

What is CAT4?

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) is an 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.

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 involves 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 is CAT4 used?

CAT4 provides teachers with information that can form the basis for discussions about how best a student can learn and reach their 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, these data can support teaching and learning for all children.

How does CAT4 compare to an exam?

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.

Should my child revise or train for CAT4? Can I get practice tests?

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.

Can I contact you with my questions about the test?

If you have any concerns or questions about the test, please contact your school. Please note that only schools can buy the CAT4 assessment.