



Standardised Tests & Results

A Chairde,

During May, standardised tests will be carried out in Scoil Barra Naofa with all pupils from 1st to 6th Classes in **English Reading, Spelling and Numeracy**. 6th Class will also do a standardised test in Gaeilge (Irish).

For 2nd, 4th and 6th Class pupils, the DES requires that results **must be reported** to parents. Although it is not a requirement by the DES, SBN also reports the results of standardised tests carried out in other classes. Traditionally this was done through the Annual end of year Report Card, but **we will use Aladdin Connect to report Standardised Test results to parents** moving forward.

New Tests in 2019

Standardised tests are straightforward in many ways but **interpreting them can cause confusion for parents**. Standardised Tests are independently set and marked and schools across the country buy them in. The best known ones are the Drumcondra Tests and Micra T/Sigma.

In May 2019 we will use new, up-to-date tests from the ERC (Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra), which were standardised in 2018 and reflect recent changes in performance on English and Maths nationally. Tests are also for the first time available online. We plan for **3rd Class** to do much of their testing online this year.

Why were the tests redeveloped?

- The tests were redeveloped as research suggested that tests generally get easier over time, as familiarity with content increases.
- There have also been national improvements in achievement levels, which have meant that results in schools and nationally, have been heavily skewed in recent years, compared with test norms.

What does that mean for your child?

As was the case for most schools in the country, over the last number of years our test results in Scoil Barra Naofa, would have been heavily skewed compared with test norms. As this year we will be testing using the new tests (standardised in 2018), we would expect that the results will be more in line with test norms.

For some children this may mean their result in their English & Maths standardised test (compared with previous years) may be significantly lower, or indeed significantly higher. This should not be a cause for alarm for parents.

It is important to remember that by comparing to last year or previous results, you are **NOT comparing like with like** – these are NEW tests, with NEW standardised norms. *Please see the attached letter from the ERC, which explains in further detail the changes.*

Please remember that as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) states, Standardised Tests **are NOT intelligence tests and** their main purpose is to help a teacher identify strengths and weaknesses in individual pupils and to offer some guidance to parents. Standardised tests are only one of a number of ways that we monitor and measure a child's progress.

They are not an “end of year” test (in some schools they are carried out in Autumn). Standardised tests are not designed as to simply test topics covered by curriculum of a class level. Particularly in Maths, tests can contain questions which might be more suitable to a lower or a higher class level.

Results can be useful references for teachers and can be used to help identify if a child has a learning difficulty or, indeed, if a child is a high achiever. A teacher can then plan a learning path for individual pupils accordingly. A standardised test result may highlight an area that a child ordinarily seems to be comfortable with in in class and/or at home – and may need to be monitored further in that area. **In summary, standardised tests are only one of a wide range of assessment tools used by teachers and results should not be interpreted in isolation.**

Procedures for Testing

The ‘standard’ procedure for administering and correcting the tests is clearly outlined and must be adhered to by any school that administers that test. Teachers do not prepare children for the test - they must not and should not ‘teach with the test in mind’, as this would distort the results.

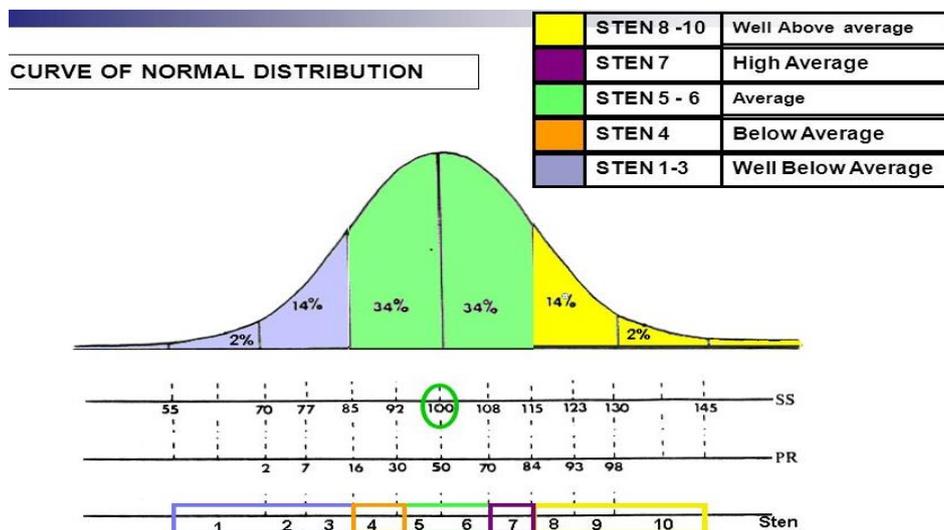
The ‘standard’ manner in which a test is scored must be adhered to by the correcting teacher. Results may be shared with parents, but schools should not share the corrected test booklet with pupils or parents. The corrected test booklet is kept securely on file for 12 months, after which it is securely destroyed. Test results are recorded in a child’s file, which in accordance with Data Protection Legislation, schools must store securely until a child is 26 years of age.

Understanding results – STens & Standard Scores

A standardised test differs from traditional tests, which measure how many items a child gets right or wrong, e.g., 7 out of 10. Standardised tests use two scoring systems, either a percentile rank or a STen score.

In SBN we report the STen scores - they are expressed in a scale of 1-10. Unlike traditional tests, a score of 6 does not mean that a child gave incorrect answers to 4 out of 10 questions. It means that the child's performance in the test was better than 5 out of 10 other children of that age in the country.

- A STen score of **5 or 6 is regarded as average** and it should be achieved by about **one-third** of children in Ireland
- A 7 is a high average, achieved by about one-sixth of pupils
- An 8-10 is well above average and also achieved by about one-sixth of pupils.
- One sixth of children score a low average 4
- Another one sixth score 1-3, which is rated well below average.



A score of 1-3 *may* indicate difficulties in Reading, Maths or Spellings and, in such situations, a support teacher may provide extra support to the individual child. If your child's teacher feels that your child's results suggest a concern in an area, and warrants further discussion with you, the class teacher will already have been in contact with you to discuss this.

Like all other tests, a child's performance on any given day can be affected by a range of factors, such as feeling unwell. Whether a score is high or low, one score would not necessarily confirm a child's achievement level. **A child's score will naturally fluctuate from year to year.**

As well as reporting the outcomes to parents, since 2012 schools are also required to send them on to the Department of Education, which uses the data to monitor national standards.

Children & their Test Results

At the end of May, we will be releasing the results of the Standardised Tests through Aladdin Connect. **It is up to you, as a parent to decide if you wish to discuss the exact result with your child.**

The school would **STRONGLY** advise that you only discuss results in general terms with pupils – rather than giving them a numeric value. Comments such as “You should be very proud of your results” and “Your hard work paid off” might be more appropriate with young children, than overly (and possibly incorrectly) analysing.

You must consider if it will cause undue worry or stress to your child to share a score every year – they may worry about ‘going up’ or ‘going down’ from year to year, when it is perfectly natural for results to do this.

Particularly this year with the use of the new tests, recently standardised, there may be a significant change in results (in either direction), it may be very disheartening to children who do not understand the standardised nature of these types of tests.

They may interpret the results as 7/10, which is not the case, or may be unduly excited or disappointed by a result. It is up to you, as a parent, to decide how much information, if any to share with your child.

If you do choose to share the results with your child, **please remind them to keep the results to themselves, and not to share them with their classmates.** Test results should NOT be a topic of conversation particularly in the Senior Classes, as it can cause a lot of undue pressure for children.

No matter the results, they have all worked hard across the year, and no doubt did their best and should be praised for doing so.

Communicating with Teachers

If you have any concerns or questions, about the new tests / testing procedures, or your child's standardised test results once they are received, please do not hesitate to contact the class teacher, or myself to discuss further.

Mise le meas,

Ciara Ní Bhuaigh & Foireann na Scoile