



Droichead - Understanding Standard Scores – Post-primary

Circular 0014/2017 provides guidance on the implementation of standardised testing in primary and post-primary schools. The circular states that schools can use standardised tests to screen and identify students' performance in literacy and numeracy. Schools may use a cognitive ability test (for example CAT-4) for incoming first year students where standard scores are extrapolated. It is important that teachers are familiar with the range of scores and what they mean. However, the Circular cautions against using the test results as sole determinant of a student's ability; results of any one test should not be viewed in isolation. Other information such as parental input, psychological/OT reports, information from primary schools and teachers should be considered in conjunction with test results. (NEPS, 2010)

Standard scores usually go from 55 to 145. The table shown below describes what the different standard scores tell you about a student's achievement in the tests.

Standard score	What does the standard score mean?	Approximate percentage of children who get this score
130 and above	Very high	2%
120 - 129	High	7%
110 - 119	High average	16%
90 - 109	Average	50%
80 - 89	Low average	16%
70 - 79	Low	7%
Below 70	Very low	2%

If a student's standard score is between 90 and 109 for example, then their performance on the test is average. The table shows that approximately half of students in Ireland have standard scores in this range.

Circular 45/2014 stipulates that primary schools are required to use an Education Passport and to forward them to the relevant post-primary school, following confirmation of enrolment. (DES, 2014). Primary schools often record a student's achievement in standardised tests using STen scores.



You may see STen scores on a student's Education Passport when they transition from primary to post-primary school (NCCA, 2020).

A STen score scale is from 1 to 10. The table below describes the different STen scores.

STen score	What does the STen score mean?	Proportion of children with this score
8 - 10	Well above average	1/6 or almost 17%
7	High average	1/6 or almost 17%
5 - 6	Average	1/3 or almost 34%
4	Low average	1/6 or almost 17%
1 - 3	Well below average	1/6 or almost 17%

References

DES, 2014. Circular 0045/2014 Information in relation to Actions under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Standardised Testing, Reporting and Other Matters, Dublin: s.n.

NCCA, 2020. Education Passport. [Online]

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NCCA, nda. Information for Parents - Standard Score. [Online]

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NCCA, ndb. Information for Parents - STen Score. [Online]

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NEPS, 2010. A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools - Guidelines for Teachers. s.l.:DES.

