

# Understanding Assessments



## Cognitive Assessments

Are used in schools to assess a child's level of overall intellectual ability and their strengths and weaknesses to support their individual learning needs.

## Which children are referred for an assessment?

- Those who have language or learning difficulties
- Children who may have an intellectual disability or other developmental behaviour disorders
- Children who are gifted or have high intellectual potential
- Children who are not progressing at school, who may have a specific learning difficulty.



## What is the process?

- **Accessing Support - the school's role:**
- If your child is struggling in one or more areas, or falling behind, your teacher may recommend an assessment.
- This assessment is carried out by Student Support Services or SSS - *A Department of Education Service*.
- Before referring, the school will review previous recommendations and school actions.
- Your child's progress and any evidence of learning difficulties will be discussed.
- The school and SSS will identify strategies to provide support.

## What these assessments measure: 5 main areas of intelligence

### Processing Speed

A child's speed and accuracy of scanning information, mental processing, motor coordination and visual decision-making.

### Verbal Comprehension

A child's ability to understand what is being said, understanding verbal information. This is also their ability to use their vocabulary to express themselves.

### Fluid Reasoning

A child's ability to think flexibly to solve a new problem using planning and their skills and problem solving skills.



### Working Memory

A child's ability to keep in mind what they need to complete tasks. The ability to take in multiple bits of information, mentally work with it and hold onto it long enough to do some work.

### Visual/Spatial Intelligence

A child's spatial/non-verbal reasoning abilities. This is your child's ability to understand better if something is modelled in front of them. They may also be great with puzzles.

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## Understanding Results

It can be confusing to understand what a cognitive assessment has measured. **Percentile ranks and standard scores** are used to measure your child's results.

## Percentile Ranks

A child's percentile rank reflects how they did on the test compared to children the same age.

For instance, if we lined up 100 girls of the same age as Emily, in order of ability. The little girl sitting at position 1 would be the worst performing and 100 be the best. If Emily was in the 50th percentile, she would be performing better than 50% of children of the same age. The average range is between the 25th and 75th percentile.



## Standard Scores

All scores are converted into standard scores that help to place the child's results on that test into a particular range. These converted scores are used to determine where a child's cognitive abilities lie in comparison to other children the same age. **Any standard score between 90 and 109 falls within the Average Range.** *The Full Scale IQ* - is your child's IQ score and overall estimate of their abilities based on their performance across all of the tests.

Percentile <or =2	Percentile 2nd – 8th	Percentile 9th – 24th	Percentile 25th – 75th	Percentile 76th – 90th	Percentile 91st – 97th	Percentile >98th
Extremely Low	Very Low	Low Average range	Average range	High Average range	Very High	Extremely High
<b>Scores of &lt;70.</b>	Scores between 70-79	Scores between 80-89	Scores between 90-109	Scores between 110-119	Scores between 120-129	Scores of 130+

## ok, so now what do we do with the results? them to Think

Recommendations can help to develop a personalised learning plan for the child based on a child's profile. The psychological assessment provides a formal measurement and provides general recommendations.

**However, the cognitive assessment is just one step.**

Teachers, like those we have at Tutoring Works, who are trained in special education, now implement a plan and strategy to help your child to overcome their learning challenges and capitalise on their strengths.

Depending on the results, it is likely your child will require an independent learning plan at school and additional tutoring as educational support to help to bridge the gap between their current knowledge and where they need to be and to also act as an educational advocate for them.



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## Common Tests

The most commonly used cognitive assessments in Victorian schools are:

- Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI-IV) ages 2.6 to 7.
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) for children aged 6.0 to 16.11 years.

## How can I help my child?

- Discuss the assessment with teachers and tutors to ensure the best strategies are being used to support your child with their learning
- Break down tasks into smaller steps
- Emphasise and repeat key points
- Reduce distractions when asking your child to perform a task that is complex or new
- Your child's self-esteem may be at risk. It is very important that your child's classroom based work and homework is pitched at the right level that takes into account your child's difficulties so they can experience success.
- Encourage the development of your child's intellectual strengths and teach them strategies to overcome their weaknesses
- Be aware of the limitations of the IQ score and the narrow set of abilities the score represents
- Get regular updates about your child's progress from their teacher and tutor.



## Remember...

## The cognitive assessment is one test-

Successfully intelligent people realise that no one is good at everything. Einstein wasn't. Lincoln wasn't. Da Vinci wasn't. Galileo wasn't. The idea that there is a general factor of intelligence that can be measured by IQ is a myth that is only supported because the range of abilities they measure is narrow.

- Sternberg, IQ researcher.

