

AEN ASSESSMENT POLICY



St Mary's CBS Portlaoise
May 2021



AEN Assessments Policy 2021/2022

Assessments which take place within the AEN Department

It is understood by the AEN department that the results of any one standardised test should not be used in isolation, nor used as baseline data for predicting student's future achievements, nor for solely informing decisions regarding the provision of interventions or targets within learning plans for students.

Information from ability tests, attainment tests, teacher observations, the Educational Passport, the Student Support File, parental reports as well as the views of the student are also very important aspects of a thorough assessment and are considered by all AEN department members in decision making.

This evidence-based approach facilitates the identification of individual students' strengths, interest, values, motivation and learning needs and helps to inform the actions and interventions that best address those needs.

Ability tests are designed to establish what a student is capable of knowing, while achievement tests measure what is known and has been learned or achieved to date. In St. Mary's CBS the department acknowledge that in the case of EAL students their test scores may be adversely affected by their proficiency in the English language rather than reflect their actual ability.

Covid 19

Disruption caused by Covid-19 has greatly disrupted the normal running of school in the months from March 2020 to June 2021, with ongoing challenges to be expected. It is understood by the AEN Department that students may have struggled and may have lost ground academically, relative to their peers. Varied impacts on children's home and economic environments, and stress and wellbeing levels, are also important to note here.

For all these reasons, we have acknowledged that careful consideration is needed when reporting on student academic engagement and performance and wellbeing, and on their test scores in terms of regression and reliability.

Irish Exemption Testing

St Mary's CBS acknowledge that all students are expected to have the opportunity to learn the Irish language to the greatest extent possible and at a level appropriate to their needs. There are certain exceptional circumstances whereby an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student enrolled in a recognised English-medium post-primary school.

The authority to grant an exemption has been delegated to school management. However, although the Assessment Coordinator in St Mary's CBS is responsible for the initial testing to determine if an exemption to the Irish language is appropriate for the student, it is a cross departmental approach which is taken when discussing and determining if the exemption is appropriate for the student in question.

A written application for an exemption is made by the parent or guardian or student if aged 18+ to the school principal. To support inclusive practices, the student should be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his ability and interests. Consideration may be given to granting an exemption from the study of Irish only where the student meets the provisions of Post-Primary Circular 0053/2019.

Note: A literacy attainment score at/below the 10th percentile in either Word Reading or Reading Comprehension or Spelling is only one aspect of the criteria to be taken into consideration when processing applications for exemption from the study of Irish in line with sub-paragraph 2.2c of the Circulars.

Consent

Prior to the students starting school in St Mary's CBS consent is sought from Parents prior to the CAT4 Entrance Exam. This consent is then used for first year testing, namely, the Progress Test in Math's (PTM), National Group Reading Test (GRT). Consent is also sought in second year and again in third year to enter testing for the Reasonable Accommodations (RACE) process for Junior Cycle. (Please see Appendix I – Parental Consent Form for Son's Testing)

Administration & GDPR

Care has been taken by users of the selected tests within the school to research accurately the suitability, reliability and validity of all assessment instruments selected for use, and to ensure that the versions in use are the most up- to date and appropriate for administering to the specific student cohort.

The tests used are suitable to use as they are either UK or Irish-normed tests. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) have advised on the use and appropriateness of certain assessment instruments/tests used in St Mary's CBS. (as per DES Circular 67/2020)

In using appropriate assessment instruments, school management and the appropriately qualified teachers should pay due attention to the requirements of current legislation, particularly in relation to GDPR. GL Assessment, whom St Mary's CBS partner with for assessment, supply our CAT4, PTM, and GRT exams. They are GDPR compliant, and all data provided to GL is stored in EEA based cloud locations, as per our Data Protection Policy.

When administering online/electronic assessment instruments, the AEN Department are mindful of GDPR and ensuring compliance in relation to who controls and has access to the data within the school, the purposes for which this data will be used, the retention of the data and where the data is stored. Files are stored on a secure OneDrive where only relevant school personnel can gain access or in a locked cabinet within the AEN cabinet.

Interpretation

The results of any one standardised test are not be used in isolation, but rather in conjunction with other information available on the student. As highlighted in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) publication *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Resource Pack for Teachers*, 'results of any one test should not be considered in isolation and tests results should always be considered alongside other information: parental information, information from the primary school, information from teachers etc.

Feedback with GDPR regulations

A copy of the testing report is made available to parents/guardians upon request after testing takes place.

Information on Tests administered in St. Mary's CBS

CAT4 (Entrance Test)

*CAT4 Provides a rounded profile of pupil ability so you can target support, provide the right level of challenge and make informed decisions about pupils' progress. It provides a unique profile of strengths and weaknesses across four batteries: **Verbal Reasoning** – the ability to express ideas and reason through words is essential to subjects with a high language content, and the most obvious skill picked up by traditional assessment. **Non-verbal Reasoning** – problem-solving using pictures and diagrams; skills which are important in a wide range of school subjects, including maths and science-based subjects. **Spatial Reasoning** – the capacity to think and draw conclusions in three dimensions, needed for many STEM subjects, but not easily measured by other datasets. **Quantitative Reasoning** – the ability to use numerical skills to solve problems, applicable well beyond mathematics.*

The information provided by the CAT4 test:

- Provides a snapshot document (through use of GL assessment) of how incoming 1st years are performing in literacy and numeracy to the AEN Department.
- Using these results along with the information provided by the primary feeder schools, our AEN teachers are able to highlight students who may need support in English and Maths classes and plan accordingly. This information is shared at our weekly AEN Meetings where relevant staff members are present.
- In line with a whole-school approach and as part of the school's Assessment Policy regarding standardised testing and data protection, the results of standardised tests, in conjunction with other related information, should be shared with relevant members of school staff. This is in order to plan effectively to meet the educational, social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of the students. It may also be necessary at times to share relevant information with external parties, such as NEPS, CAMHS and the Inspectorate, for example.
- This information is shared through VShare, which is password protected.

NGRT

NGRT enables us to identify students who may not be reaching their potential in reading and allows us to carry out further diagnostic testing to see if there is a specific learning difficulty. The NGRT also informs our literacy for learning and life strategy.

- To share the GRT information collected, through use of GL assessment with those teachers who request it which will allow those teachers to make judgments about students they teach.

PTM

Progress Test Series in Mathematics provides information which validates the mathematics departments thoughts and judgments about students they teach and gives them confidence that their judgment is right from an objective point of view.

- To share the Progress Test Series in Mathematics information, through use of GL assessment, with those teachers who request it which will allow those teachers to make judgments about students they teach

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS: GROUP ADMINISTERED TESTS LITERACY (READING, SPELLING AND HANDWRITING)					
Name and date of publication	Type	Description	Age range	Norms	Publisher/distributor website
New Group Reading Test, 3rd edition, 2010	Group; Digital version available	A screening / monitoring reading test which includes sentence completion and passage comprehension at each level.	Form 3: 10 to 13; Form 4: 14 to 17.05	UK norms	www.glassessment.ie
ACHIEVEMENT TESTS: GROUP ADMINISTERED TESTS MATHEMATICS					
Mathematics Assessment for Learning and Teaching: Key Stage 3 (MaLT 12, 13 and 14), 2009	Group; Paper version available	Provides dual formative & summative assessment of mathematical attainment.	Junior Cycle	MaLT 12 - UK norms 11 to 13:05 MaLT 13 - UK norms 12 to 14:05 MaLT 14 - UK norms 13 to 15:05	www.hoddersoneducation.co.uk
Progress in Maths Series (12, 13 and 14), 2004	Group; Paper and Digital versions available	Standardised diagnostic tests to identify specific strengths and needs in Maths	Test 12 – 12 to 12:11; Test 13 – 13 to 13:11;	UK norms	www.glassessment.ie
ACHIEVEMENT TESTS: INDIVIDUALLY ADMINISTERED TESTS LITERACY (READING, SPELLING, LANGUAGE AWARENESS/PROCESSING AND READING COMPREHENSION)					
SPaRCS Test	Individual or group	A group of tests that are designed to assess spelling, processing speed and reading comprehension speed	13 -18	Irish and UK norms	www.educationelephant.ie

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test WIAT-III 3rd UK Edition for teachers, 2018.	Individual (Group – spelling only)	Provides normed assessment in untimed single word accuracy, reading comprehension, reading speed and single word spelling. Battery of five subtests to test key aspects of literacy.	4 to 25.11	UK norms	www.pearsonclinical.co.uk
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This AEN Assessment Policy should be read in association with the following school policies:

1. Learning Support Policy
2. Data Protection Policy
3. Irish Exemption Policy

And the following Legislation:

1. Data Protection Act (2018)
2. Freedom of Information Act (2014)
3. Education Act (1998)

This policy will be reviewed annually in light of experience and future developments within education.

Signed:  Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 18th May 2021

Appendix I



PARENTAL PERMISSION – to be returned with Acceptance Letter

Student's name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Please tick each box:

I/We give permission for members of the AEN Department to meet with my/our son to investigate any particular areas of difficulty, including initial testing and relevant discussion with mainstream teachers.

I/We give permission for our son to get extra support in literacy and/or numeracy as required. This may require your son being withdrawn from certain subjects in order to receive the necessary support.

I/We give permission for the AEN Department staff to make my/our son's learning needs known to his teachers in St Mary's CBS, in a sensitive and confidential manner.

I/We agree to provide the AEN Department with copies of all relevant reports/assessments relating to my/our son's learning needs.

I/We also give permission to show my/our son's assessments to representatives of the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and / or National Educational Psychologist Service (NEPS) if necessary, in order to access suitable support.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____

