



Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey

Psychometric Assessment Policy 2024

'Our school is a caring Christian Community in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment'.

Name of School:	Loreto Abbey Secondary School
Purpose of the Policy:	The overarching purpose of this assessment policy is to clearly outline all aspects involved in the administration of psychometric assessment. This policy will enhance communication on all aspects of psychometric assessment for all stakeholders.

<p>Definition of Assessment Instruments for the purposes of this policy:</p>	<p>Circular 0001/2023 provides post primary schools with information and a list of assessment instruments [...] that are approved for use in Guidance and AEN.</p> <p>Standardised ability assessments are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. <u>They measure potential and what a student can know rather than what is known.</u></p> <p>Information from ability tests, attainment tests, teacher observations, the Education Passport, the Student Support File, parental reports as well as the views of the student are also very important aspects of a thorough assessment. This evidence-based approach facilitates the identification of individual students' strengths, interest, values, motivation and learning needs and helps to inform the actions and interventions that best address those needs.</p> <p>Diagnostic assessments which would be administered by an Educational Psychologist may be administered subsequent to information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.</p> <p>These assessments are designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning.</p> <p>Interest tests may be administered to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for higher education, further education and training, apprenticeships or work.</p>
<p>Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy:</p>	<p>Dara Shortt & Orla Brophy Guidance Counsellors</p> <p>Whole School Guidance Team</p> <p>SEN Department</p>
<p>Date policy approved by BOM:</p>	<p>18th June 2024</p>

Date for review of policy:	2026/27
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Signed: *Elis Humphreys*

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 18th June 2024

Use of Assessment Instruments

Purpose of Assessment:

Here at Loreto Abbey Secondary School, incoming First Year students are assessed using the **Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT 4 – Level E) – 4th ed., 2012.**

This measures four principal areas of reasoning – verbal, non-verbal, quantitative, and spatial – to provide a comprehensive profile of the core abilities relating to learning.

The results of this assessment are used as a tool to track student's academic performance over the course of their academic journey at Loreto Abbey. It also helps to identify students who may require additional learning support.

These tests are administered by the Guidance Counsellors and the AEN teachers.

Woodcock Johnson IV Tests of Achievement, UK & Ireland Edition, are used as a screening and diagnostic tool for students at both Junior and Senior Cycle if it is deemed necessary by parent(s)/guardian(s) or teachers. This test will also determine student's suitability for Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) for third level.

The **WJ IV** is made up of 11 discrete tests that can accurately assess areas of reading, writing and maths in persons aged between 4 up to adult (aged 90+).

Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting, 2007 (age 9 to 16) and 2011 (age 17 to 25). This achievement test is administered to determine a student's speed of hand writing. The results of which will inform whether or not a student requires the aid of assistive technology, such as a keyboard.

Transition Year students have the opportunity to do **My Future Choice Testing**. This incorporates two tests that complement each other, **'My Eirquest'** and **'My Aptitude'**. These tests assist students in reaching a better understanding of their strengths from both a career and academic perspective. The results suggest a number of careers that may be appropriate based on the students interests which were indicated throughout the assessment, alongside their aptitudes.

This profile test assesses the following areas: verbal, numerical, abstract and spatial reasoning, along with arithmetic calculation, spelling and working quickly and accurately.

Careers Portal, is an individual website that provides a free Career Exploration Toolbox including an Interest Profiler.

Qualifax is the National Learners' Database of course and career information. Their **Interest Assessment Test** will give an indication of areas or types of work that would match a student's interests.

Informed Consent:

Parent(s)/ Guardian(s) of all incoming First Year students are requested to sign a consent form relating to Psychometric Assessment. This form explains the purpose of the testing that may take place throughout the course of their daughter's education at Loreto Abbey, Dalkey. It is accompanied by a FAQ sheet for Parent(s)/ Guardian(s).

**Selection of
Assessment
Instrument:**

Circular Letter 0001/2023 outlines three types of Assessment Instruments:

Standardised ability tests are designed to be curriculum-independent and measure more enduring and long-term traits than the attainment of learning. They measure potential and what a student is capable of knowing rather than what is known.

Standardised attainment tests (sometimes referred to as achievement tests) measure what a student knows and can be used to assess, for example, students' knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy, and to determine progress in these areas. On foot of information garnered from various assessment practices including ability and achievement tests, further information may be gathered through the administration of diagnostic tests to provide a more detailed view of a student's learning strengths and needs.

A **diagnostic test** is designed to provide specific information about a student's strengths and needs in some aspect of learning, for example, word identification skills or understanding of number concepts.

In addition, guidance counsellors may use the outcomes of ability and interest tests to guide and to support students' decision-making regarding subject choice and senior- cycle programme options and to support their career development, including planning for higher education, further education and training, apprenticeships or work.

[Please note the use of assessment instruments in schools for the assessment of personality is not appropriate and therefore such instruments will not be part of those listed or used in Loreto Abbey]

All tests are administered by suitably qualified professionals, specifically the Guidance Counsellors and SEN teachers.

All Assessment Instruments that are used within Loreto Abbey, Dalkey are approved by the DES.

**Administration of
Assessment Instrument**

As outlined in Circular Letter 0001/2023 the administration of ability tests is restricted to appropriately qualified personnel who have been specifically trained in specialised psychometric testing including the selection and administration of such assessment instruments, interpretation of assessment results, scoring and feedback.

Here in Loreto Abbey Secondary School, typically in the case of psychometric instruments of general ability (and individually administered achievement tests), such personnel will be the qualified Guidance Counsellors or teachers of Additional Educational Needs with appropriate qualifications to administer specific tests.

Such personnel will engage in on-going training and continuing professional development.

The Register of Psychometric Test Use: Guidance Counsellors, which is maintained by the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) www.psychologicalsociety.ie endorses the professional competence of guidance counsellors in the administration of psychometric tests and supports the implementation of good practice in psychometric testing in schools.'

Our School Guidance Counsellors are part of this register.

As in line with best practice information is provided to parent(s)/guardian(s) and students as to the purpose of the assessment and with whom the results may be shared and why. In accordance with GDPR regulations, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) will have access to the information gathered from these assessments.

The consent of parent(s)/guardian(s) and students is obtained in advance of any assessment instrument being administered. This will **only** take place if **written consent** has been obtained. ***In a small number of cases it may be necessary to obtain verbal consent over the telephone from a parent/guardian.***

Provision of feedback:

Feedback is given by appropriately qualified professionals, either a Guidance Counsellor or other suitably qualified teacher where appropriate.

Assessment feedback should be accurate and timely.

In giving feedback, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) should be made aware of the limitations of assessment results. Assessment results are only one element of the whole picture of a student in education. Many elements make up the whole picture such as the interests of the student, their talents, experiences, information and knowledge gathered from many other sources. Assessment results should never be regarded as definitive.

In giving feedback the student should be afforded the opportunity to explore their results in the context of the educational opportunities that the school can provide.

Assessment results may support decision making.

Consideration on the purpose of assessment must be considered for all students including those who have Additional Educational Needs and/or students that are studying English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Consideration must be given to how the assessment results are provided (e.g. raw/standardised scores) and to whom (e.g. to students and/or parent(s)/guardian(s)).

Personal results/feedback/information should never be disclosed or directly referenced in a group context.

Examples of acceptable processes to provide feedback include:

- A. Providing personalised feedback to students in a one-to-one meeting.
- B. Providing general feedback at a parent/guardian and student evening with each student receiving their results in a sealed envelope.

In the case of our **CAT 4 Level E Assessment**, for First Year Students, parent(s)/guardian(s) are informed that these scores along with other formal and informal assessments provide a baseline for our tracking system for their daughter's educational journey in Loreto Abbey. As a result students do not receive individual feedback following the assessment. However if a

parent/guardian wishes to receive individual feedback they are welcome to speak with one of the Guidance Counsellors or the AEN Co-ordinator.

The **Woodcock Johnson IV, UK & Ireland Edition**, achievement tests, are administered as a result of concern from a teacher, parent/guardian or management, or perhaps a student themselves around some area of academic performance. The results of these tests are fed back to students and in some cases parent(s)/guardian(s) as part of a one to one meeting. The outcome of these tests helps to determine whether or not students are eligible to apply for Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE) or Disability Access Route to Education (DARE). These results may also indicate the need for further diagnostic testing with an Educational Psychologist.

Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting, 2007 (age 9 to 16) and 2011 (age 17 to 25). This achievement test is administered to determine a student's speed of handwriting.

General feedback is provided on the **'My Eirquest' and 'My Aptitude'** that students sit during Transition Year. This is done as part of a parent / guardian and student evening with each student receiving their results in a sealed envelope. These results are provided to students and parent(s)/ guardian (s), prior to subject choices being made for Fifth Year. These results can help clarify where certain students have aptitudes for specific subjects and in turn specific career paths.

Interpretation of Assessment Results

This section outlines the larger context in which the results may be interpreted.

CAT 4 Level E, along with other formal and informal assessments are used as a baseline to inform our school academic tracking system.

These results can also help to identify students who require additional learning support, when addressed alongside additional evidence from parent(s)/guardian(s), Educational Passport, Teachers or Management.

Data obtained from the **Woodcock Johnson IV, UK & Ireland Edition**, Tests of Achievement, helps to determine whether or not students are eligible to apply for Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE) or Disability Access Route to Education (DARE). Interpretation of these results can also indicate the need for further diagnostic testing with an Educational Psychologist.

Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting, 2007 (age 9 to 16) and 2011 (age 17 to 25). The results of this test help to determine a student's speed of handwriting. The results of which will inform whether or not a student requires the aid of assistive technology, such as a keyboard in the State Examinations.

Results from **'My Eirquest' and 'My Aptitude'** allows students and parents to interpret information that relates to their subject interest area and in some cases specific careers. These results can help inform subject choice for Fifth Year students, along with career investigations that may need to be followed up over the coming months and perhaps years.

Any sharing of information must occur in line with school policy on confidentiality and data sharing.

The results of standardised tests may be shared with the relevant members of school staff in order to plan to meet the educational, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of the student.

From time to time this information may need to be shared with external agencies including NEPS, CAMHS and the Inspectorate. Again this will be done with the consent of parent(s)/guardian(s).

Results should never be used in isolation, but rather in conjunction with other information that may already be available about the student. Information gathered from assessments should be considered alongside information that is gathered from parent(s)/guardian(s), primary schools and teachers.

It is critically important for schools not to get into the situation of early labelling.

In interpreting results schools should be aware of the influence of the home culture of an individual student. A home culture that is different to that of the standardised group will have implications for the interpretation of results.

**General DATA
Protection Regulation
(GDPR):**

Assessment may be administered either online or through use of paper and pen.

When the online version(s) of tests are used, it is important that the assessment information that is gathered is stored in line with EU GDPR regulations.

If data is stored outside of the EU, schools should ensure that the companies concerned apply GDPR data protection principles to all EU personal data.

Storing of Assessment Data

Schools should be aware of the obligations of access of stored data under:

- The Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2013
- The DATA Protection Acts 1988 and 2003
- GDPR 2018

Storage of Assessment Data

All assessment data is stored in accordance with Loreto Abbey's Data Protection Policy (2024).

A minimum standard of security will include the following measures:

- Access to the information will be restricted to authorised staff on a "need-to-know" basis.
- Manual files will be stored in a relevant filing system, located away from public areas.
- Computerised data will be held under password protected files.
- Any information which needs to be disposed of will be done so carefully and thoroughly.

The premises at Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey are protected by G4S and are monitored on a 24 hour/7 day week basis.

When data is stored on paper, it will be kept in a secure place where unauthorised people cannot see it. This also applies to data that is usually stored electronically but has been printed out for a valid reason:

- When not required, the paper or files will be kept in a relevant filing system
- All personnel will ensure that personal data, paper and printouts are not left where unauthorised people could see them.
- Data will be shredded and disposed of securely when no longer required.

When data is stored electronically, it will be protected from unauthorised access, accidental deletion and malicious hacking attempts:

- Data will be protected by strong passwords that are changed regularly and never shared between employees.
- If data is stored on removable media (e.g. a USB key), these will be kept locked away (and ideally encrypted) when not being used.
- Data will be stored on designated drives and servers and will only be uploaded to an approved cloud computing service.
- Servers containing personal data will be sited in a secure location.
- Data will be backed up frequently.
- All servers and computers containing data will be protected by approved security software and a firewall.

Sharing standardised test results with members of school staff and with external parties: In line with a whole-school approach and as part of the school's assessment policy regarding standardised testing and data protection, the results of standardised tests, in conjunction with other related information, should be shared with relevant members of school staff. This is in order to plan effectively to meet the educational, social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs of the students. It may also be necessary at times to share relevant information with external parties, such as NEPS and CAMHS. Schools need to be mindful of their Data Protection / Data Sharing responsibilities when sharing data with external bodies.

Access to data: The Freedom of Information Act 1997, The Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003, the Data Protection Bill of 2018 and the 2018 GDPR provide for a **right to access personal information** held by Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey.

The results of all psychometric tests will be shared with parents and students if it is deemed necessary or requested. This is depending on the assessment instrument used as outlined in the 'Provision of Feedback' section.

Should the results of such testing highlight concern for those who have administered these tests, students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to help obtain a more holistic interpretation of the results.

The school will **retain the information until seven years after the student has left school**. This is in line with data protection requirements.

**Reasonable
Accommodation at the
Certificate
Examinations (RACE):
Circular 0001/23**

Details of tests that are acceptable for RACE will be set out in the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations - Instructions for Schools, which is published annually by the SEC. These tests are taken from the list of assessment instruments and web-resources approved for the use in Guidance and/or SET contexts. It is published by the Department of Education and is governed by this circular letter. Schools should ensure that the versions of tests in use are the most up-to-date and appropriate for administering to the specific student cohort. For the purpose of RACE applications schools are advised to await updates and closing dates from the SEC and where necessary adapt the timing of testing, if required. RACE information can be accessed at Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE)