

Bennekerry National School Carlow

Principal: Tonia Cleary
Deputy Principal: Lourda Griffin



Telephone: 059 9143495
bennekerry@gmail.com
Roll No: I7501Q

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Standardised Tests and Results

Dear parents/guardians,

During May/June, English Reading, Spelling, Gaeilge and Numeracy standardised tests were carried out in Bennekerry N.S. with all pupils from 1st to 6th classes. While we chose to continue with the Sigma-T tests which we have used for a number of years, this year we administered the New Drumcondra Reading Test which was redeveloped by the ERC (Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra) and was standardised in 2018 to reflect recent changes in performance on English nationally. Bennekerry N.S. participated in this standardisation process.

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 Bennekerry N.S. would have been heavily skewed compared with test norms. As we tested using the new tests this year, we expect that the results will be more in line with test norms and the results will provide a more accurate picture.

For some children this may mean their result in their English 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 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.

Results can be useful references for teachers and can be used to help identify if a child has areas of difficulty or, indeed, if a child is a high achiever. A teacher can then plan a learning path for individual pupils accordingly. **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.**

Understanding results – 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 a scoring system involving standard scores, percentile rank or a STen score.

In Bennekerry N.S. we report the Standard Scores. They can be interpreted as follows.....

Standard Score Range	Descriptor	Proportion of pupils
115 or higher	Well above average	One-sixth
108-114	High average	One-sixth
93-107	Average	One-third
85-92	Low average	One-sixth
84 or below	Well below average	One-sixth

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.**

Children and their Test Results

As part of the school report, we will make your child's standardised English Reading and Numeracy results known to you. 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. 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.

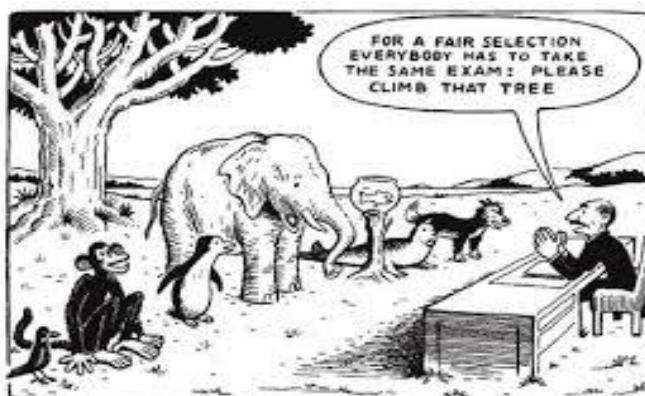
Particularly this year with the use of the new tests, there may be a significant change in results (in either direction), and it may be very disheartening to children who do not understand the standardised nature of these types of tests.

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. In fact, **our advice is that children should not be shown any part of their school report** as the report is designed to share information honestly with parents about their child's progress and is intended for them alone. Seeing a particular comment or result might cause a child to develop a fixed mindset in relation to a specific subject or area of the curriculum and in Bennekerry N.S. we strongly advocate the development of growth mindsets.

No matter the results, most pupils have worked hard across the year, and if they did their best, they should be praised for doing so. Remember, a single type of test does not reflect any one child's range of talents and skills.

Mise le meas,

Tonia Cleary



Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.
Albert Einstein