in **1,500+ schools, trusts, and local authorities.**

It helps pupils **be the very best they can be** by lowering stress, giving **instant personalised feedback,** and making learning fun.

Teachers can see in real time **who needs help and with what,** so classrooms buzz with **helpful discussions and real human interaction.**

**Schools that use Learning by Questions SATs Springboard resources regularly report 30% or more improvement in age-related expectations within weeks.**

## Who says you can't do SATs with smiles?

Open the Learning by Questions page at www.lbq.org

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