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Reading and Numeracy Tests in Wales

**INFORMATION FOR
PARENTS/CARERS YEARS 2 - 9**

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Information for Parents and Carers

Children in Years 2 to 9 now take national tests in reading and numeracy each summer. This leaflet explains what the tests involve and what the test results can tell you about your child's learning.



Why have national tests been introduced?

Schools have always used tests to check how well children are doing. Having national tests developed specially for use in Wales means that teachers in all schools have the same information on the reading and numeracy skills of their pupils. It also makes it possible to get a picture of national achievement in these subjects. The tests can show where individual children might need more help to improve their skills. Schools can compare achievement in reading and numeracy in their schools with what is happening nationally.



What are the tests like?

Reading

The reading tests are made up of short questions based on two or more texts. Some of the questions check how well the text has been understood, others aim to find out if children are able to make judgements about what they are reading. Before the start of the test, children can try out some practice questions so that they will know what the different types of question are like and what they may be asked.

There are reading tests in both English and Welsh. Each test takes up to an hour but younger children can take a break part-way through. Children in Years 4 to 9 in Welsh-medium schools take the tests in both languages. Children in Years 2 and 3 are only expected to take the Welsh reading test although schools may choose to let Year 3 pupils take the English reading test as well.

Numeracy

There are two kinds of numeracy tests.

1. The procedural test measures skills in number, measuring and data skills.
2. The reasoning test measures how well children can use what they know to solve everyday problems.

English and Welsh translations are available for both tests. Each of the numeracy tests takes up to half an hour, but again, younger children can take a break during the tests.



When does testing take place?

All schools will give the tests to their pupils during the period from **7 to 13 May 2014**. Within this time, it is up to the school to timetable the tests and they should let you know the dates when your child will sit the tests. Children can take the tests in classroom groups or in larger groups, perhaps in a school hall.

Do all children have to take the tests?

Most children should be able to take the tests, but some may need particular access arrangements. For example, large-print and Braille versions of the tests are available for children who have problems with their eyesight. A very small number of children may not be able to take the tests. Headteachers will carefully consider whether to enter some children for one or more of the tests.



What can the tests tell me about my child's learning?

The tests can provide useful information to add to what your child's teacher knows about their reading and numeracy from their work every day in the classroom. Teachers can use the results to identify strengths and also areas where more help may be needed. They may share this information with you at parent meetings.

However, any test can only look at a limited range of skills and abilities. The reading tests cannot provide any information on speaking, listening or writing skills. The numeracy tests cannot test your child's understanding of space and shape. Some children will not perform at their best on the day of the test. As a result, their test results alone may not give a full picture of their ability. Each test is designed to measure achievement across the range expected for each year group. The tests will not always give reliable information for children who are working at the extremes of the range for their age.

It is important to discuss your child's progress with their teacher based on all the evidence they have, rather than just focusing on a single test result. It is also important to remember that children do not all make progress at the same rate.



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

By the end of the summer term, your child's school will give you test results for each test that your child has taken. The results should be read alongside your child's annual report.

The tests provide two kinds of score, a standardised score and a progress score. These two scores are very different from scores you may have come across in other situations, for example 9 out of 10 or 65%.



What is a standardised score?

Having a score of say '6 out of 10' does not take into account how hard a test is or show how one child has done compared with other children taking the test. If most of the others taking the test scored 9 out of 10, then 6 is not a good score. But if the average score was 2 out of 10, then 6 is a very good score. The standardised score from the national tests tells you how well your child has

done compared with other children of the same age taking the test at the same time. The average standardised score is set to 100 and about two-thirds of all children taking the test will have standardised scores between 85 and 115. So, a standardised score lower than 85 **might** suggest some difficulty with reading or numeracy as measured on the test.

In a few cases the range of difficulty of the questions in the test may mean that it is not possible to register a standardised score for a child whose reading and numeracy skills are developing more slowly than would be expected. The score could only be given as 'less than 70'. If this is the case, your child's teacher will use other methods to assess how their skills are developing. One of the things a teacher might do is to let your child try the questions from a test for the year group below to see if this helps to get a better picture of where they may need more help to make progress.



Similarly, very high achievers can only be given a standardised score of 'more than 140' because the test does not measure the limit of their skills. Again, teachers will be able to give you more information about your child's ability.

What is a progress score?

Using specially designed tests across eight year groups has meant a unique opportunity to map the development of reading and numeracy skills as children move through school. We have developed progress score scales for each of the three sets of tests (reading, numeracy (procedural) and numeracy (reasoning)) to give a picture of how skills in different year groups compare. The scales are created using statistical models that take account of the level of

difficulty of every question across all the tests. The models are complicated but their aim is simply to make it possible to measure improvement in reading and numeracy from one year to the next. It will also be possible to investigate whether standards in reading and numeracy across the whole country change over time. As long as your child takes the tests each year, you will be able to track their progress as measured by the tests.



Progress scores in 2013 and 2014



This chart shows how progress can be measured by the tests. The progress scores shown are for a child taking the Year 3 test in 2013 and the Year 4 test in 2014. The solid line on the progress score charts represents the mid-point in the progress scores achieved in each year group. Half of the children taking the tests would be expected to achieve a score that lies between the two dotted lines. A quarter of the pupils in each year group would have progress scores above the higher dotted line and a quarter of the pupils in each year group would have progress scores below the lower dotted line. This pupil has made progress that is in line with what is expected for her year group.

For the purposes of this graph, pupils scoring 0 or no score and those pupils with a maximum score have not been included as they represent the extremes of the scale which are not very reliable.



How reliable are the results from these tests?

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The National Foundation for Education Research, with advice from practitioners and experts from across Wales, have developed the tests and the statistical models for the scores. Some of the features of the tests are very familiar, others such as the progress-score scale model are new and have been created to meet the specific requirements of the Welsh Government. Work to develop the tests began in autumn 2012 and work to make sure that the test results will be as accurate as possible has continued following their first 'live' use in summer 2013.

The model for producing the progress scores and standardised scores for reading has now been improved as a result of this work. In 2014 all schools will receive updated results for reading tests in 2013 that reflect these improvements and provide a secure basis on which to look at progress between 2013 and 2014 and into the future.



Should I help my child to prepare for the tests?

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No. The tests are just one piece of evidence about your child's achievement. The best way to prepare your child is to make sure that they are not worried or anxious.



Can I help my child to improve their reading and numeracy?

Yes, definitely! Getting involved in your child's learning while at home and out and about can make a big difference to their progress. Any of the following will be a huge help.

- Reading and talking about any kind of text such as books, magazines, webpages, leaflets, notices.
- Using numbers when shopping, planning trips, looking at football scores, times of TV programmes.
- Sharing activities that involve reading and numeracy such as cooking, playing board games, watching or playing sport, writing emails.
- Talking about words and numbers you come across in everyday life.

Useful contacts

You can find more advice and guidance on supporting your child in reading and numeracy by visiting the following websites:

Better reading – gives useful hints and tips on reading with your child.
www.betterreading.co.uk

Make time to read – a Facebook page set up to raise awareness of the importance of making time to read with your child.
www.facebook.com/maketimetoread

Booktrust – has created a range of programmes and projects designed to help people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy reading and writing.
www.booktrust.org.uk

Bitesize* – is the BBC's free online resource to help children in the UK with their school work.
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

Lovereading4kids* – will help you to explore books that will excite them and help them to fall in love with reading.
www.lovreading4kids.co.uk

Sumdog* – is a site that offers games to make mathematics fun. They are all free to play with the option to subscribe for extra features.
www.sumdog.com

How is your child's school doing?
A website that provides information on schools' performance across Wales.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

BBC Advice for parents* – from homework help to Special Educational Needs, find out how to help your child at school.
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

Estyn – find out more about how your child's school is performing.
www.estyn.gov.uk

Free school meals – find out if you are eligible. Go to www.wales.gov.uk then go to Education and Skills and Schools section.

Change4life – gives you ideas and recipes to help you and your family be healthier and happier.
www.change4lifewales.org.uk

MEIC – is the confidential helpline service for children and young people in Wales. From finding out what's going on in your local area to helping deal with bullying.
www.meiccymru.org

Summer reading challenge – help with reading through the summer holidays.
www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

Hwb – the all Wales learning platform, full of useful resources.
<https://hwb.wales.gov.uk>

* Please note this website is only available in English.