

Dynamic versus standardised cognitive assessments

There are different types of cognitive assessments that might be used in one-to-one work with children.

Standardised assessments are designed so that questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent, and standardised scores can be created. These can compare a child's scores to the range that would be expected considering their age. Examples of such assessments include the British Ability Scales (BAS) and the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC). However, it is important to note that a child's performance on a standardised test is not a reflection of their potential, and research highlights that IQ is not fixed; children can learn and be taught the necessary skills in order to make progress.

Why might I sometimes choose to do a **standardised assessment**?

- To explore different cognitive skills, and relative strengths and needs currently experienced.
- To compare this to what might be 'typical' expectations at that age/developmental stage.
- To identify a baseline of where the child/young person is at now.
- To measure in a standardised way the product of past experiences or the outcome of new learning. This can be helpful in research or measuring intervention progress.
- To gain an insight into how a child responds within a standardised assessment, which is a key part of our educational system e.g. examinations.
- To gain a more objective measure that is not reliant on (possibly subjective) assessor opinion and when the assessor needs to remain neutral.
- When there are within-child factors related to learning needs (e.g. specific learning difficulties) that need to be further unpicked.

Dynamic assessment is an approach that focuses on *how* children learn, not what they know. When the child experiences difficulty within the assessment, mediation (/support) is provided to develop their skills. This identifies how they apply new strategies and what helps move them to a higher level of performance. Examples of such assessments include the Children's Analogical Thinking Modifiability Test (CATM) and Raven's matrices.

Why might I choose to do a **dynamic assessment**?

- When the school already have information regarding cognitive strengths and needs, and norm comparisons.
- When a child has difficulties with language or affective factors (e.g. motivation, anxiety, impulsivity) that would impact on their test scores.
- To unpick their cognitive strengths and needs in a flexible and non-linear way.
- To explore and assess the affective factors that might be influencing learning.
- To explore their approaches to learning, and the strategies and processes used (rather than just their performance/the outcome of testing).
- When you want to administer assessment activities that create opportunities for success, end on positives, and build a child's confidence and beliefs around learning.
- To understand what strategies/mediation/teaching helps them learn best to inform support in the classroom and to look at what environmental factors can be changed to help them make progress.
- When I want to deliver intervention, rather than just assessment, to bring about change.
- To be able to model/demonstrate what is possible in learning to the young person, but also to others (e.g. class staff, family etc).
- To explore the impact of providing intervention and reinforcement.
- To retest hypotheses and measure progress following intervention.
- To help the child generalise skills learnt from intervention to the classroom.

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