



Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan, Assessment Policy.

Purpose of the Policy:	The overarching purpose of this assessment policy is to clearly outline all aspects involved in the administration of psychometric assessment. This policy will enhance communication on all aspects of psychometric assessment for all stakeholders.
Definition of Assessment instruments for the purposes of this policy:	Circular 0001/2023 refers to the different types of psychometric assessment and offers a definition of each type of assessment: Standardised ability assessments are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. They measure potential and what a student can know rather than what is known. Standardised attainment/achievement assessments measure what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these areas. Diagnostic assessments may be administered subsequent to information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs. These assessments are designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning. Interest tests may be administered to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior- cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for higher education, further education and training, apprenticeships or work.
Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy:	The senior school management team, the guidance department and the special education team are involved in/responsible for the development. Implementation and review of this assessment policy.
Date Policy approved by BOM:	12th June 2024
Date for review of policy:	

Use of Assessment Instruments:

Purpose of Assessment	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. Assessment instruments which are appropriate and have a clear and defined purpose are used. In particular, care is taken in relation to the suitability of the assessment instruments that are used with students with SEN, or with students who are studying English as an Additional Language (EAL). 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. Standardised ability tests are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. All incoming students are assessed using the CAT4 ability test to measure ability in Verbal Reasoning, Non Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning and Spatial Reasoning. In addition, guidance counsellors may use the outcomes of ability, interest, values and motivation tests to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior- cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for further and higher education, training, apprenticeships and the world of work. In our school we use assessments for tracking students to ensure they are reaching their full potential or receiving support the student needs to reach their full potential. Assessment instruments are tools to review students' strengths and weaknesses and to assist with their subject choice. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) is an assessment that is designed to help students and their teachers understand how they learn and what their academic potential might be. It assesses how students think in areas that are known to make a difference to learning. CAT4 is used to give our school a much broader, more rounded view of each student, their potential and how they learn. Results help teachers decide about the pace of learning that is right for a student and whether additional support or challenge is needed. CAT4 provides teachers with information that can form the basis for discussions about how best a student can learn and reach their potential in school. Teachers can access an individual profile of learning preference along with a range of indicators of likely future performance. Used with other information, these data can support teaching and learning for all students. Standardised attainment tests (sometimes referred to as achievement tests) measure what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these
------------------------------	--

	areas. A diagnostic test is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example, word identification skills or understanding of number concepts. The Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis – English (PPAD-E) is a new standardised test of literacy in English is used in 1st year as a screening and diagnostic tool for assessing literacy skills. NGRT is used to screen all 1st year students to measure reading skills against the national average. NGRT provides information about sentence completion and comprehension skills allowing you to identify where difficulties lie. The student's reading ability can be benchmarked using the Standardised Age Score (SAS). The WIAT-III is an individual assessment of academic achievement for students identified as not reaching their expected attainment in literacy following initial screening and continued monitoring. The WIAT-III encompasses a broad range of academic skills such as Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Oral Language. It evaluates these various aspects of academic achievement by having the student engage in a variety of tasks. This assessment is used to identify student's attainment in reading, spelling and reading comprehension. MaLT is a mathematics assessment used with all 2nd year students and can be used at any time during the school year – for screening, monitoring and tracking progress, as well as for individual diagnostic profiling. The Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting DASH is used for providing evidence for Reasonable Accommodations in 2nd and 5th year for individual students. It can also play a role in identifying student with handwriting difficulties and provides relevant information for planning intervention. The assessment includes five subtests, each testing a different aspect of handwriting speed. The subtests examine fine motor and precision skills, the speed of producing well-known symbolic material, the ability to alter speed of performance on two tasks with identical content and free writing competency. EAL- English as an Additional Language. EAL Post-Primary Assessment Kit
Informed Consent	A letter of consent will be sent to the student's parent/guardian/care-giver to be signed at the beginning of each academic year referencing the school assessment policy. Parent/guardian/care-giver and students will provide consent by signing the letter. Letters to be included as part of their enrolment pack and returned to school to be stored on each student's file.
Selection of	See appendix for test descriptors

Assessment Instrument	Care is taken by users 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. Test administrators examine closely the test manuals and any other supporting information before selecting a test. In selecting an assessment instrument, we are aware of the qualifications required to administer, score, interpret and provide feedback on that particular test. Where necessary, the publisher of the test may be contacted for more detailed information in this regard. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and NCSE advisors provide information and advice on the use and appropriateness of certain assessment instruments/tests.
Administration of Assessment instrument	See table attached (See Appendix) See letter (See Appendix) Information should be provided to parent/guardian/care-giver and students regarding the purpose of the assessment and with whom the assessment results may be shared and why. The consent of parent/guardian/care-giver (for students under 18 years of age) and assent of students over 18 should be obtained in advance of the assessment instrument being administered, in line with the school's assessment procedures and data protection policies. SET and guidance departments will notify parent/guardian/care-giver and students of upcoming assessments. The impact of the recent pandemic on students has varied greatly, while some will have coped well and progressed with their learning at a typical pace, others may have struggled or lost ground, relative to their peers. As such schools may have incomplete information on individual students. When interpreting test scores schools should carefully consider the impact of academic engagement and performance and wellbeing on the students' performance. Some assessments, such as standardised group achievement tests, can be administered by subject teachers, under the supervision of a suitably qualified person. Other tests should only be administered and interpreted by appropriately qualified personnel depending on the nature of the instrument used. It is advised to check in advance with the test publisher on the specific qualifications required for each instrument used. The administration of ability tests should be restricted to appropriately qualified personnel who have been specifically trained in specialised psychometric testing, including the selection and administration of such assessment instruments, interpretation of assessment results, scoring and feedback. In the case of psychometric instruments of general ability (and individually administered achievement tests), Specific tests will be administered by qualified guidance counsellors or teachers of special education with appropriate qualifications. Such personnel should engage in ongoing training and continuing professional development.

Considerations regarding administration for individual student needs

Exemption from the study of Irish

There are certain circumstances whereby an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a student enrolled in a recognised English-medium primary or post primary school. The authority to grant an exemption has been delegated to school management. Circulars 0054/22 (primary) and 0055/22 post primary together with application forms, guidelines, checklists and frequently asked questions are available on the website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/> Guidance on test selection in relation to exemptions from the study of Irish is also available on the website at the link above. 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 2.2.2 of the Circulars (FAQ 12 on the website at the link above provides further details)

For students with significant literacy needs, such as those where there are concerns that literacy attainments remain, despite intervention, at/below the 10th percentile, the school will most likely be providing support through the SET. These teachers undertake assessment and identification of need as part of the development of Student Support Plans as set out in the NEPS Model of Service and in the document: Special Educational Needs - a continuum of support. The granting of an Irish exemption emerges from this process. Therefore the school will already have evidence on an individual's Student Support file to support the application. The granting of an exemption from the study of Irish should not be a key factor in planning for the provision of special education teaching or testing for a student.

Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE).

The scheme provides accommodations for candidates with a variety of complex special educational needs including learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioral or other needs. Details of tests that are acceptable for RACE will be set out in the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations - Instructions for Schools, which is published annually by the SEC. These tests are taken from the list of assessment instruments and web-resources approved for the use in Guidance and/or SET contexts. It is published by the Department of Education and is governed by this circular letter. Schools should ensure that the versions of tests in use are the most up-to-date and appropriate for administering to the specific student cohort. For the purpose of RACE applications schools are advised to await updates and closing dates from the SEC and where necessary adapt the timing of testing, if required.

In addition, as highlighted by NEPS, schools and teachers should be aware of the particular difficulties associated with the assessment of children whose home culture is markedly different from the group on whom the test is standardised. This may be a factor and should be considered when considering results for Traveller children or children who are newly arrived from cultures outside of the western world.

Relevant stakeholders, including (Visiting teacher, parent/guardian/care-giver, SET

	teacher, Guidance Teacher) should be consulted regarding whether testing is appropriate for certain students due to literacy attainment levels, EAL, Cognitive ability, home culture.
Provision of Feedback	When interpreting test scores we carefully consider the impact of academic engagement and performance and wellbeing on the students' performance. In line with the school's policy, we aim that appropriate, accurate and constructive feedback is provided in a timely fashion to students and parents by appropriately qualified personnel, for example, guidance counsellors, SET and other suitably qualified teachers. Appropriate, accurate and constructive feedback will be provided in a timely manner to students and parent/guardian/care-giver by appropriately qualified personnel, (guidance counsellors or other suitably qualified teachers.) For many students a written report is sufficient ,however for some students individual meetings are necessary to ensure the feedback is provided in a manner appropriate to their needs. Students are provided with the opportunity to explore their assessment results in the context of the educational option available to them in the school and to inform their future educational and vocational development, career choices and decision making. Students and parent/guardian/care-givers are made aware of the limitations of the results of standardised tests during this discussion and the importance of other factors including the students' interests, motivation, talents and experiences, and information available from other sources.
Interpretation of Assessment Results.	When planning interventions to meet a student's needs, we are aware that the results of any one standardised test should not be used in isolation, but rather in conjunction with other information available on the student. Neither should the results of any one test be used as baseline data for predicting a student's future achievements, or for solely informing decisions regarding the provision of interventions or targets within learning plans for students. 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. Decisions regarding the use of assessment instruments and the sharing and interpretation of assessment data should always be made in accordance with the individual schools' policies on assessment, SEN and data protection, and in accordance with best practice on test administration and usage. In line with a whole-school approach and as part of our assessment policy regarding standardised testing and data protection, the results of standardised tests, in conjunction with other related information, may be shared with relevant members of school staff as appropriate. 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 and CAMHS. In line with Data Protection / Data Sharing responsibilities when sharing data with external bodies, we are mindful of the limitations of standardised tests when sharing results and the potential for students to acquire a label based on these results. Results are presented accurately and sensitively and in a way that is clearly understood by the receiving party. Care is taken to ensure that the difference between standardised ability and achievement tests is understood and the limitations of such tests have been explained. Tracking, recording and reviewing progress Provision for students with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs planning target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative approach to support. Student Support Plan We use a Student Support Plan (SSP) to plan interventions and to track a students pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to students in line with their level of need. Our Student Support Plan is based on the NEPS template. These are stored in the SEN Office in a locked cabinet. Relevant information is available for staff to access via Compass. Consent is sought from parent/guardian/care-giver and student is informed in advance of assessments. Results are shared with parent/guardian/care-giver via email/phone call as appropriate, students will receive results face to face as appropriate.
General DATA Protection Regulation (GDPR)	In using assessment instruments, school management and the appropriately qualified teachers should pay due attention to the requirements of current legislation, particularly in relation to GDPR. There will be full compliance with all requirements of current GDPR legislation, cognisant of GDPR data processing and retention requirements, for example, ensuring compliance in relation to who controls and has access to the data, the purposes for which this data is used, the retention of the data and where the data is stored i.e. within or outside the EU. The school will ensure that the information, in line with data protection requirements, is kept secure with access confined to designated school staff. In the case of electronic information this will be kept secure through password protection. Only designated school staff will have access to this password. The school will retain the information until seven years after the student has left school. This is in line with data protection requirements. In order to ensure that each student receives an education that best supports their development, the information and results may be shared with the student's teachers in accordance with established test practice. This is to ensure that teaching approaches can be adapted to accommodate the different learning needs and styles of students. In addition, the guidance counsellor and the learning support teacher will have access to the information.
Storing of	The school is aware of obligations relating to access, retention and processing data

Assessment Data	under the Freedom of Information Act 1997, the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2013, associated regulations, and the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003, and GDPR (2018). There will be full compliance with all requirements of current GDPR legislation cognisant of GDPR data processing and retention requirements, for example, ensuring compliance in relation to who controls and has access to the data, the purposes for which this data is used, the retention of the data and where the data is stored i.e. within or outside the EU.
Reasonable accommodation at the certificate Examinations (RACE)	The underlying principles of the certificate examination accommodations scheme put in place by the Department of Education and operated by the SEC are similar to those that underpin arrangements in other jurisdictions with broadly similar disability rights legislation to that of Ireland. All such schemes focus on the need to remove barriers to accessing the examinations, while retaining the need to assess the same underlying skills and competencies as are assessed for all other candidates, and to apply the same standards of achievement as apply to all other candidates. The scheme provides accommodations for candidates with a variety of complex special educational needs including learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioral or other needs. Details of tests that are acceptable for RACE will be set out in the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations - Instructions for Schools, which is published annually by the SEC. These tests are taken from the list of assessment instruments and web-resources approved for the use in Guidance and/or SET contexts. It is published by the Department of Education and is governed by this circular letter. Schools should ensure that the versions of tests in use are the most up-to-date and appropriate for administering to the specific student cohort. For the purpose of RACE applications schools are advised to await updates and closing dates from the SEC and where necessary adapt the timing of testing, if required. From 2019, it is no longer necessary to administer cognitive ability assessments for the purpose of RACE. We administer: ● WIAT III T - targeted literacy test ● DASH - Handwriting speed attainment test ● Error analysis of student reading and written texts ● Reading rate RACE Guidelines are subject to change. Up to date information of RACE may be found at https://www.examinations.ie
Other information	

Appendix

Table of Assessment instruments.

Assessment	Test and components	Administration	Purpose	How
Cat4	Cognitive Achievement Test	Senior Management Team School Liaison Officer In consultation with Guidance and SET		Approved circular 58/2019
Ppad-E	Post-Primary Assessment & Diagnostic - English <u>Diagnostic & Screening</u> 1. Word Reading 2. Spelling 3. Reading comprehension 4. Writing samples 5. Reading speed	When September - November of First Year Administrator First Year SET Teacher, supported by English teachers	Converts raw scores to standard scores and generate interpretation and intervention reports Report provides evidence based SET interventions and in-class approaches for each students' profile Developed by NEPS & ERC	Approved circular 58/2019 Standardised among the First Year students of Ireland Paper based test which is largely group administered, except for the word reading test Test takes approximately 60-70 minutes
Malt 12, 13, 14 Mathematics assessment for Learning and Teaching.	<u>Diagnostic marking</u> To analyse individual performance by strand.: 1 Number 2 Algebra 3 Geometry & Measures 4 Statistics	First Term Administrator SET Maths teacher	Use it to track progress from year to year in JC. Use it to identify strengths and weaknesses. Norm -referenced, age standardised scores. Gives a personalised performance	Currently have paper based version. <u>Duration</u> 45 minutes

			map`.	
NGRT	<u>Screening</u> New Group Reading Test Standardised assessment to measure reading skills and sentence completion	1st year Administrator SET	Provides information about decoding with some element of comprehension allowing us to identify where difficulties lie. Students' reading ability can be benchmarked using the Standardised Age Score (SAS).	Approved circular 58/2019 All 1st year classes complete with their class group digitally. Students use earphones to listen to instructions and enter the test based on their chronological age. Depending on their score, they move on to appropriate phonics-based tasks or to the passage comprehension section. Takes approx 50 minutes
WIAT-III	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test third UK edition for Teachers Subtests administered Word Reading Reading Comprehension Spelling	When From Jan Second Year And April of 5th year For RACE As required for individual student Assessment Of Need Irish Exemption Administrator SET Teachers	Provides normed assessment in untimed single word accuracy, reading comprehension, reading speed and single word spelling. Race – Reasonable Accommodation in State Exams Individual assessment of need	Approved circular 58/2019 Pen and Paper test Administered individually by SEN teacher trained in Psychometric Testing UK Normed Age 4-17+

