NOTES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

INTERPRETING SCORES ON THE DRUMCONDRA PRIMARY READING TEST-REVISED

What is the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test – Revised?

As directed by the Department of Education and Skills, starting from the 2011-2012 school year, it is a requirement for schools to assess pupil's reading, using standardised tests such as the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test-Revised (DPRT-R), in 2nd, 4th, and 6th classes annually. The DPRT-R is administered to groups of children by their class teacher, following procedures outlined in the test manual. The DPRT-R is based on the types of texts and reading comprehension processes outlined in 1999 Primary School English Curriculum.

Level 1 of the DPRT-R, which is typically administered to children at the end of First class or at the beginning of Second class, consists of 102 multiple-choice type questions distributed over three subtests: Reading Vocabulary (understanding of word meanings), Reading Comprehension (understanding of sentences and longer texts), and Word Analysis (ability to recognise words with similar sound and spelling patterns). The examples below are intended to give an idea of the types of questions children taking Level 1 of the DPRT-R are expected to answer. Question 1 requires children to identify the word that is closest in meaning to the underlined word, while Question 2 requires them to read the text and select the object that the text is mostly about.

Sample Questions – Level 1 (End of First Class/Beginning of Second Class)

Sample Question 1	Sample Question 2
The children <u>reached</u> the end of the road. **A.** crossed **B.** arrived at **C.** looked for **D.** saw	I am tall and strong. I grow leaves in Spring. Birds build their nests on me. What am I? **A.** A tree. **B.** A hill. **C.** An egg. **D.** A bear.

Level 2 of the DPRT-R, which is typically administered to children at the end of Second class or at the beginning of Third class, consists of 98 multiple-choice type questions distributed over three subtests: Reading Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Word Analysis. The examples below are intended to give an idea of the types of question children taking Level 2 of the DPRT-R are expected to answer. Question 3 requires children to identify the word that is closest in meaning to the underlined word, while Question 4 requires them to read the text and select the object that the text is mostly about.

Sample Questions – Level 2 (End of Second Class/Beginning of Third Class)

Sample Question 3	Sample Question 4
The children <u>reached</u> the end of the road. **A.** crossed **B.** arrived at **C.** looked for **D.** saw	*(Based on the preceding story)* The story is mainly about. . . **A.** how to climb a mountain. **B.** where to find a crock of gold. **C.** how to win a fight. **D.** how to be fair.

Levels 3-6 of the DPRT-R, which are typically administered to children from end of third class through to sixth class, consist of 76 multiple-choice type questions, distributed over two subtests: Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension. The examples below are intended to give an idea of the types of questions children taking Levels 3-6 of the DPRT-R are expected to answer. Sample questions 5 and 6 are vocabulary questions, while sample questions 7 and 8 are comprehension questions.

Sample Questions – Senior Classes (End of Third Class – End of Sixth Class)

Sample Question 5	Sample Question 7
They had <u>an anxious</u> wait. **A.** a lengthy **B.** an uneasy **C.** an unusual **D.** a relaxed	*(Based on a previously read text)* In the passage, Ceres is described as. . . **A.** a dwarf planet. **B.** a satellite. **C.** a new sun. **D.** an ecosystem.
Sample Question 6	**Sample Question 8**
Their actions were <u>decisive</u>. **A.** dangerous **B.** unexpected **C.** definite **D.** late	*(Based on a previously read text)* This story is mainly about. . . **A.** how to make friends. **B.** why we all need friends. **C.** where to find help if you need it. **D.** how friends can hurt us.

Why are there subtests?
Subtests such as Word Analysis (First and Second classes only), Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension, are intended to measure different aspects of reading. Nevertheless, children who do well on one subtest usually do well on the others. To do well on Reading Comprehension, children need to be able to read the words and understand their meanings as well as apply a range of comprehension skills. Total (Overall) Reading scores on the DPRT-R are based on children's combined scores on Reading Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension.

What do the test scores mean?

In developing the DPRT-R, the test was administered to nationally-representative samples of about 2000 children at each class level. The results were used to develop test norms. The test norms allow teachers to compare the performance of an individual pupil in their class with that of other pupils nationally at the same class level.

The results of standardised tests may be reported in terms of Raw Scores, Standard Scores, Sten Scores, or Percentile Ranks.

The **Raw Score** corresponds to the number of questions answered correctly by the child. Thus, on a test of 40 questions, a raw score of 20 means that the child answered half of the questions correctly.

In standardising a test, Raw Scores are transformed to **Standard Scores** (sometimes called Scale Scores). Standard Scores tell you the position of a child relative to other children nationally. On most standardised tests, the average Standard Score is set at 100. The following table may be helpful in interpreting Standard Scores. It provides a descriptor for scores in each of several score ranges, and also indicates how the performance of a child may be interpreted relative to other children in the norm group.

Standard Score Range	Descriptor	Achievement - Nationally
115 and above	Well above average	Top one-sixth of pupils
108-114	High average	One-sixth of pupils
93-107	Average	Middle one-third of pupils
85-92	Low average	One-sixth of pupils
84 and below	Well below average	Bottom one-sixth of pupils

Thus, a Standard Score of 120 is considered to be 'well above average', and indicates a strong performance on a test. Fewer than one-sixth of children achieve a score that is this high or higher. A Standard Score of 88 is in the 'low average' range, and would indicate a 'low average' performance. A Standard Score of 84 or lower would indicate a 'well below average' performance.

Performance on standardised tests may also be reported in terms of a **Sten Score**. These scores are on a scale of 1 to 10. The following table may be useful in interpreting Sten Scores:

Sten Score Range	Descriptor	Achievement - Nationally
8-10	Well above average	Top one-sixth of pupils
7	High average	One-sixth of pupils
5-6	Average	Middle one-third of pupils
4	Low average	One-sixth of pupils
1-3	Well below average	Bottom one-sixth of pupils

Thus, a Sten Score of 2 indicates that a child performed 'well below average' on the test relative to other children at the child's class level nationally. A Sten Score of 5 indicates that the child achieved a score in the 'average' range, while a Sten Score of 9 indicates 'well above average' performance on the test.

Finally, a child's score may be reported in terms of a **Percentile Rank**. A child with a Percentile Rank of 40, achieved a score on the test that was the same as, or better than 40% of children nationally, and lower than 60% of children nationally. Similarly, a Percentile Rank of 70, means that the child did as well as, or better than 70% of children nationally, and less well than 30% of children nationally.

How accurate are achievement test scores?

Unfortunately, there is error associated with all test scores. A child's test score, whether a Raw Score, Standard Score, Sten Score or Percentile Rank, is an estimate of his or her true score. If a child achieves a Standard Score of 115, it indicates that the child's 'true' score is probably in a range or band of scores around 115. For example, we might say that there is a 68% chance that the child's true score falls in the range 112 to 118. This means that your child's score on a test such as the DPRT-R is an estimate of his/her 'true' achievement rather than a precise measure. It also implies that small differences between scores are probably not meaningful.

What should I do if my child gets a low score?

Since the DPRT-R is a norm-referenced test, some children will achieve low scores. About one-sixth of children will achieve scores that are 'well below average'. These include Standard Scores that are below 85, and Sten Scores between 1 and 3. If your child achieves a low score, you should discuss this with the child's teacher. First, find out if the low score reflects the child's performance in class. If it does, it may be appropriate to explore ways in which your child's below average performance can be addressed. This may entail additional diagnostic testing by the school to pinpoint specific strengths and weaknesses in reading, and the provision of extra support at home and/or at school.

How can I improve my child's reading achievement?

The following activities are intended to develop the reading skills of children at all levels of reading ability:

- Visit a library or bookshop on a regular basis and talk to your child about the books. Ask your child which books s/he likes most, and why.
- Encourage your child to read at a particular time every day – for example, before meals, or at bedtime.
- Encourage your child to read the news sections of newspapers or websites, and summarise what s/he has read.
- Encourage your child to read books based on favourite television programmes or films.
- Read reviews of television programmes, films, or computer programs with your child.
- Discuss with your child what s/he has read. Ask him/her to tell you why s/he liked (or disliked) a story/or other text.
- Discuss ways in which books your child has read are related to activities in school, or to television programmes/or films.