



Dear Parent/Carer,

My name is Pete Whitehouse and I am an Assistant Headteacher at The Emmbrook School. My main responsibilities include the assessment, recording and reporting of student progress.

I welcome you all and hope that your child has had a wonderful first few days with us. All the staff here are really excited about getting students settled in to school and getting stuck in to teaching and learning.

When a child starts with us, key subject areas will use the information from the Key Stage 2 SATS to help decide which group or set a student should be in. Whilst this data set is useful and provides real insight, we also like to look at other information available in order to have a more holistic understanding of a child's strengths. In order that we can ascertain a more standardized benchmark for each child in year 7, all students will be sitting CAT4 tests. These are a series of tests completed online.

The tests provide a rounded profile of student ability and will allow us to target support, provide the right level of challenge and make informed decisions about students' progress. It provides a unique profile of strengths and weaknesses across four batteries:

1. Verbal Reasoning – the ability to express ideas and reason through words is essential to subjects with a high language content, and the most obvious skill picked up by traditional assessment.
2. Non-verbal Reasoning – problem-solving using pictures and diagrams; skills which are important in a wide range of school subjects, including maths and science-based subjects.
3. Spatial Reasoning – the capacity to think and draw conclusions in three dimensions, needed for many STEM subjects, but not easily measured by other datasets.
4. Quantitative Reasoning – the ability to use numerical skills to solve problems, applicable well beyond mathematics.

The tests will take place in the week beginning Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September. They will take place in lessons. The provisional schedule for the testing is shown below.

Form	Date	Period
7A	Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> September	1 - 3
7B	Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> September	4 & 5
7B	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	1
7C	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	2 - 4
7D	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	5
7D	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	1 & 2
7E	Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	3 - 5
7F	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> September	1 - 3
7G	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> September	4 & 5
7G	Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> September	1
7H	Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> September	2 - 4

Once these are confirmed, I will let the students know when their tests will be closer to the time. Students will leave their timetabled lessons and be based in one of our ICT rooms. The tests are absolutely nothing to worry about and require no preparation.

Once the results of the CAT4 tests are known, these will be combined with other data (such as internal benchmark testing and primary school information) to help us ensure that your child is placed in the correct group.

The timeline for this means that, for the first few weeks at school, your child will mainly be taught in their tutor group class. As testing, assessment and teacher data becomes available, these classes will change.

If you have any questions around the CAT4 testing, please do not hesitate to contact me at the school. I hope your child settles in quickly and adjusts to life as part of The Emmbrook School.

Yours sincerely,

P Whitehouse (Assistant Headteacher)



## FAQ's

### What is CAT4?

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) is a diagnostic 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.

While many tests focus on a child's attainment in core subjects, CAT4 is 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.

Tasks involve thinking about shapes and patterns (Non-Verbal Reasoning), words (Verbal Reasoning), numbers (Quantitative Reasoning) and some questions are answered by mentally generating and transforming visual images (Spatial Ability).

CAT4 is based on years of research and development. The current edition took five years to develop and the involvement of 25,000 students across the UK. It is a well-known assessment in schools; teachers value its ability to provide an understanding of what a child is capable of rather than defining them by their understanding of a body of knowledge in particular subjects.

### How are CAT4 results used?

CAT4 provides teachers with information that can form the basis for discussions about how best a student can learn and reach his or her potential in school.

Teachers are provided with an individual profile of learning preference along with a range of indicators of likely future performance. Used with other information (such as results from Key Stage 2 SATs, for example), these data can support teaching and learning for all children.

### Can students practise for CAT4?

We strongly advise against any kind of practice ahead of a CAT4 test as this will alter the reliability of test scores. The point of CAT4 is that it is not a test of learnt knowledge and it needs to be as unaffected as possible by any external factors, such as practice. Think of it like an eye test; if you practice ahead of an eye test and memorise the card, your diagnosis may not be correct and valuable information may be missed.

CAT4 is a timed assessment and is administered under formal conditions. However, each section of the assessment includes introductory information with practice examples, and these will familiarise the children with the style and format of the questions. These sections are not timed and may be repeated.

### Is additional time allowed for children with SEND?

CAT4 is a timed assessment and additional time is not permitted as this will affect the reliability of the results. CAT4 is not just about what and how it tests but how the questions are answered within a set timeframe. The timed element makes it diagnostically very powerful.

CAT4 subtests are generously timed and most children reach the final questions, however there may have been a minority of students during the standardisation process who would have obtained higher scores if they had been given more time. Therefore, giving extra time to a particular student could give an inflated view of their relative ability when comparing their results with the CAT4 norms.