



## ASK THE EXPERT

# “That lightbulb moment”

James O’Brien explains how GL Assessment’s CAT4 can help teachers spot students’ hidden potential

### What is CAT4?

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) provides you with a rounded profile of a student. It measures the main areas of reasoning ability known to make a difference to learning, and helps teachers understand how students learn, what barriers to learning they may have and their academic potential. It’s a standardised assessment, so results are robust, consistent and are benchmarked nationally and over time. It requires no preparation, and is suitable for students up to 17+.

### What do schools use it for?

As it focuses on reasoning ability, rather than attainment, CAT4 allows teachers to see what students are capable of – particularly when triangulated with other assessments and teacher judgement. It also allows schools to understand what students can do at GCSE and A level, and includes retrospective KS2 indicators. CAT4 provides a snapshot in time, but its stability and consistency have made it especially valuable at transition and KS3 over the last few years.

### What surprising features does CAT4 have that teachers may be unaware of?

It’s excellent at uncovering hidden potential, often providing teachers with ‘that lightbulb moment’. It can pinpoint the abilities of EAL students who may struggle verbally but score highly on non-verbal, quantitative or spatial skills, for example, or children who have high verbal skills but who struggle with numbers. And CAT4 is multi-functional – it helps subject teachers advise on GCSE choice, SENCOs identify who needs additional support, and provides SLT with a reference point for every year group.



### EXPERT PROFILE

**NAME:**  
James O’Brien

**JOB TITLE:**  
Head of Assessment Insights

**AREA OF EXPERTISE:**  
Standardised assessment

**BEST PART OF MY JOB:**  
Being part of a team dedicated to helping schools improve pupil outcomes through better assessment

### How does your link with Fischer Family Trust (FFT) benefit schools?

Our partnership with FFT allows schools to upload CAT4 scores into FFT Aspire, which then generates GCSE estimates for all students. This helps teachers set targets for students in every subject, to monitor progress and estimate likely outcomes at GCSE. Teachers can also access summaries and benchmark estimates of gender and prior attainment groups. This service is due to be rolled out across all secondary year groups in the autumn term.

### What ongoing support is included with CAT4?

In addition to account management support, we also provide free online training resources and one-to-one data consultations with our Assessment Insights team, which is made up of former teachers. This gives an additional layer of insight, helping schools extract the most useful information from their data. We also offer interactive reports at school group level, for SLT, classroom teachers, parents and students that highlight individual and group strengths and weaknesses, suggest interventions, and provide national comparisons.

## ASK ME ABOUT

**DATA INSIGHTS** - How teachers can extract the maximum benefit from assessment and use it to implement tailored interventions for students

**WORKLOAD** - How school leaders can use data to reduce the burden on teachers and inform learning

**COLLABORATION** - How schools can integrate assessments to allow teachers and leadership teams to work more effectively together

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