

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams explains the National Reading and Numeracy Tests in Wales

Kirsty Williams said:

“Schools through the ages have always used tests to check how well children are doing. In the coming weeks, across Wales, all pupils in years two to nine will take the national reading and numeracy tests.

I want to be clear about why we have our national reading and numeracy tests – to assist our schools to plan next steps for learners to develop these core skills. The tests are not about ‘grading’ the pupil or for that matter the school.

Our national tests have been developed especially for use in Wales so that teachers in all schools have the same information on the reading and numeracy skills of their pupils. The tests take place in schools every year at the end of April, beginning of May.

There are two numeracy tests: a 30 minute test on procedural numeracy and a 30 minute test on numerical reasoning. The procedural test measures skills in things like numbers, measuring and data. The numerical reasoning test looks at how children can solve everyday problems.

There is also a one hour reading test, split into sections and with breaks for younger learners. The reading tests are made up of short questions based on two or more texts. Some of the questions check how well the text has been understood, others aim to find out if children are able to make judgements about what they are reading. Before the start of the test, children can try out some practice questions so that they will know what the different types of questions are like and what they may be asked.

The key to our approach in Wales is how we use what the tests tell us. They provide useful information to add to what a child’s teacher knows about their reading and numeracy from their work every day in the classroom. Teachers can use the results to identify strengths and also areas where a pupil may need more help and support. By the end of the summer term, a child’s school will give parents test results for each test that their child has taken. These reports show schools and parents how each learner has done in the tests, compared to all other learners in Wales of the same age. Of course, any test can only provide one piece of evidence of a learner’s work, and this needs to be considered alongside a

teacher's assessment of their work throughout the year.

The approach we have taken with tests is very different to England. Our numeracy and reading tests are designed to look at a pupils' annual progress and see what support they may need. The test results are not used to judge a school's performance and do not go towards 'ranking' the school, unlike in England where school league tables are informed by SATs results.

I am undertaking an ambitious programme of education reforms, which I describe as our national mission, to raise standards of literacy and numeracy and tackle the link between poverty and educational attainment. Our numeracy and reading tests will remain a key part of the way we help pupils achieve their full potential."