



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## **Personalised assessments – IT guidance for schools**



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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

**OGL**

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## Introduction

This guide has been produced to help schools prepare for the introduction and continued roll out of the personalised assessments.

Please note that technical details in this document may be updated from time to time. You should check Hwb at [hwb.gov.wales/personalised-assessments](http://hwb.gov.wales/personalised-assessments) for the latest version of this guidance.

Learners access the assessments at school using Hwb, the Welsh Government's learning platform, at [hwb.gov.wales/](http://hwb.gov.wales/). Staff members can schedule and facilitate assessments, and download reports on individual learners and classes, via a dedicated website accessed by logging into Hwb. **All users – learners and staff members – will require their Hwb log-in.** For information on how users find Hwb usernames and passwords see the link at [hwb.gov.wales/getting-started](http://hwb.gov.wales/getting-started).

We recommend that you read the Welsh Government's Education Digital Standards at [hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards](http://hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards). You will find this resource helpful when managing your digital technology environment to facilitate learning.

Many schools will have internal IT support and will already be confident in their system and its ability to run the assessments. If you have questions relating to your school's IT system, the first point of contact should be your school's digital champion.

## How to make the most of your school's internet connection

Once devices access your school's network, the following factors can impact on the strength and reliability of your internet connection.

Factor	Explanation	Recommendation
<b>Network infrastructure</b>  This includes network cabling, routers, network switches and wireless access points. If these are not appropriately maintained, your school's network may experience slow speeds and unresponsiveness.	It is important to check and maintain your network infrastructure. Plan to regularly review it – this will provide a solid foundation for all your digital services and help you get the most from your internet connection.	Contact your local authority for advice on your current network infrastructure and ask how they can support you.  Address any weaknesses in your infrastructure – this will help maximise the availability of your internet connection.
<b>Competing demands on your internet connection</b>	Think of your school network (especially your Wi-Fi) as your home water	Check when lessons are scheduled to be using media-rich content. This will

<p>Having simultaneous lessons using media-rich content (such as streaming videos) can lead to a reduction in your speed and impact the end-user experience.</p>	<p>supply – all taps in the house share the one water supply. The fewer taps running, the better the flow rate.</p> <p>Better management of traffic and data used across your school network will help you to make the most of your internet connection and improve your users' experience.</p>	<p>help your school plan activities that rely on the internet connection.</p> <p>For further guidance on making the most of your internet connection please visit the Education Digital Standards webpage at <a href="https://hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards">https://hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards</a>.</p>
<p><b>Software and application updates</b></p> <p>These include the operating system, security software and other application updates, which can impact on your school's internet speed.</p>	<p>If software and applications are updating in the background while an assessment is being delivered, the learner's experience can be impacted by slow responses.</p> <p>Some devices allow automatic updates to be disabled or specific times to be set when these updates can run.</p>	<p>Contact your local authority for advice on how to manage software and application updates successfully.</p>

## Checking internet connection and bandwidth

Typically you will need a minimum bandwidth of 2Mbps if you are assessing a class of 30 learners, with no other significant demands on the network at the time.

The maximum load on the network occurs at the start of the assessment. This is not a timed assessment so there is no need (for fairness or other reasons) to start all learners at exactly the same time. Allowing learners to start as they are ready and settled will allow a slightly staggered start which will spread the load on your network.

Before you schedule assessments, we recommend checking your internet connection and bandwidth by contacting your internet provider **or** going to [www.speedtest.net/](http://www.speedtest.net/), clicking 'Go', then recording the download and ping speed. A 'ping test' measures the bandwidth or reaction time of your school's connection – how fast you get a response after you've sent out a request. A fast ping means a more responsive connection<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: the speed test is available as a free service on a site that contains advertisements. For this reason it is sometimes blocked on a school network. If this is the case, please speak to your internet provider. Other comparable services are available.

Schools schedule their own learners using the scheduling tools on the assessment website. This enables schools to stagger how many learners take an assessment on the same day; additionally, the assessment may be started at any time between 8a.m. and 5p.m. to manage the number of learners using the network at one time. Reducing the number of concurrent assessments can help reduce the strain on your school's internet connection and bandwidth.

For example, if you experience the symptoms outlined above, you should reduce the number of learners taking concurrent assessments and run a speed and ping test. Record the download and ping speeds along with the number of concurrent users and check if these symptoms persist.

An assessment helpline is available to assist with any problems experienced by schools and to advise on next steps. Schools can contact the Assessment Helpdesk on 029 2026 5099 or [help@personalisedassessments.wales](mailto:help@personalisedassessments.wales).

## Devices

The assessments have been designed to be compatible with:

- desktop computers
- laptops
- tablets

that have a modern browser installed (see 'Browser requirements'). Before running an assessment, you should ensure your devices are fully charged and checked for updates. We recommend that operating systems and apps are regularly updated.

Please be aware that Windows 7 will no longer be supported by Microsoft in January 2020. Schools are encouraged to upgrade to use the Hwb national licensing arrangements and upgrade to Windows 10. Please work with your digital champion and local authority/IT support partner to ensure that your systems are up to date.

## Browser requirements

You should use one of the following browsers (these are the minimum browser requirements<sup>2</sup>):

- Internet Explorer 11
- Mozilla Firefox 55
- Google Chrome 59
- Safari 10.

**Please note:** Microsoft Edge is not currently a supported browser. While the personalised assessments website can be accessed using Edge it will not allow users to launch the Reading Personalised Assessments if the Edge browser version

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the recommended browser for access with a screen reader is JAWS operating with Internet Explorer 11.

is below Version 77. We understand that Edge is due to be updated to Version 77 in Microsoft Windows in early 2020.

## Checklist to prepare for personalised assessments

1. If you haven't done so already, please read the Welsh Government's digital guidance for schools at [hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards](https://hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards). This site will guide your school on checking and maintaining IT infrastructure, making the most of your internet connection and managing software/application updates.
2. Before you schedule assessments, be aware of other lessons using media-rich content and consider how this will impact running the assessments.
3. Check devices are fully charged, have a modern browser installed and software updates are complete before any scheduled assessments take place.
4. Check that you have a supported browser on each device used to take online assessments – **please note** that Microsoft Edge is not currently supported and will not launch the Reading Personalised Assessments if the browser version is lower than Version 77.

For further information regarding internet and school IT infrastructure please visit the Education Digital Standards webpage at <https://hwb.gov.wales/support-centre/education-digital-standards>.

Remember:

- **plan ahead** – work with your local authority/IT support partner to ensure the network capabilities and devices are adequate; when you schedule the personalised assessment understand how many users will be accessing the system concurrently
- **prepare** – ensure other teachers are aware assessments are being taken so that other demands on the system are minimised; check you have Hwb logins for all learners (and they work); turn on all devices you plan to use and ensure they are all up to date and fully charged
- **on the day** – keep an eye on how the assessments are running; refer to the guidance; contact the helpdesk if required; make a note of any issues and feedback to your local authority/IT support partner if necessary.