



Be the Best that You can Be

# Cedarwood School

113-117 Dunmaglass Road, Glenferness  
PO Box 812, Witkoppen, 2068  
Telephone: (011) 465 9830, (011) 467 4889, (011) 467 4657 / 072 617 5291  
Fax: 086 654 9727  
E-mail: [admin@cedarwoodschool.co.za](mailto:admin@cedarwoodschool.co.za)  
[www.cedarwoodschool.co.za](http://www.cedarwoodschool.co.za)



## Psychoeducational Assessments Unpacked

The thought of an assessment often leaves a person feeling anxious, uncertain and unprepared, a feeling we can all recall from the grueling processing of a driving license exam. The more we understand about the process, the more we can be prepared and benefit. This newsletter hopes to unpack a few key aspects of Psychoeducational Assessments in order to know how this process can be beneficial and most effective. Common questions include:



- **What is the purpose?**

A Cognitive or Psychoeducational assessment is most often used in order to gain insight into the current functioning of a child; in terms of how they think, reason, explore strengths and areas of difficulty that impact their learning and development. If we stick to the driving analogy -this would be like taking your car to the garage because of a strange sound; or for a service so that it can run optimally. A Psychoeducational assessment includes a cognitive assessment, scholastic assessment and an emotional screening.



### **Cognitive assessment (IQ) include:**

- ✓ **Visual Processing;** understanding and working with pictures
- ✓ **Verbal Reasoning;** using and understanding words and instructions
- ✓ **Fluid Reasoning;** problem solving when faced with new information
- ✓ **Working Memory;** how much information they can take in and hold in mind
- ✓ **Processing Speed;** the pace at which they manage clerical tasks

### **Scholastic assessments include:**

- ✓ **Reading;** including their word attack with sight words, nonsense words, comprehension, and speed and accuracy in reading paragraphs
- ✓ **Writing;** including spelling, writing sentences and longer paragraphs and the quality and speed of their handwriting
- ✓ **Maths;** routine calculations on paper, problem solving and fluency in basic bonds

The foundations of reading, writing and maths are required in all subjects, in classwork, exam writing and life skills. Therefore, understanding your child's performance in these skills can inform support requirements.



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**Emotional screening** includes asking the child to draw pictures, complete sentences or reflect on how often they feel different emotions and what might trigger them. It is important in order to identify if a child's feelings are contributing to or creating an obstacle to their performance in class, tests and exams.

All of this information helps us understand if the child needs additional support, intervention or concessions in order to give them the opportunity to work closest to their potential. At times, only one aspect of the assessment process will need to be considered when trying to understand a specific area of your child's functioning. Speak to the Psychologist assessing your child about the purpose you hope to achieve and make sure that your questions are answered in the initial meeting and the feedback.

- **What can I expect from the feedback?**

The goal of the feedback meeting is to give you a better understanding of how your child thinks, reasons and learns. Answer any questions or concerns you have about their performance or wellbeing.



Psychologists often refer to a bell curve to establish where your child scored within the norm or expectations, but can also help you understand why they might have performed in this way or how this might impact other areas of academic and practical functioning.

Sharing this information with other professionals after the feedback is generally the next step to make the information meaningful.

Working together as a team, with the psychologist and other professionals can help your child generalize new skills and support structures within the home and school environment.

- **What do I do with the report?**

A Psychoeducational assessment report often seems long and technical; however this is about your child. Read through it and try to understand it. Check that the background information is accurate and reflects what you feel is important. If you are uncertain or confused about any of the report because of the terminology or detail, let the Psychologist know so that it can be made more meaningful. This document was created for you and your child first and foremost.

Always keep a copy of the report, preferably electronic and hard copy. This becomes an important document to consider when entering new environments, making changes or when an updated assessment is considered. Think about how valuable it is to have a Full Service History available when selling or buying a car.

The Psychologist will also keep a copy of the report; however will not release it without written consent. It is highly recommended that you share the report with all professionals working with your child; including neurologists or psychiatrists, therapists and teachers. The more these professionals have an understanding of how your child learns, the more your child will feel supported and understood.



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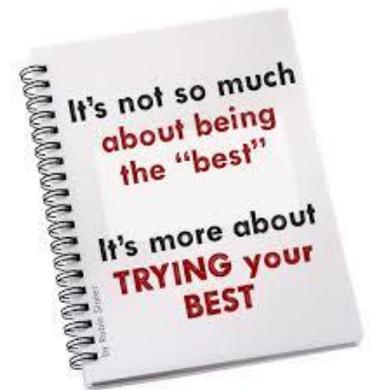
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## • How can I prepare my child for the assessment?

- **Communicate the change of routine** in advance, to reduce anxiety. Let your child know that they'll be doing different work with somebody other than their teacher. If you can give them a heads up about when, where and with who they will be working, this always helps.
  - *Don't tell them it will be fun or they will play -although the assessor will make them as comfortable as possible, the majority of time used will be challenging them and it is a lot of work and they will likely feel tired afterwards.*
- **They will be asked to look at pictures and answer questions about what they know and what they think.** They are not expected to know everything or to learn or study; it would be best if they have a good, early sleep the night before, eat a healthy breakfast and pack a snack or something to drink.
- **Remember** to take medication or glasses or any supportive devices which they use in class to help on the day.
- This is not a test and will not show on their school report -but we still want to see the best work that they can do. **Encourage them to try their hardest** and let them know that this will make you proud.
- They can be encouraged to ask questions and communicate when they don't know or are uncomfortable. Brain Breaks or bathroom breaks will be given if they are tired or in need of a rest. The more they tell the assessor what they are thinking, the more they can work together to figure out the best way their teachers or parents can help when things get tough.



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