

September 2024

Dear Parents of Year 7,

I am writing to inform you that all Year 7 students will undertake a series of Cognitive Ability Tests, commonly referred to as CATs, next week. These will be delivered in the Sports Hall, over the course of three lessons and with a break in between.

Tuesday 24th September – students in teaching groups 7 L

Wednesday 25th September – students in teaching groups 7 R

CATs are undertaken across the country in the vast majority of schools. We will be working hard to ensure that our students are clear that they should not practice or revise, and that they do not need to be worried at all.

I have shared this information with Year 7 students via their tutors, and will also speak with them in an assembly on Monday 23rd September.

<https://support.gi-assessment.co.uk/knowledge-base/assessments/cat4-support/before-the-test/testing-send-and-eal-students/>

Overview of reasons why schools undertake CATs:

The Cognitive Abilities Test is an assessment that is designed to help students and their teachers understand how they learn and what their academic potential might be. It assesses how students think in areas that are known to make a difference to learning.

We know that for a variety of reasons some students attain better Key Stage 2 SAT scores than others at the end of Year 6, and that not all of these reasons are due to student's ability. Schools like to complement the Key Stage 2 SATs data with data from a very different set of tests, which measure underlying aptitude and may not have been recognised by the SATs test scores.

CATs are designed to give schools a much broader, more rounded view of each child, their potential and how they learn. Results help teachers decide about the pace of learning that is right for a student and whether additional support or challenge is needed.

As a school we can also use the CAT data to help us to identify undiagnosed specific learning difficulties. For example, those with a low non-verbal test score will be identified and can have further individual screening to identify learning need which can be shared with teachers.

Further reasons why secondary schools use CAT data.

Helping classroom teachers

Teachers use CAT data to inform in-lesson groupings and help create equitable learning in their mixed ability groups. Curriculum Leaders use CAT data when considering tiers of entry for GCSE examinations. All curriculum subjects' progress is measured from the average of SAT scores (completed in May of Year 6) for Reading and Mathematics. This might be reasonable for some curriculum areas, but in some subjects (for example, Art) the SATs outcomes for Maths and English might not be as useful as CAT data showing specific strengths and weaknesses.

Identification of strengths, under-achievement and post-16 pathways

The more we know about students, the more we can match learning to need. CAT data can be used to identify under-achievement – there are students who have 'average' attainment in SATs who indicate very highly in CAT data. Also, CAT data can allow our specialist careers team to identify students whose career paths may be best suited to "S.T.E.M." pathways (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Helping the Special Educational Needs department

Wyvern's Special Education Needs Department use an in-depth dyslexia testing system that relies on CAT data. CAT data is also useful in the cases of students for whom English is not their first language.

Measuring potential, not attainment

Unlike SATs, CAT data does not tell us a measure of attainment in a certain assessment at a certain point in time, rather it is a measure of *potential* that tests underlying ability and reasoning skills.

Further information about CATs, including frequently asked questions, can be found on the GL Assessment web site:

<https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/support/cat4-product-support/cat4-information-for-parents/>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



Mr Simon Stocks
Deputy Headteacher
Wyvern College



