

Your child and standardised testing

During your child's time in primary school he/she will complete standardised tests in English reading and in Maths. This leaflet explains what standardised tests are and how they can help your child's learning.

What is a standardised test?

We are all familiar with the idea of tests in school. No doubt you are well aware of the regular end of week tests such as the spelling or tables test prepared by the teacher. A standardised test is another kind of test. It is used to measure a child's achievement in **English reading** and **maths** compared to other children throughout the country **at the same class level or age level**. The English reading test gives information about how well your child can understand what he/she has read. This test does not gather information on your child's written or spoken English. The maths test finds out how well your child can use numbers for different purposes and solve maths problems. Schools choose from a number of standardised tests which have been developed for use in primary schools in Ireland and our school currently uses the Sigma-T and Micra-T tests or the Drumcondra tests. These tests are based on the curriculum. There are different levels of the tests so, for example, the test your child does in first/second class will relate to your child's age and the curriculum for that class level.

Are standardised tests the same as intelligence tests?

No. Standardised tests are not intelligence tests. The main purposes of using standardised tests are to help the teacher plan your child's learning, and to inform you about how well your child is doing in English reading and maths. When the test scores are used alongside other information gathered by the teacher through observing your child at work, talking with him/her and looking at his/her work, they show how your child is getting on in English reading and maths, and help the teacher to identify your child's strengths and needs.

What is a standardised test?

Standardised tests are used to:

- ✓ report to you as a parent on your child's achievement in English reading and maths
- ✓ help to find out if your child has learning difficulties in English reading and maths so that the school can put appropriate supports in place
- ✓ help to find out if your child is a high achiever in English reading and maths so that appropriate learning experiences can be provided for him/her
- ✓ help your child's teacher plan for further learning across the curriculum because your child's achievement in English reading and maths is important for all his/her learning.

When are standardised tests carried out?

Our school uses standardised tests towards the end of the school year from first to sixth class.

Do all children take standardized tests?

A small number of children might not take the tests. For example, if your child's first language is not English, the teacher may decide that he/she should not take the English reading test. Your child may, however, take the maths test. If your child has a learning or physical disability, the teacher may decide not to give the test but to use a different way to check on your child's progress.

Should I help my child prepare for standardised tests?

No. Standardised tests are one source of information about your child's achievement in English reading and maths. The teacher gathers information about your child's learning all the time. Your child will take the standardised tests on a regular school day as part of his/her daily work in the classroom. Indeed, your child may not even realise he/she has taken the tests!

How will I know how my child has done on the standardised tests?

Your child's class teacher will share the test results with you, typically at a parent/teacher meeting but also in the end of year school report.

How will I know what the test scores mean?

You will be familiar with hearing your child say he/she got 62% in a maths test or 9 out of 15 in a spelling test. Standardised tests generally use other types of scores. Our school has decided to tell you how your child did in the test using a **STen (standard ten) score** and **Percentile score**.

Understanding scores

STen scores go from 1 to 10. The table below describes what the different STen & Percentile scores tell you about your child's achievement in English reading and maths. If your child's STen score is 5 or 6, you will know that his/her performance on the test is average. About one third of children in Ireland have STen scores in this band. You can see from the table below that there are also STen scores above and below the average. As with other tests your child does in school, his/her result on a standardised test can be affected by how he/she feels on the test day or by worry or excitement about a home or school event. This means that each test result is **an indication** of your child's achievement in English reading and maths. You play an important role in encouraging and supporting your child no matter what he/she scores on the test.

STen Score	Percentile Score	Meaning	Proportion of pupils who get this score
8-10	86 - 99	Well above average	1/6
7	70 - 84	Above average	1/6
5-6	32 - 68	Average	1/3
4	16 - 30	Below average	1/6
1-3	1 - 14	Well below average	1/6

If my child's score is low, what does this tell me?

A STen score of 1, 2 or 3 suggests that your child **may** have difficulties in English reading or maths. One test score by itself does not give a complete picture of your child's learning in English reading or maths. The teacher might decide to gather more information about your child from other tests, as well as his/her observations in class. You too will have additional information from helping your child with homework, and hearing him/her talking about school work. The teacher may ask a colleague called the **learning support** teacher to look at your child's test scores and other assessment information. They may decide that your child would benefit from extra support with reading or maths. This extra support may be given by the learning support teacher.

If my child's score is high, what does this tell me?

A high score on the test **may** suggest that your child is a high achiever in English reading or maths. As with low scores, one high score is not enough to confirm this. Your child's teacher will use information from other classroom assessments to understand more clearly how well your child is doing in English reading and maths.

Should I share the score with my child?

You know your child best. No matter what the score is, you play an important role in encouraging your child to do his/her best, and in helping your child with English reading and maths. If the score is low and your child needs extra help with English reading or maths, it may be helpful to talk to him/her about this and to see the help in a positive way. Ultimately, this support can help your child enjoy school and make the most of the many opportunities to learn created by you and by your child's teachers.