

Case Study

Improving learning, teaching and parental engagement at Olashore International School



At Olashore International School, GL Education’s assessments are helping to evidence the value the school adds in nurturing each child to their full potential.

Olashore International School is a leading selective boarding school based in rural south-west Nigeria. Its 500 students are primarily Nigerian, studying a combined British and Nigerian curriculum over six years.

Children sit exams at the end of Year 9 – the national end of compulsory education – then IGCSEs and WASSCEs (West African Secondary School Certificate Exams) at the end of Year 12.

Derek Smith, principal of Olashore, comments: “Our educational system means there are only two points across the six years where we get indicators of our students’ progress. Internally, extensive formal assessments are taken very seriously, but these don’t always allow you to benchmark results independently. It can be hard to get a measure of how your students are progressing on an international scale.

“We’d reached the point where our results were excellent, but we were keen to see how we compared to other national and international schools. We wanted evidence as to how much value we were adding to our students academically, and to see how we were living up to our mission statement of nurturing each child to their full potential.”

Demonstrating best progress

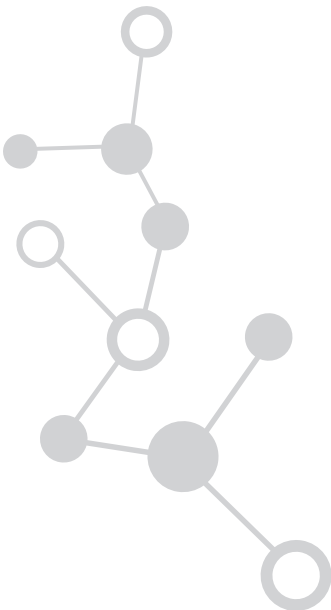
Two years ago, the school decided to run a pilot programme using three assessments from GL Education; the *Cognitive Abilities Test: Fourth*

edition (CAT4), Progress Test in Maths and Progress Test in English. CAT4 assesses a pupil’s ability to reason using verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial ability tasks, whereas the Progress Tests assess attainment of English and maths skills and concepts.

Derek continues: “I had previously used these assessments in the UK, and knew they were reliable. As we are located three hours outside Lagos, our internet access is limited so we thought we’d try paper-based assessment. We focused on Year 7 and Year 10, the first years of Junior and Senior secondary, so we would have a good benchmark for pupils starting their three year journey with us.

“In the first year, there were a few challenges. Returning papers to the UK for marking made the process slower than we would have liked. It was difficult to know how to distribute results to parents and, with no historical data, we knew we’d be unable to see what we were really looking for – were the children making progress?”

“However, what really gave us a lift was the response from parents. We gave them the full analysis report from CAT4 – with the exception of Key Stage 3 indicators, as we don’t use these levels – and it was very well received. Parents really appreciated the depth of detail and such clear information in a format they could easily understand.”



Challenging expectations

The extremely warm reception from parents spurred the school on to fully implement the programme from Year 7 to Year 11.

“We’d spent a year working on our internet and, although we are still not high-speed, we were able to move to online testing. We’re now using the results from *CAT4* to set targets for IGCSE results and have also looked at expected grades data across each department and each year group. We also compare Year 7 standardised age scores from *CAT4* with the *Progress Test* scores to benchmark the level of students entering our school.

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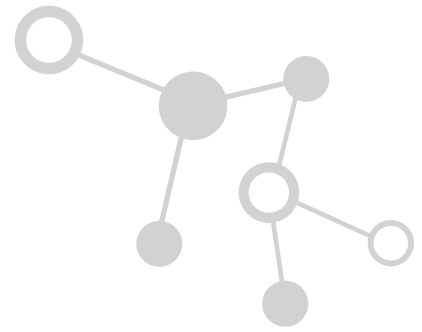
Reporting to parents and governors

The reaction from governors has been very good as they can clearly see how the school is progressing, while parents continue to be thrilled with the details of independent benchmarking.

“The *CAT4* report lists best subjects first and provides expected grades. Parents very much like the individual summaries which give insight into learning profiles, strengths and areas for support. We’ve also found it a useful way of explaining to parents some things we do in school that aren’t always found in a traditional Nigerian education system, such as one student helping another.

“With Year 9 parents, identifying strengths can be very useful for option choices, especially for students who are strong across the board. Some students have also told me it’s useful leverage with their parents if they want to study social sciences, rather than become doctors or lawyers.

“We then sent a letter with the *Progress Test* results, including percentile rank and standardised age scores which, again, went down well. There were a small number of students whose scores went down – knowing this provides us with an opportunity to discuss what is happening with both the student and parents and to put interventions in place if necessary.”



Closing the triangle

This year, Olashore decided to trial the attitudinal survey, *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)*, which looks at nine factors proven to be linked to educational goals.

“As a boarding school, children live with us for up to 13 weeks without going home, so it’s important to know how they are responding. *PASS* gives a much deeper insight into how children feel about school than we can get from other sources, and it only takes 20 minutes.

“For example, we saw that Year 7 girls had a low score in ‘response to the curriculum’, one of the measures from the *PASS* survey, so we are looking at what we can do. Do we need to make learning more relevant to work they have covered in primary schools perhaps? Or do we need to emphasize the future usefulness of what they are learning?”

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“In these early days, I’m conscious that we are only scratching the surface of what we’ll eventually be able to gain, both academically and pastorally, from the information the assessments provide us. However, we’re already seeing an impact and this will only increase as time goes by.”

Benefits for Olashore International of GL Education assessments

- Enables school to track progress for each year group, setting interventions and support across cohorts or departments as necessary
- Helps to set realistic targets for external exams
- Benchmarks school and students on an international scale
- Empowers students to set targets for themselves, giving them an opportunity to manage their own progress and learning
- Provides a basis to consider option choices and career guidance, leading to better choices at Year 9
- Enables success to be measured for the board of governors via independent benchmarking
- Gives parents confidence that the school is delivering the best possible education for their children

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