



Standardised Testing in Primary Schools 2019/2020

As you will be aware, in normal circumstances primary schools are required to administer standardised testing during the period May/June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes in accordance with circulars 0056/2011 and 0018/2012. As all schools are currently closed under Covid-19 restrictions and with uncertainty as to when schools will reopen, the Department of Education and Skills has made the decision to cancel Standardised Testing for primary schools for the 2019/2020 school year.

The priority in these times is to support the learning and wellbeing of all our learners. This is not an easy time for teachers, learners and their families. When schools return the focus for teachers and the whole school community will be on settling the children and returning to normality in the classroom without the added pressure of having to undertake standardised tests.

Standardised Tests are only one of a number of assessment tools that can be used to inform teaching and learning in primary schools. As stated in the Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for schools ‘Assessment is about building a picture over time of a child’s progress and/or achievement in learning across the *Primary School Curriculum*’. These guidelines <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2b3eaa53-cb4b-4053-9d71-2d28d9d6c734/Assessment-Guidelines.pdf> provide ‘examples of how teachers gather information about children’s progress and achievement, use this information to enrich teaching and learning, and report this information to all those concerned with children’s education’. In light of the cancellation of the standardised testing for this school year, schools should consider how best to report to parents about the progress of their children, to report as part of the Education Passport for the transition to post primary school and to develop support plans as necessary for individual learners.

The allocation of Special Education teachers to mainstream schools is based on a school’s educational profile, which includes consideration of the percentage of students performing below a certain threshold on standardised test results. For the profiled allocations, an aggregate of primary school standardised test results over a number of years is used so as to provide the most accurate picture of a school’s educational profile over a period of time. For future revisions of the Special Education Teacher model an aggregate of the most recent number of years standardised test data will continue to be used to develop the school profiles, with the exclusion of the 2019/2020 school year data.

In light of the cancellation of Standardised Testing in 2019/20, the grants paid to schools for purchase of test materials will not issue in this school year. Should you have any queries on any of the above you can email us on CAP_Helpdesk@education.gov.ie.

We acknowledge the challenging circumstances that teachers and school leaders are operating under at this difficult time and would again draw your attention again to the Guidance on Continuity of Schooling - For primary and post-primary schools published by the Department on the 2nd April 2020 (<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/guidance-on-continuity-of-schooling.pdf>)