

National Reading and Numeracy Tests

**Understanding the outcomes –
information for practitioners**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Helping parents/carers to understand outcomes from the National Reading and Numeracy Tests

As part of the national reading and numeracy testing programme, the test outcomes for individual learners are provided to parents/carers in the form of a pupil result sheet for each of the tests taken. Many parents/carers will be unfamiliar with interpreting these types of test results but it is very important that they are able to understand the information given to them about their child and what it means for their learning. This year, the final page in the pupil results sheet has notes to explain the presentation of results.

This guidance highlights some key points that may be helpful to practitioners when discussing test outcomes with parents/carers. It is structured around questions that parents/carers may have. You may also find it useful to refer to the Welsh Government's guide *Reading and Numeracy Tests in Wales: Information for parents/carers Years 2–9* at <http://learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/reading-and-numeracy-tests-information-for-parents-carers/?lang=en>

What are the national tests for?

The national tests give every school in Wales the same information on reading and numeracy skills for all their learners. Using common tests across all schools means that it will be possible to get a picture of achievement in reading and numeracy across Wales.

The tests are **not** a replacement for other types of assessment used in school across the whole curriculum. The results from the tests simply add to the information that schools and teachers already have about achievement in reading and numeracy from their work with learners every day in the classroom.

What is the difference between a teacher assessment judgement and a test result?

Teacher assessment judgements are built up from a large evidence base over time. They can take account of skills demonstrated through observation, oral work, class discussion, extended tasks and projects and during group work, for example. A test result reflects the skills demonstrated through written responses to questions on a given occasion when all learners take the tests under the same conditions. Both types of assessment provide useful information but it is different information.

My child's test result seems to contradict the teacher assessment judgement – what does this mean?

Assessments can give contradictory results for several reasons and need to be interpreted carefully. Using outcomes from different assessments can prompt

important questions and help to get a clearer picture of strengths and areas for improvement.

If a test result suggests that a learner is demonstrating skills that they do not show during classroom work, then it may be that they need more encouragement to contribute with confidence to oral work and class discussion. If a test result suggests that a learner has not demonstrated all the skills they show in the classroom context, then this might be because the test included questions on topics where their learning is not fully secure or that they do not always show their best work through written responses. All forms of assessment have limitations and that is why best assessment practice draws on a range of different assessment opportunities, including formal tests.

How can a test result help to show where my child needs to improve?

The individual questions in all the National Reading and Numeracy Tests are linked to the expectation statements in the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). The LNF sets out annual expected outcomes for literacy and numeracy. Because the tests are marked in school, teachers can see where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding and identify what the next learning priorities should be both for individuals and in class groups. (Your school may already be using the diagnostic tools for the reading and numeracy tests published on Learning Wales at <http://learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/national-reading-and-numeracy-tests-diagnostic-support-tools-2014/?lang=en>).

What does the standardised score tell me?

(It may be helpful to refer parents/carers to *Reading and Numeracy Tests in Wales: Information for parents/carers Years 2–9* at <http://learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/reading-and-numeracy-tests-information-for-parents-carers/?lang=en> which has an explanation of standardised scores.)

The standardised score from each of the national tests shows how well an individual learner did on the test compared to other learners of the same age taking the test. Standardised scores are commonly used with tests intended to measure the ability of large groups of individuals. This is because just knowing the number or percentage of correct marks on a test paper is not enough to give a full picture of how well a learner or a group of learners has done in their test. The test results from all schools are analysed to prepare standardised score scales so that meaningful comparisons between individuals and groups can be made. For each test the average score is set to be equal to a standardised score of 100 and about two-thirds of all learners taking the test would then be expected to have a standardised score between 85 and 115. So a standardised score of less than 85 might suggest that a learner may be experiencing some difficulty with the reading or numeracy skills tested, and a score

greater than 115 might suggest that a learner is showing reading or numeracy skills that are well developed for their age.

Each test is specifically designed for a particular age group and focuses on the range of skills in reading and numeracy that would be expected for that age group; no test can assess an unlimited range of ability. This means that for learners working at the extreme ends of the ability range in their year group, standardised scores from the tests cannot really measure the limit of their skills. For example, learners who are developing reading skills much more slowly than others in their year group might have a standardised score of 'less than 70'. What this really means is that this test alone cannot provide enough information about their skills in reading or areas where improvement is needed. Parents/carers might wish to know what other information the schools can use to inform learning and teaching for these learners so that their needs can be met.

In the same way, learners achieving very highly on the test can only be given a standardised score that is 'more than' the maximum score available for the test; we know that they have done very well on this test but we cannot measure how well they might have done if the questions on the test had allowed them to perform to the absolute limit of their ability. It might help to think of this in terms of, for example, giving a university student a test designed to measure emerging reading skills. Of course, we might expect that the student would obtain full marks but this would not tell us anything about their ability to read or analyse complex texts. Parents/carers might wish to know what other information schools can use to inform learning and teaching for these learners so that they can be confident that they will be sufficiently challenged in future.

Should the results of the numeracy (procedural) and numeracy (reasoning) test be compared?

The numeracy (reasoning) tests are new and innovative, and learners' results in these tests may differ from their results in the numeracy (procedural) tests. It is important for parents/carers to understand that the tests focus on different skills. The procedural test measures skills in number, measuring and data skills; the reasoning tests measure how well learners can use what they know to solve everyday problems.

Parents/carers might wish to know how their child is performing in reasoning activities within the classroom or how best to support their child in developing these skills.

Why is there no results sheet for one of the tests?

A results sheet should be provided for every test taken by a learner. Where a learner was absent during the test period and unable to take one or more tests, there will be no result sheet. If a decision has been taken in schools that a learner should be

disapplied from taking a particular test because they would be unable to access it, then there will be no results sheet. (Please note though that in line with Welsh Government policy on inclusion, both absent and disapplied learners will be assigned a standardised score of less than 70 for reporting purposes in the National Data Collection.)

My child has achieved the maximum standardised score possible – do the tests ‘set a ceiling’ on scores?

Like any test, the National Reading and Numeracy Tests are specified to assess a particular ability range. Essentially, they are designed to measure the skills in reading or numeracy that would be expected across the year group or year groups nominated for each test. If an individual learner is performing at the top of the ability range, their test result cannot accurately determine the limit of their reading or numeracy ability and we can only say that their standardised score is more than the maximum value measured by that test. This does not, however, mean that their progress in reading or numeracy cannot be tracked over time, just that more information than their test scores will be needed to provide a true picture of the progress they are making. Parents/carers may wish to know about any steps being taken to provide their child with more challenging tasks and/or texts.

Should I compare my child’s standardised scores from one year to the next?

Essentially, a standardised score is a way of comparing one learner’s performance on a test to the performance of other learners of the same age. So if you compare standardised scores from one year to the next you may be able to see that in one year a learner’s score shows that their performance was similar to most learners of the same age (85–115) and maybe in the next year their performance was a little better than for other learners of the same age (maybe 120). However, if the standardised score remains the same this does not mean that the learner is making no progress. Other learners of the same age may have made progress to a similar extent and so the learner’s performance would still be in line with that of other learners..

My child’s standardised score for the reading test has gone down from last year

Where parents/carers have compared their child’s reading test standardised score in the 2013 pupil results sheet to the standardised score in their 2014 learner results sheet it may, in some circumstances show a drop in their score from 2013. As we have used a different and improved model for calculating the standardised scores for the 2014 reading tests parents/carers should not compare this year’s standardised score in the reading test to last year’s standardised score in the reading test.

Why are progress scores not included on the result sheets?

Progress score scales will allow us to chart the development of learners' reading and numeracy skills. They are innovative and have never before been used across such a wide age range.

Creating a progress score scale for all learners from Years 2 to 9 is taking longer than expected and so for this year you will receive a standardised score only.

