

**Grange Post Primary School Diagnostic Assessment Policy**

Mission Statement

Grange Post Primary School is the partnership of staff, students and parents enabling each student to achieve his or her full potential.

We aim to inspire a Love of Learning in all our students, irrespective of ability and through personable and enthusiastic encouragement to lead all on onto develop as caring, respectful individuals in a challenging world.

Mission Statement – Special Educational Needs Department

The Special Educational Needs Department at Grange Post Primary School will strive to give all students an opportunity to acquire and develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, competence and attitudes necessary to contribute to a personal and family environment conducive to human development, health, leisure, security and happiness.

To contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, expressive, and intellectual, for personal and home life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure.

To enable them to take their place in the world with the knowledge and ethical attitudes which are embedded in the Mission Statement of our school.

# Assessment

Educational Assessment and diagnosis of all students, using formal and informal methods in conjunction with information available from other sources during the first half term each year is important to identify students with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

# Identification of needs

Under the terms of the Circular Letter 0014/2017, “Schools will deploy resources based on each students’ individual learning needs” (Circular Letter 0014/2017, p. 14). With this in mind, and seeking to ensure that resources are deployed effectively and efficiently, it is required that the school identifies the learning needs of all students once they have enrolled in the school. Upon enrolment in the school, the school will seek to gather data from a variety of sources to best identify the learning needs of students. This data gathering will include:

* Requesting documentation (e.g. educational passports, educational assessment report) from the student’s parents upon enrolment.
* Discussion with the student and their parents/guardians after they have enrolled.
* Requesting assessment records, educational passports and other essential information from the Primary School.
* Requesting, where necessary, any documentation pertaining to an Irish exemption that the student has been granted while in the primary school/previous schools.
* Discussion with the student’s primary school teacher(s) SET when the student is transitioning from Primary School.
* Discussion with other relevant individuals or bodies whom have previously engaged with the student in relation to their learning needs. (e.g. Educational Psychologist, NEPS, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist and Visiting Teachers for the deaf and blind)
* Diagnostic Assessment (where deemed relevant as set out below)
* Additional sources of information may be required and permission from the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be sought if required to access such information.

Following enrolment in the school students will need to be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis through:

* Data gathering through results and attainment analysis
* Regular discussion with student and parent(s)/guardian(s)
* Year Head referrals
* Response to emerging circumstance that may occur
* Ongoing Screening Assessments, as appropriate
* Further Diagnostic Assessments, as appropriate

# Screening Assessments

All students complete a standardised Cognitive Assessment Test IV (CAT4) during their first term in the school. This test is conducted by the Guidance Counsellor. Results are made available to the Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, SEN Department and to the student’s teachers as the student moves through the school. The results are also shared with parents and they are given a detailed report with the results. The school uses assessments that have been approved by circulars from the Department of Education and Skills (see <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/e86f9-advice-on-the-use-of-assessment-instrumentstests-for-guidance-or-for-additional-and-special-educational-needs-sen-in-post-primary-schools/>).

# THE CAT4 Test

CAT4 is the new edition of GL Assessments well established Cognitive Abilities Test, Ireland’s most widely used test of reasoning abilities for pupils aged 7 to 17+ years, CAT4 Irish Edition has been fully standardised for Ireland from ages 10:06 to 17+ years on a sample of 6,500 pupils, providing accurate, up-to-date data.

**Reasons for using CAT4 test**

* Identify gifted and talented students and those that may be coasting in class.
* Identify student’s that are under-achieving and help setting targets for future attainment.
* Identify a student’s, weaknesses and learning preferences, providing accurate and reliable information that is essential for personalised learning and goal setting.
* Identifies children with special educational needs.
* Easily highlights any inconsistencies between attainment and ability.

# Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic Assessments are used in circumstances where screening assessments have identified that a student may have a difficulty with a specific area, such as literacy or numeracy. The purpose of the diagnostic assessment is to identify the learning needs of a student to enable an appropriate programme of interventions to be established and implemented. These assessments are not used to diagnose students with any condition and should not be mistaken for a diagnosis made by external /bodies/professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Psychiatrists, General Practitioners, Consultants or any other qualified healthcare personnel.

The New Group Reading Test (NGRT), the Wide Range Achievement Test V (WRAT5) and the Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH) may be used by the school as diagnostic assessment tools.

# New Group Reading Test (NGRT)

The New Group Reading Test (NGRT) is a screening / monitoring reading test which includes sentence completion and passage comprehension at each level. This group administered tests takes about 30 minutes and can be administered by a teacher or SET. The NGRT helps identify possible learning disabilities in literacy.

# Wide Range Achievement Test V (WRAT5)

The Wide Range Achievement Test 5 (WRAT5) is an achievement test, which measures an individual’s ability to read words, comprehend sentences, spell and compute solutions to maths problems. The WRAT5 helps identify possible learning disabilities.

# Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH)

We may also use the Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH) for first year screening purposes on some, or all, students who assess difficulties with speed of writing. This test may play a role in identifying children 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.

In Grange Post Primary School, the WRAT5 and/or NGRT are used in conjunction with the CAT4 for all first years in the first school term (for more detailed information see Appendix 1 below).

Other assessment tools may be used for diagnostic purposes, as appropriate (see Appendix 1). Other diagnostic assessment used in the school are in accordance with the yearly Department of Education circulars which provide “Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or for additional and Special Educational Needs (SEN) in post-primary schools” (see <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/e86f9-advice-on-the-use-of-assessment-instrumentstests-for-guidance-or-for-additional-and-special-educational-needs-sen-in-post-primary-schools/>).

Diagnostic assessment sometimes may involve the school recommending a referral to external agencies, where appropriate. In such cases, the school will communicate with the student’s parents/guardians and advise parents/guardians of the data that has been gathered up to that point.

# DAT – Differential Aptitude Test

In Grange Post Primary School, the DATS are conducted with third year students. These tests were developed in the US, but have been standardised for use in Irish schools. The DATs are designed for use in educational and vocational guidance and are used by school counsellors, personnel officers, psychologists and all persons concerned with assessing the intellectual characteristics and educational or vocational aptitude of adolescents. The tests are suitable for pre-Junior Cert Certificate to Leaving Certificate Students.

They are group-administered tests of cognitive ability, divided into eight sub-tests. The subtests are Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Ability, Clerical Speed and Accuracy, Abstract Reasoning, Mechanical Reasoning, Space Relations, Spelling and Language Usage.

The DAT was standardised on over 10,000 students attending Irish Post Primary schools. A combined Verbal Reasoning and Numerical score can be used as an index of scholastic ability.

Other career guidance related information on testing is outlined in Appendix 1.

# When will the tests be administered

**First Year**

All first year students in the first term (September/October) of the school year will be tested with the CAT4 and may be tested with the NGRT, WRAT4 and/or DASH tests. The Principal, SEN team and Guidance Counsellor will review the scores. Some students may be identified for further assessment or a referral to NEPs.

Testing for Irish exemptions may be undertaken after first year (see Appendix 1).

**3rd Year**

For Reasonable Accommodations, students will be tested in either 2nd or 3rd year (see Appendix 1).

All third year students will be assessed with the DATs at the end of the first school term (November). The DAT test is a useful resource for students who are choosing their 5th year subjects.

**Senior Cycle**

From this academic year (2020/2021) on the Guidance Counsellor will complete the CAT4 with students who are going into 5th year.

Assessments for DARE will also be conducted in 5th/ 6th year.

DATS and other career guidance interest tests may also be undertaken in senior cycle (see Appendix 1).

# Sharing of results with teachers

When the test results become available:

* The SEN Team and the Guidance Counsellor will meet to identify students with particular needs based on their test scores.
* A report is either sent home to parents or discussed with parents at the parent-teacher meetings with the SEN Coordinator.
* The SEN Team draws up personal Pupil Plans and Student Support Files with parents and school management.
* Feedback is provided to staff through a staff meeting. Teachers can also speak to the SEN Team and Guidance Counsellor in relation to individual students.

# Reasonable Accommodations in the State Exams (RACE)

Students who are eligible to apply for RACE will undergo a number of school based assessments as laid out by the Department of Education. Often these include, testing elements from the WRAT5 and DASH. In accordance with the guidelines, the Department of Education may issue a student with a reader, reader assistance, spelling and grammar waiver, the use of technology or a scribe (see Appendix 1).

**Confidentiality**

All test results are dealt with in a confidential and sensitive manner. (see confidentiality policy) (**In draft)** All test results are sent to parents and/or discussed with them at a parent-teacher meeting.

When appropriate, this information may be shared with appropriate personnel, such as School Psychologist or Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO).

**Storage**

Paperwork relating to SEN Testing is kept in the SEN office in a locked filing cabinet. Teachers may request access to the cabinet through the SEN Team.

# Informal testing/ Information gathering

The following informal testing can be done within the SE room or by mainstream teachers in their classes and referred back to the SEN Team.

* Formal and informal discussions with parents
* Informal student interview (may be part of Student Support information gathering)
* Observation by class teachers using Formative Assessment, i,e.
* Regular classwork
* Study and home habits
* Term tests
* Attitudes and behaviour
* School adjustment
* SEN teacher error analysis in
* Reading skills
* Comprehension
* Writing
* Spelling
* Penmanship
* Oral skills
* Auditory skills
* Observing participation in school and extra-curricular activities
* Progress recorded, e.g. behaviours, class and term tests, attendance.
* Student Support Files, including Student Support Plans, Personal Pupil Plans, and Groups Education Plans are updated regularly.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson of Board of Management**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

Appendix 1



Dear Parent/ Guardian,

As part of the school’s ongoing commitment to providing for your son/ daughter’s educational needs it will be necessary to carry out standardised attainment, ability and aptitude tests during your child’s schooling at Grange Post Primary School.

These standardised tests help to monitor progress and involve comparing your son/daughter’s scores to those obtained by the average pupil of the same age.

Depending on the test and the purpose of the test, testing may be conducted individually or in a group by a subject teacher, guidance counsellor or Special Needs Teacher (SET).

Please refer to the list of tests and their purpose below.

**Standardised Tests**

The details of the tests we use here at Grange Post-Primary from 1st-6th year are outlined below.

There are three main types of tests:

* **Tests of General Ability** can be used to gain an understanding of the student’s general intellectual or cognitive ability, (e.g. Cognitive Abilities Test, fourth edition (CAT 4)).
* **Achievement Tests** are designed to measure a person's level of skill, accomplishment, or knowledge in a specific area. Here, at Grange Post-Primary we may use a combination of the following: New Group Reading Test (NGRT), Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5), Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH)
* **An Aptitude Test** is an assessment used to determine a candidate's cognitive ability or personality. They're extremely common in job assessments as they can be used to predict the likelihood of a candidate's success in a job role. We use Differential Aptitude Tests for Schools (DATS).
* Other tests may include career interest tests, these are generally undertaken in senior cycle.

**1st Year Screening: CAT4, NGRT, WRAT5, DASH**

In first year, it is best practice that all students in Irish post primary schools are screened using achievement tests (e.g. WRAT5, NGRT, DASH) and ability tests (e.g. CAT4) to determine whether they need more, less or the same learning supports they had received in primary school.

These screening tests usually take place in September, in groups and individually, during school time. Once the tests have been completed and scores have been calculated, results will be posted to parents/guardians.

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| **Ability test:**   * The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) is a diagnostic 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. The guidance counsellor administers the test in a group setting.   Tasks involve thinking about shapes and patterns (Non-Verbal Reasoning), words (Verbal Reasoning), numbers (Quantitative Reasoning) and some questions are answered by mentally generating and transforming visual images (Spatial Ability).  The CAT4 test will be scored by an independent company called GL Assessment. Under the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) your permission is needed to send your child’s test to the company for scoring as your child’s name and date of birth is on the answer sheets. |
| **Achievement Tests of Literacy: (Reading, Spelling, Writing)**   * New Group Reading Test (NGRT) is a screening / monitoring reading test which includes sentence completion and passage comprehension at each level. This group administered tests takes about 30 minutes and can be administered by a teacher or SET. This test will be scored by an independent company called GL Assessment. Under the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) your permission is needed to send your child’s test to the company for scoring as your child’s name and date of birth is on the answer sheets. This may be administered by a SET or class teacher. * The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5) word reading test may be used for first year screening of some, or all, students. This word reading test will be individually administered by a Special Education Teacher (SET). * The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5) spelling test a group administered test by a SET. * We may use the Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH) for first year screening purposes on some, or all, students who assess difficulties with speed of writing.   **Ability/Achievement Testing Mathematical Skills**:   * The Cognitive Abilities Test- 4 (CAT4) includes Non-Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative and Spatial Reasoning batteries. “The Cognitive Abilities Test- 4 have mathematical components (numerical reasoning in the former and quantitative reasoning in the latter) and many schools find this information adequate for the purposes of intake screening.” (National Educational Psychological Service, 2010) * We may also use the Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5) Maths computation test, which is group administered by a SET. |

**Irish Exemption- WRAT5**

If a parent/guardian wishes to apply to the Principal for an Irish exemption for their child. The SET teacher may use achievement testing (e.g. WRAT5) on an individual basis.

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| Achievement Test for Irish Exemption   * The **Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5)** is used to test literacy. |

**Reasonable Accommodations for State Examinations- WRAT5, DASH**

In second/ third year and again in fifth/sixth year your child may be considered for Reasonable Accommodations for their State examinations.  These tests are conducted individually during school time and usually take less than an hour to administer by a SET. Once the tests have been completed and scores have been calculated a SET will contact the parent/guardian to discuss whether any further action is needed.It is important to note that the school cannot apply for Reasonable Accommodations for ineligible candidates, i.e. students who do not have evidence of an on-going need and students who do not meet the criteria. The final decision for RACE rests with the Department of Education. Usually, the accommodations received at Junior cycle will re-activated for Leaving Certificate state examinations, except in the case of a scribe or an emergency accommodation.

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| **Achievement Tests for Reasonable Accommodations at State Examinations\*, i.e. RACE**   * The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5) includes word reading, reading comprehension and spelling tests. * The Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH) may be used to examine writing speed.   \*Please note all testing for RACE is undertaken on an individual basis by a SET. |

**End Junior Cycle- Senior Cycle: CAT4, DATS, WRAT5, DASH, career interest tests**

In senior cycle the guidance counsellor may undertake aptitude and ability testing to aid students in ascertaining their strengths for their future subject and career choices.

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. To apply for this students may have to undergo achievement testing (e.g. WRAT5 or DASH) in literacy and/ or numeracy.

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| **Ability/ Aptitude Tests for Older Students**   * The CAT 4 ability test (see above) is standardised up to the age of 17 and therefore can still be useful, with older students. * Additionally, some schools find the Differential Aptitude Tests for Schools (DATS), to be useful in identifying aptitudes towards the end of the junior cycle. It can also be used with older students and has Irish norms. DATS has 8 subtests, verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, abstract reasoning, perceptual speed + accuracy, mechanical reasoning, space relations, spelling + language usage. It may also be used in association with the Careers Interest Inventory (CII). This is a group administered test by the guidance counsellor.   These tests will be scored by an independent company called GL Assessment. Under the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) your permission is needed to send your child’s test to the company for scoring as your child’s name and date of birth is on the answer sheets.  **Career Interest tests- often these are paper-based or online self-assessment tests**   * These self-assessment tools can help assist students to figure out what careers might suit them. * With so many online tests available, we cannot list them all, but they may include tests from CareerPortal.ie and Qualifax.   **Achievement tests for Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)**   * The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 5) or Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH) may be used to test literacy and numeracy. |

**Sharing of Information**

Results of all standardised tests will be shared with guardians/ parents or the student if they are over 18.

The results of any achievement/ ability/ aptitude tests may be shared with other relevant members of school staff in order to plan effectively to meet the educational, emotional, and behavioural and wellbeing needs of the students. It may also be necessary at times to share relevant information with external parties, such as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), the Department of Education (DES), and the Inspectorate. Any information shared is done in accordance with the school’s policies (see grange.pps.ie).

**Parental Consent**

Please sign the permission slip below to give your consent for standardised testing.

Please be aware that the parent/guardian is free to withdraw consent at any time but they must do so in writing to the school principal, Ms Eimear Harte.

Yours faithfully,

Orla Sills (SEN) and Siobhan Evans (guidance counsellor)

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Please retain the above information for future reference.

**Circle your preference, insert your son or daughter’s FULL name in CAPITAL LETTERS, and sign the form.**

**I AGREE** to allow my son/daughter (FULL NAME) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to undergo standardised achievement, ability and aptitude/career testing during their enrolment at Grange Post-Primary in a group and/or individual setting.

**Or**

**I DO NOT AGREE** to allow my son/daughter (FULL NAME) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to undergo standardised achievement, ability and aptitude/ career testing during their enrolment at Grange Post-Primary in a group and/or individual setting.

Parent/ Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/ Guardian name in BLOCK LETTERS: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_