



Circular 0048/2026

## Information in relation to Standardised Testing and Other Matters – Academic Year 2025/26 and Subsequent Years

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of  
Primary and Special Schools and Chief Executives of ETBs.

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## 1. Standardised testing in primary schools – returns for 2025/26

Thank you for continuing to provide your standardised test results to the Department of Education and Youth through the Esinet online system. We appreciate the work of school staff in making this happen.

Your standardised test results should be uploaded onto the [Esinet portal](#) **on or before Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

### When to carry out the tests

Please carry out the tests at 2nd, 4th and 6th class during May or early June 2026, following the instructions as detailed in circulars [0056/2011](#) and [0018/2012](#).

To note, schools are not required to carry out standardised testing at other class levels although some schools choose to do this.

The administration of standardised tests to whole classes are not appropriate at infant class level, as they are unreliable for children at this early stage in their learning and development. Standardised tests, if used before the end of first class, should be done in small groups only. See [here](#) for more information.

### Exemptions and special accommodations

In general, a child should be included if they can engage meaningfully with the test, and if they will not be distressed by participating in the testing process. However, Circular 0056/2011 allows principals to exempt pupils if:

- They have a learning or physical disability that prevents them from completing the test.
- They are migrant pupils whose level of English or Irish makes the test unsuitable.

Pupils may sometimes take the test with accommodations, such as:

- Taking the test at a lower level than their class.
- Taking the test in a quiet room.
- Extra time for comfort breaks.
- Taking the test with the support of a Special Needs Assistant.
- Having a reader for the mathematics test (a human reader or a digital device that reads text aloud).
- Answering a paper test using the test booklet rather than an answer sheet (applies from 3rd class upwards).
- Using coloured overlays.

When using exemptions or accommodations, you should:

- For pupils in 2nd, 4th, or 6th class, mark them as exempt on Esinet returns (do not include their result).
- Interpret results carefully if the test was taken outside standardisation conditions.



Considerations for migrant pupils:

- Some may be ready for standardised testing within their first year in Ireland.
- Others may need more time, for example, if progress in English or Irish language development is slower, or if their education has been disrupted by accommodation issues, lack of school places, or other wellbeing factors.

More information is available at <https://www.erc.ie/erc-drumcondra-tests/information-for-schools/test-administration/general-test-administration-faqs/>.

### **Return of data to the Department of Education and Youth**

Your standardised test results should be uploaded onto the [Esinet portal](#) **on or before Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026**.

To enter and approve the data, please:

- Log on to the Esinet portal.
- Click on 'School Data Collection', and then 'Literacy and Numeracy'.
- Read the instructions before clicking 'Continue'.

All schools, including special and infant schools without a second class, should read and follow the [step-by-step guide](#) for uploading returns.

### **Funding**

Your school will shortly receive funding for 2025/26 standardised testing. The following funding will be provided:

- **€6.00** per pupil in English medium schools with a minimum payment of €140.
- **€7.50** per pupil in Irish medium schools with a minimum payment of €162.

These funds should be used to buy test instruments and materials such as teachers' manuals, scoring services or test-related software. Any remaining funds, after covering test costs, may be used to buy additional tests to better understand pupils' needs and support inclusion.

### **Reporting**

Schools must meet the reporting obligations set out in Part 7 of Circular [0056/2011](#). These include:

#### **Reporting to parents/guardians:**

- Schools must provide parents/guardians with a written report explaining the results. This should be sent well in advance of the summer break to give parents/guardians time to meet with the teachers and/or the principal if needed.
- All schools must use a standard report template to report on pupils' progress and achievement.
- Reporting templates include options for pupils receiving additional support.
- The creator tool and templates are available [here](#).



- Information for parents/guardians on understanding standardised test scores can be found [here](#).

Parents leaflets which provide information on understanding standardised tests can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Reporting to boards of management**

Schools must also report information from standardised tests to their board of management.

### **Approved tests**

- **Educational Research Centre (ERC)** provides standardised tests in paper and computer-based formats:
  - ERC Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (English).
  - ERC Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test (in English).
  - Triail Mhatamaitice Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna (i nGaeilge)
  - Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus Lán-Ghaeilge (ar fáil i bpáipéar amháin).

Information on these and other tests is available at <https://www.tests.erc.ie/>.

Online and paper tests can be ordered on ERC DOTS (*Drumcondra Online Testing System*) <https://schooladmin.erc.ie>.

For queries relating to rolling out online testing in your school, test ordering, administration and scoring, contact: [tests@erc.ie](mailto:tests@erc.ie)

- **Mary Immaculate College** offers paper-based tests:
  - MICRA-T (Mary Immaculate College Reading Attainment Tests).
  - SIGMA-T (Standardised Irish Graded Mathematics Attainment Tests).

Order from [www.cjfallon.ie](http://www.cjfallon.ie).

### **The need for assessment**

Assessment is an integral part in effective learning and teaching. It supports teachers in understanding pupils' progress, identifying learning needs, and planning appropriate learning experiences. Assessment also enables meaningful communication with pupils and their parents or guardians about learning and development.

All forms of assessment, including standardised tests, supports the teacher in identifying the next steps in children's learning and ensure that learning outcomes and learning experiences are tailored to meet the needs of pupils and class groups.

Standardised tests can help schools to:

- Monitor progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Identify strengths and areas that may require further support.



- Support teachers in providing learning experiences that meet pupils' needs.
- Inform decision-making at school level in terms of support and resource allocation.

The results of a single standardised test should not be used in isolation to predict future achievement or as the sole basis for decisions about interventions or targets within a pupil's support plan. A balanced approach, incorporating teacher observations, engagement with parents, pupils' views, and reports from external agencies (where available), is necessary to support the development of a comprehensive pupil profile. This allows teachers to adjust instruction and provide appropriate supports and interventions so that all pupils can make progress in their learning

### **Assessment Guidelines**

The [Assessment Guidelines for Schools](#) (2007) provide:

- Information on different assessment methods.
- Advice on developing, implementing, and reviewing assessment policies.
- Guidance on legal requirements for sharing information about pupils' progress and achievement.

[Circular 0056/2011](#) also provides information on assessing children's literacy and numeracy achievement.

### **National and International Testing**

Circular [0056/2011](#) asks schools to make every effort to take part in large-scale assessments run by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) for the Department of Education and Youth. The department and ERC appreciate schools' ongoing participation in these studies.

- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2027**  
TIMSS is an international study that takes place every four years. It assesses the mathematics and science achievement of Fourth class pupils in primary and Second year students in post-primary schools. It also collects supporting contextual information.

Findings from TIMSS provide important information on Ireland's mathematics and science achievement in an international context. The findings from the most recent cycle, TIMSS 2023, can be found at <https://www.erc.ie>.

#### **Data collection in March/April 2027**

Approximately 150 primary schools and 150 post-primary schools across Ireland will be randomly selected to participate in the main study data collection. If your school is selected and you have any questions, please contact [TIMSS.Ireland@erc.ie](mailto:TIMSS.Ireland@erc.ie).

- **National Assessment of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) 2028**



NAMER is a national study that has taken place since 2009. It assesses the mathematics and English reading achievement of Second and Sixth class pupils in primary school. It also collects supporting contextual information from pupils, parents, teachers, and schools.

Findings from NAMER provide important information on mathematics and English reading achievement in Second and Sixth class. The findings from the most recent cycle, NAMER 2021, can be found at [www.erc.ie](http://www.erc.ie)

### **Field trial in May/June 2027**

Approximately 40 primary schools across Ireland will be randomly selected to participate in the field trial. If your school is selected and you have any questions, please contact [NAMER@erc.ie](mailto:NAMER@erc.ie).

## **2. Special Education**

The Special Education Teaching (SET) allocation model was introduced in 2017, with schools' educational profiles updated in 2024. Each school's unique educational profile is based on three pillars: Enrolment Allocation, Educational Teaching Needs Profile and Educational Disadvantage.

The **Educational Teaching Needs Profile** is calculated using outcome data collected within schools and submitted to the Department of Education and Youth. The profile focuses on the pupils with the greatest level of need in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

The data supporting this pillar come from aggregate standardised test results in English and Mathematics, which are used to create individual school profiles. For Irish-medium schools, the profile is based on the mean of the standardised test results in English, Irish, and Mathematics.

For more details regarding the Special Education Teacher Allocation model, please see Circular [0002/2024](#).

## **3. Transitions**

### **Early learning and care settings to primary school**

The NCCA [Mo Scéal](#) reporting templates support young children transition's from early childhood settings to primary school. They facilitate the sharing of information about children's learning and development. Along with the support materials, Mo Scéal encourages early childhood and primary settings to work together to ensure a positive and effective transition.

A [Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools: Strengthening Links between Primary Schools and Early Learning and Care \(ELC\) Settings](#) helps schools create collaborative links with their local naíonraí. This guide supports schools in strengthening their links with



local naíonraí, helping to promote children's smooth transition to primary school and contributing to the ongoing promotion of the Irish language.

### **Primary school to post-primary school**

Schools must use the [Education Passport](#) materials to transfer information about children at the end of sixth class. Each child's Passport should be sent to the relevant post-primary school once enrolment is confirmed, ideally by the end of June.

For children in need of additional supports, information should be shared earlier. For these children, the [NEPS Student Transfer Form](#) should be completed and signed by parents/guardians before sending to the relevant post-primary school. Supporting pupils with special educational needs may involve further meetings and sharing detailed information to ensure a smooth transition. The NEPS Continuum of Support and the Home School Liaison Officers in DEIS schools can also support the transition of pupils.

## **4. Primary Curriculum Developments**

The redeveloped Primary School Curriculum is now available on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie). The curriculum is underpinned by the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), which supports high-quality learning, teaching and assessment for all children attending primary and special schools. The curriculum is presented across five curriculum areas:

- [Arts Education](#)
- [Language](#)
- [STEM Education](#)
- [Social and Environmental Education](#)
- [Wellbeing](#).

To support teachers in using the specifications, online toolkits are available on [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie). These include a [Primary Curriculum Toolkit](#), as well as toolkits for each of the curriculum specifications. The toolkits include a range of materials to support teachers in enacting the curriculum. Significant supports are available to support the Primary Language Curriculum/Cuarclam Teanga na Bunscoile and Primary Mathematics Curriculum. Additional key supports for the entire curriculum will be available from September 2026, including:

- Teacher Guidance for each curriculum area.
- Assessment Guidance for teachers.
- Supports for progression for each curriculum area.

The toolkits will continue to be developed, and further materials will be added on an ongoing basis.

As schools begin to engage with the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum, it is important to keep in mind the [Key Messages for Early Enactment](#):

- We are building on our strengths to support every child to reach their potential



- We are all learning and growing as we enact the curriculum
- We will all work together to ensure positive learning experiences for every child
- We have agency to make the curriculum engaging and meaningful for every child.

Teachers and school leaders should regularly visit [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) for the most up-to-date information, guidance and supports relating to the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum.

### **5. Professional Learning to Support Teachers Work in Assessment**

Oide provides professional learning experiences (PLEs) for teachers and school leaders on learning, teaching, and assessment at primary level. The vision of the Primary Curriculum Framework is reflected in all PLEs designed and facilitated by Oide.

When designing and facilitating PLEs, Oide promotes assessment approaches ranging from intuitive and formative observations to more planned, structured, and summative approaches, ensuring teachers can build a comprehensive picture of children's progression across the curriculum. They can support teachers and school leaders in using assessment data, **including standardised test subscores**, to inform future learning and teaching.

More information on PLE provision provided by Oide can be found at [www.oide.ie](http://www.oide.ie)

### **6. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice**

Published in 2018 and revised in 2019 the [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice](#) aims to make the promotion of wellbeing central to the ethos of every school and centre for education.

The Department has initiated a review and broader stakeholder engagement process to consult on a successor to the current policy. The review will inform the priorities of an updated policy incorporating the continued, adapted, or new areas of agreed focus in educational wellbeing.

#### **Wellbeing Resources and Supports**

- The Department's wellbeing office has produced a [Directory of Wellbeing Teacher Professional Learning \(TPL\)](#) and a [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources](#). It provides an overview of TPL opportunities and documents and resources provided by the Department, its agencies, support services and other Government Departments and their agencies. It also includes information on how to access these supports.
- Schools can access resources and supports from the professional learning provided by OIDE from 2022-2025 [here](#).



- NEPS have developed advice and resources to support the wellbeing of everyone in the school community which is available [here](#) including videos, supports and resources.

## 7. Public Libraries Support for Schools

Membership of the public library is free. There are no fines for overdue books, and no replacement charges for lost or damaged children's books.

Public libraries deliver services under the annual Right to Read Programme to support reading and literacy. Depending on local needs and capacity they may take a hybrid approach to delivering the services in libraries and online.

The national public library strategy, [The Library is the Place 2023-2027](#) commits to build on the current library services for primary and post-primary schools and to exploring the potential for an expanded programme of library supports, delivered in alignment with the Department of Education and Youth's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033.

The public library provides access to a wide range of resources, facilities and activities. These support primary schools in developing children's literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills. Existing partnerships between schools and libraries benefit the schools, the children and families.

A partner library branch has been identified for every primary school based on catchment area. This information is available on the [public libraries' website](#) Libraries Ireland and is undergoing a periodic update currently. Each partner library branch will provide the services outlined below and will liaise directly with each school during the school year. In some cases, services may be provided by a mobile library, school library van, or the library headquarters, as determined locally. Under this collaborative approach, each library service will contact the school principal throughout the year to provide information about available library services and resources.

The range of library services offered to primary schools includes:

- Arranging class visits to libraries.
- Providing each teacher with a teacher's card to borrow items for their class and providing class book sets by arrangement.
- Delivering presentations on library services for each school, at a time agreed with the school. These presentations can be held at the school for teachers, pupils and/or parents/guardians. Schools may group together for the presentation. Online presentations may also be available.
- Providing [reading and curriculum support materials](#), including:
  - Online learning resources, including access to over 300 Irish and international newspapers, 250 magazine titles, a large selection of e-books and e-audio books, over 400 online learning courses and 110 language courses.



- eSources and reference materials to support school projects.
- A Resource Guide for Schools to help develop and expand reading and literacy collections online on [LibrariesIreland.ie](http://LibrariesIreland.ie).
- Videos with ideas for schools and teachers on creating a reading space and a reading school online on [LibrariesIreland.ie](http://LibrariesIreland.ie).
- Offering a reading space for children and access to electronic resources in each partner library. Providing reference resources and research assistance for school project work.
- Providing parents/guardians with information about library resources and activities that support their children's literacy and numeracy.
- Giving access to historical material about the local area, including maps, photographs, documents and collections relating to 1916 and later commemorations.
- Providing ongoing library programmes and initiatives throughout the year, including:
  - **Ireland Reads**, a national reading day in February.
  - **Spring into Storytime**, which offers storytime and reading activities in branches and online during April/May.
  - **My Little Library Bag** for school which provides free books to encourage library membership for children aged 4 to 6 starting school.
  - **Summer Stars** reading programme during the summer for all children who register at their library.
  - **Children's Book Festival**, held in October in libraries and online, celebrating children's books and family reading.
  - **Family Time at Your Library**, which offers fun events in local libraries and online in December.

For more details, contact your local library service, or visit [www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie).

## **8. Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy services for parents/guardians**

[Adult Literacy for Life \(ALL\)](#) is a 10-year strategy which aims to ensure that every adult has the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needed to fully engage in society.

In Ireland, one in five adults has unmet literacy needs. This can affect family life and parents and guardians' confidence and ability to for example engage with schools, read a bedtime story, help with homework, or even fill out a school form. The ALL strategy prioritises family and intergenerational learning. Family learning programmes and activities often provide a safe and supportive way for adults to engage with their own learning and to support their children's education.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) deliver family learning programs across the country. They also offer courses to improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. For more information, contact your local ETB Adult Literacy Service, your Regional



Literacy Coordinator, or the Adult Literacy for Life National Programme Office.  
Visit [www.adultliteracyforlife.ie](http://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie) or email [allinnovation@solas.ie](mailto:allinnovation@solas.ie).

[The National Adult Literacy Agency \(NALA\)](http://www.nala.ie) also offers help and advice for parents and guardians who have difficulty reading, writing, spelling or doing mathematics. NALA has an online learning service [www.learnwithnala.ie](http://www.learnwithnala.ie) where adults can learn by themselves or with the support of a tutor on the phone. Learn with NALA has [professional development courses](#) that may be of interest to teachers and school staff to raise awareness of literacy needs and literacy friendly approaches. For further information call 1 800 20 20 65 or email [info@nala.ie](mailto:info@nala.ie).

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