



Exemption from the Study of Irish
Circulars 0052/2019 (Primary) and 0053/2019 (Post Primary)
Guidance on the selection of discrete tests of literacy attainment in English

Testing requirements under Circulars 0052/2019 (Primary) and
0053/2019 (Post Primary)

Section 2.2 c

Pupils/students who:

- i) *have at least reached second class [Circular 0052/2019 – primary schools only]*
- and**
- ii) *present with significant learning difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning over time (Irish and or English). Documentary evidence to this effect, held by the school, should include Student Support Plans detailing*
- *Regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment*
 - *Target-setting*
 - *Evidence-informed intervention and review, including test scores (word reading, reading comprehension, spelling, other scores of language/ literacy) at key points of review*
- and**
- iii) *at the time of the application for exemption present with a Standardised Score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.*

- For the purpose of the criteria set out in the above circulars, testing of literacy skills should be undertaken using *a discrete test*.
- A discrete test is a standalone test which assesses a single literacy skill – in this case a test of either **Word Reading** or **Reading Comprehension** or **Spelling**.
- Selected tests must measure attainment level as a standardised score which can be expressed as a percentile rank.
- When selecting a test, schools should use the most recent version of the test and the test should be normed for the appropriate age range.
- Further guidance to schools on test selection is available in the resource ***Effective Interventions for struggling readers***: https://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/NEPS-Literacy-Resource/neps_literacy_good_practice_guide.pdf This resource contains a chapter on *Assessment and Measuring Progress* as well as a number of Appendices, which may be helpful to teachers when considering eligibility for an exemption from the study of Irish.

- Further information for schools may also be found in [Circular 0058/2019](#).
- If using online testing, schools must comply with data protection law.
- Schools should be mindful of the need to adhere to the criteria in the Circular and note that an attainment score is *just one element of the criteria* required when considering an application. Decision making is undertaken in the context of the school's recording of the students' response to interventions and supports overtime, as recorded in the individual's Student Support File.
- The school must also be satisfied that the identified significant learning difficulties are persistent despite targeted intervention as set out above.

Examples of some suitable assessment Tests

Decisions regarding the use of assessment instruments and the sharing and interpretation of assessment data should always be made in accordance with the individual schools' policies on assessment, SEN and data protection, and in accordance with best practice on test administration and usage.

Examples of discrete tests which schools may consider are included here. This list is not prescriptive or exhaustive but is intended to provide examples of suitable tests which schools may currently be using.

Word Reading	Reading Comprehension	Spelling
Wide Range Attainment Test (WRAT) 4/5 Word Reading	WRAT 4/5 Reading Comprehension	WRAT 4/5
Wechsler Individual Attainment Test 3 (WIAT 3) Word reading	WIAT 3 Reading Comprehension	WIAT 3 Spelling
Woodcock Johnson IV	Woodcock Johnson IV	Vernon Graded Word Spelling Test
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test 3 rd Edition (WRMT-III) (2011)	York Assessment of Reading Comprehension – (YARC) (has both primary and post primary norms)	The Diagnostic Spelling Test (DST) British Spelling Test 2 nd edition (BSTS2)
Diagnostic Reading Analysis (DRA3ED)	Diagnostic Reading Analysis (DRA3ED)	Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test (DPST)
Single Word Reading Test (SWRT)		
Hodder Oral Reading Test		
Lucid Assessment System for Schools (LASS)		Lucid Assessment System for Schools (LASS)

Qualifications of those conducting assessment tests

The Department is aware that some assessment instruments used for individual pupils and for groups of learners can be administered by teachers under the supervision of a suitably qualified person while other tests should only be administered and interpreted by appropriately qualified personnel depending on the nature of the instrument used.

Schools should check in advance with the test publisher on the specific qualifications required for each instrument used as some assessment instruments do not require a specialist qualification in SEN. Advice on the appropriate tests to use for a particular purpose and details regarding their administration is also available from NEPS, NCSE, NCGE and the test publishers themselves.

The [Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#) outline that Special Educational Needs teachers should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Post-Graduate Diploma in Special Education

The Department of Education and Skills annually facilitates teachers who wish to study for an approved post-graduate qualification in SEN. The Department supports a *Post-Graduate Diploma in Special Education* which is intended to provide a recognised Post-Graduate qualification for teachers working in the area of SEN and Special education teaching in mainstream primary and post-primary schools and for teachers in special classes, special schools/units and other relevant educational settings. The course is funded by the Department. For further information the school should consult [Circular 0008/2020](#) or its current successor.

Guidance Counsellors in post-primary schools

Guidance counsellors in post-primary schools are suitably trained and qualified to administer specialised psychometric tests, including tests of general ability. To support their professional practice and ongoing continuing professional development, guidance counsellors are encouraged to join the *Register of Psychometric Test Use: guidance counsellors*, maintained by the *Psychological Society of Ireland*.

NOTE: This guidance note will be reviewed periodically.