



23rd September 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: CAT and NGRT testing

I hope your son or daughter is settling well into life at Our Lady's and getting to grips with their lessons and new routines.

Clearly 2020 has and continues to be an exceptional year. Normally, your child would have completed their KS2 SAT tests in the summer, which secondary schools would then typically use to generate GCSE and vocational target grades for year 11. This year however, without KS2 SATS we are using a three tiered approach to establish your son or daughter's potential GCSE target grades in 2025.

- CAT and NGRT testing
- Primary School Teacher assessment
- English and Maths baseline testing

In line with many other schools nationally we have always used Cognitive Ability Tests or CAT tests to supplement and inform the target setting process, alongside their KS2 SAT results. The CAT tests are a suite of digital tests that assesses a student's reasoning or thinking abilities in key areas that support educational development and academic attainment. This year the CAT tests will form a significant part of the target setting process. The separate tests are:

- verbal reasoning – thinking with words
- quantitative reasoning – thinking with numbers
- non verbal reasoning – thinking with shapes
- spatial ability – thinking with shape and space

As well as CAT tests, your son or daughter's English and Maths teachers are also conducting baseline assessments in class so we can get an accurate picture of how they are doing in both of these important areas now they are with us.

Finally we are also in the process of assimilating your child's year 6 teacher assessments, so we have as accurate a picture as possible of their attainment during their final year in primary school.

These three different approaches will allow us to see the full picture of your child's academic potential. We are not expecting your child to prepare for any of these tests or assessments as we want to see their natural ability. Indeed these tests cannot be prepared for due to their nature. After one of the strangest years in education ever, we do not want your child to feel anxious about any upcoming tests and we would ask you to reassure your son or daughter not to worry about them, but just to try their best in each one.

We use target grades to ensure students, parents and teachers have appropriate expectations of the level your child is aiming for as they progress through their time in school, to ensure that work is not too hard or too easy and to report to you as parents at regular intervals throughout each year so you are always up-to-date with your child's current progress against their target grade. Please be assured that a target grade is not a limit that will place a cap on your child's progress, every year we have students who exceed their target grade sometimes by several grades. This is because we continually assess your son or daughter's progress and adjust work accordingly to ensure there is always appropriate stretch and challenge, so they can always maximise their own potential. In a different way a target grade is not a guarantee of future performance as many factors can detrimentally affect future progress such as attendance, engagement and homework.

Until now all our year 7 classes have been taught in mixed ability groups. Following October half term we will be using the three-tiered approach described above to rearrange students into parallel sets as covered in the parent's information video by Miss Duncan, which can still be found on the school website:

Joining Our School > year7 transition

<https://www.olcc.lancs.sch.uk/page/?title=Year+7+transition+2020&pid=140>

Your son or daughter will receive their new timetables in school. Please be assured that sets are continually monitored and students are able to move at key points in the year. Set moves are based on ongoing assessments and teacher judgement.

To ensure we have the fullest picture of your child, outside the GCSE target setting process, we are also giving your child New Group Reading Tests or NGRT tests. The NGRT test consists of sections on Phonics, Sentence Completion and Passage Comprehension. The test is adaptive; each student's performance is assessed as they complete the test and the questions are adapted to be in line with the ability they demonstrate.

The CAT and NGRT tests are scheduled for the week beginning the 28th September and will run over 2 weeks. **During this time please could you ensure your child brings their own headphones to each of their tests? This will ensure that there is no potential transmission of any possible infection at this time. If your child does not have their own standard 5mm headphones please let Miss Brogan know and we will ensure they can use the same school headphones for the duration of the test 2 week window.**

Should you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this process please contact me.

Yours sincerely



Des Coyle
Deputy Headteacher