Guidance and information for teachers

5th Edition

NGRT Digital

All students require headphones to access this test.

Introduction

The New Group Reading Test (*NGRT*) was published in a paper edition in September 2010. It comprised four levels of tests with equivalent forms for students from age six to 16.

This digital edition departs in two significant ways from the paper test on which it is based:

1. it is adaptive;
2. it comprises three equivalent forms (A, B and C) which may be administered to students across the age range seven to 16.

Results from trialling the digital test with children in Year 1 demonstrated that the method of answering the questions was a barrier to such young children and their performance was significantly lower when tested with the digital edition rather than the paper edition. *NGRT Digital*, therefore is suitable for the following year groups:

NGRT Digital Form	Year Group		
	England and Wales	**Scotland**	**Northern Ireland**
A	Years 2–11	P3–S5	P3–Year 12
B	Years 2–11	P3–S5	P3–Year 12
C	Years 2–11	P3–S5	P3–Year 12

When to test

We recommend administering *NGRT Digital* three times a year: once in each term. This will allow the most effective monitoring of reading progress.

Another possible way of using *NGRT Digital* would be to screen all students in the first term of the year. This screening can identify weaker readers for whom an intervention can be put in place. The intervention group can be screened again in the second term, and all students again in the third term.

The recent addition of a third digital form does not in any way hinder schools who may be used to using *NGRT Digital* once a year or twice a year - it can still be used in the same way.

Adaptive testing with *NGRT*

The *NGRT* digital edition comprises the unaltered content of the paper tests. However, this is presented in a way that allows students' reading to be tested according to their performance as they are taking the test rather than by age or year group. An analysis of the difficulty of all questions in the paper tests has been carried out in order to create the adaptive, digital test.

Like the paper edition, *NGRT Digital* comprises three sections: phonics, sentence completion and passage comprehension. However, the digital test is adaptive and each student's performance is assessed as they complete the test and the questions adapted to be in line with the ability they demonstrate. This is a benefit, particularly to students with weak skills – they can be tested with material at a lower level than that determined by age – and for students with high level skills as they can be tested with material that better reflects their ability.

Students enter the test according to their age. All start with the sentence completion section. Depending on the score from this part of the test, they will be moved on to the passage comprehension section or be given the phonics tasks. Those who complete the phonics tasks will not be presented with the passage comprehension. **Testing time will be approximately 30 minutes. However, please note that as *NGRT Digital* is adaptive the time taken to test each student will vary, so some will finish before others.**

The sequence of questions in the sentence completion section is based on the probability of a student answering a question correctly based on those questions answered correctly on the basal set (which is determined by age). This will make testing shorter and, importantly, place the child at an appropriate level for the hardest part of the test, the reading comprehension.

Most students will complete the sentence completion section followed by the comprehension section and read and answer questions on one, two or three passages at the appropriate level of difficulty. If students perform poorly on the sentence completion section they will complete the phonics section and will not be administered any comprehension passages.

Each form of the digital test should be considered as a single test with several parts:

• Sentence completion (a bank comprising all questions across all levels)
• Phonics section (the full content from Test 1)
• Reading comprehension – passage by passage rather than grouped by level as students will be directed to an appropriate initial passage on the basis of performance on sentence completion. Generally, this should be a secure basis for selecting the next part of the test but some students' skills may be stronger or weaker in sentence completion than in passage comprehension so the program will adjust to performance on the initial passage too.

So:

• All students will start the test with sentence completion
• The program will determine the first question based on date of birth
• Each student will progress through the test according to performance
• Students with very low scores will move to the phonics section
• Students will be presented with one, two or three passages; this will shorten test time and is possible because the level of passage will be suited to the individual on the basis of their sentence completion score.

Administering the test

Note: The test administrator will need to read through the following instructions well in advance of the test session.

Prior to testing

It is strongly advised that you go to:

https://support.gl-assessment.co.uk/testwise/gettingstarted

Administration

The test must be administered in a formal test environment with students made aware that they are taking a test and that the usual expectations of behaviour and constraints of a test session will be in place.

Each student will need either their own personal computer with a mouse, or a tablet, along with a high quality set of headphones. You are advised to check that headphones are working and that sound levels are appropriate before logging on to Testwise.

All administration instructions are incorporated into the test program but please introduce the test session and check that students understand the instructions and the method of answering by walking around the room as they work through these parts of the test.

When students are settled, explain that they are going to take a test that will show how well they can read and understand what they have read. Students must work in silence but if they have a query they should raise their hand and wait for the teacher to approach them. Answer any questions at this stage and explain that you cannot help with any of the test questions.

Reassurance

Further explain that the test starts with some practice questions to get them used to the real questions and that all instructions are given by audio. *NGRT* is not a timed test so students should work through the questions at their own pace.

Sentence completion – example question

All students will start the test with the sentence completion section and see the following example question.

The voice over will explain that the students have to click on the word (from a choice of five) that they think best completes the sentence.

Once the students have clicked on 'Next' they cannot return to the previous question.

In the practice section students will receive feedback telling them whether they have answered correctly or incorrectly. This will not be a feature of the test, however.

Because the digital version of *NGRT* is adaptive, each student will see a different set of test questions. Performance on the sentence completion section will determine which part of the test will be administered next.

Phonics section – example questions

This section of the test is in four parts and each part has a single example question with feedback.

Initial letter items

These questions are supported by a picture and the student is asked to identify the first letter of the word illustrated (the audio provides the word).

'Sounds like' items

Again, supported by a picture and by audio, the student is asked to select the word that sounds like the item illustrated.

Final letter sound items

Students are presented with the first part of a word and from a selection of digraphs or trigraphs (two or three letters which together represent a single sound) and three letter combinations have to complete the word.

Initial letter sound items
Students are presented with the final part of a word and a selection of letters from which they must select one to complete the word.
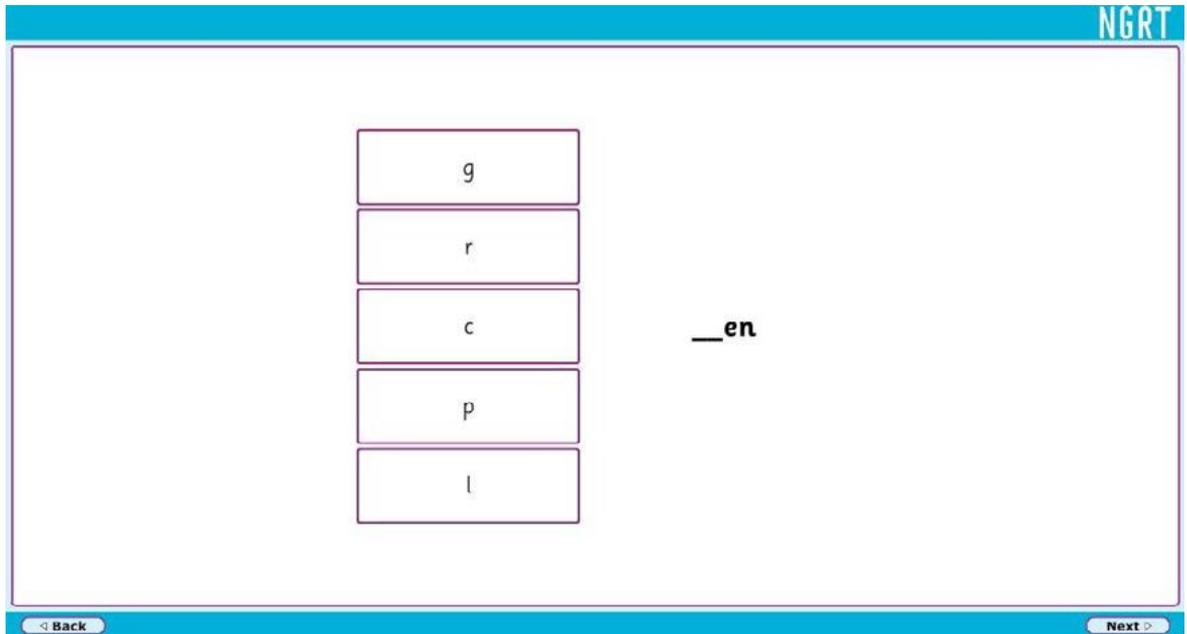
These four short exercises are aimed at students who are at the very beginning of learning to read or whose reading is delayed and there is a need to test that they can match letters to sounds, understand simple rhyme and complete real words by adding final or initial sounds.

Passage comprehension – example questions
Students will see one, two or three passages (determined by performance on sentence completion and, as appropriate, the initial passage). A short passage, appropriate to the demands of the test passage is presented as an example and for practice.

For the easiest passage comprehension, 'Looking after Missy Mouse', a short example passage about looking after a pet mouse replicates the layout of the real test questions where the story text and questions relating to that part of the story are on the same screen. Here is an example:
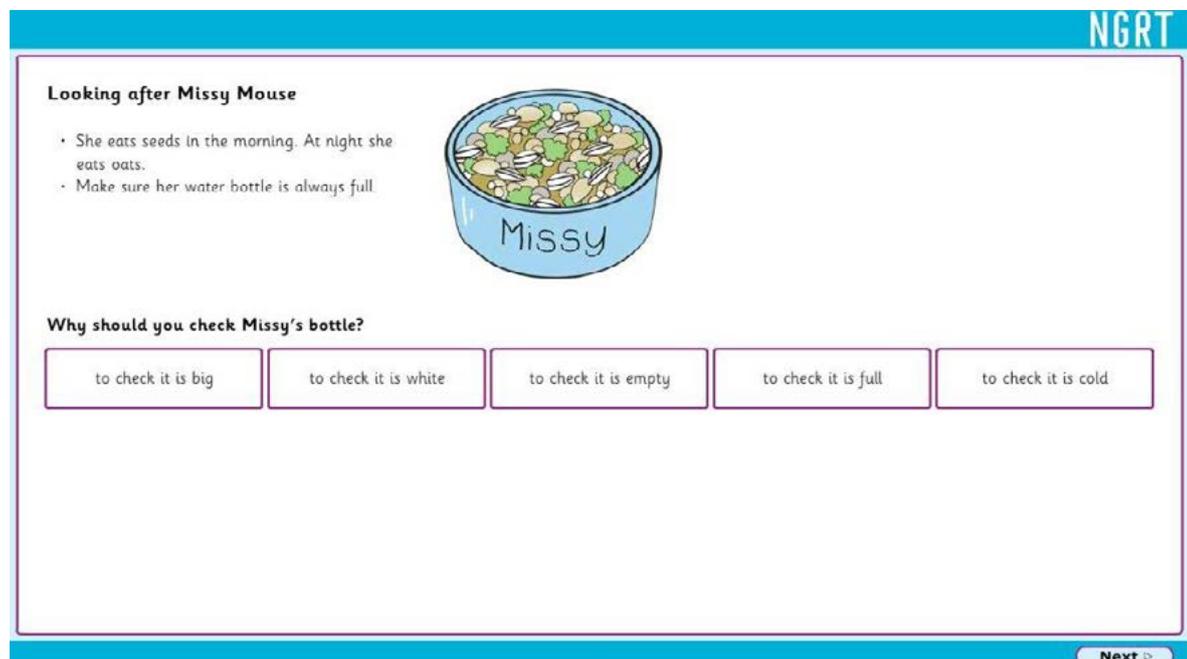
All other passage comprehension tasks are introduced by a short passage with example questions which show students how to answer the questions.

In these passages students can navigate through the story text using the scroll bar and through the questions using the 'Next' and 'Back' buttons separately so they can refer to any part of the story at any time to answer any question.

The example section looks like this:


Here is an example from one of the test passages:

During the test

During the test session, you should walk around periodically to prevent copying and to ensure that students understand how to answer the test on-screen. Any students showing signs of difficulties should be given assistance. However, you should give no help at all in the choosing of answers or explaining text.

Testing time will be approximately 30 minutes. Some students may finish in a shorter time and should have work to hand so that they remain occupied until the whole group has completed the test.

At the end of the test all responses will be stored on the Testwise server. Please do not turn off any computer until the students have clicked on the **End Test** button and have been taken back to the page showing that the test has been taken:
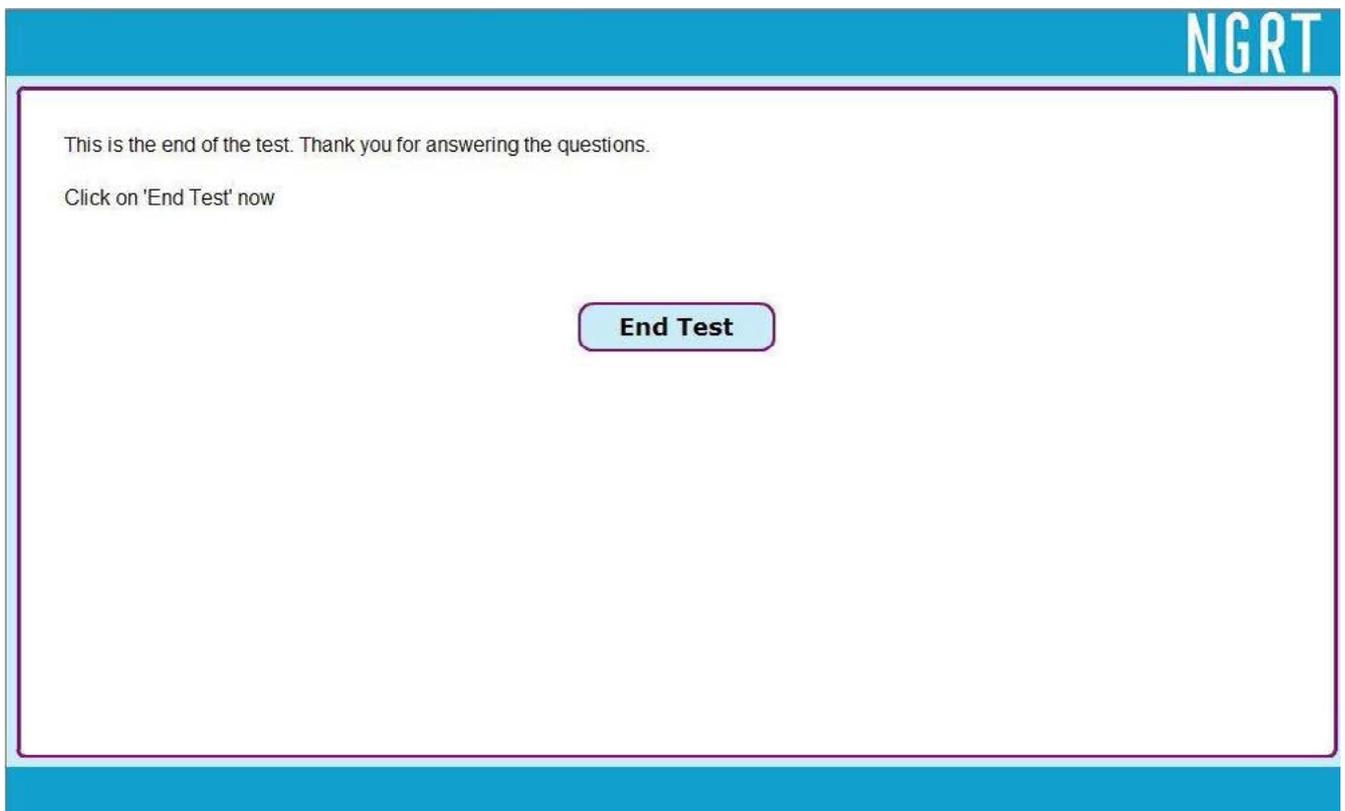
The test environment

As mentioned above students completing *NGRT* need to be in a quiet room without interruptions. Enough time should be allocated to allow students to settle, be given the introduction to the test and complete it. A total of 40 minutes should be sufficient to introduce and administer the test.

Students should be told that they must work in silence but that if they have a query they should raise their hand and wait for the teacher to approach them.

While students are completing the test, the teacher should walk round the computer suite to check that they are progressing appropriately and that they are not having difficulty with the methods of answering questions.

Unexpected incidents

If there is a failure in your computer system while students are completing the test, it will not be possible to re-enter the test at the point at which the failure occurred. If students have fully completed a section of the test and a computer failure occurs, they will be able to recommence the test at the section after the one they have completed. If students complete the test and responses are stored (that is, they have clicked the **End Test** button) and then the system fails, it will be possible to retrieve responses and reports from the GL Assessment back-up server.

NGRT Group Report for Teachers

A Group Report for Teachers will be available after testing and is made up of the following sections:

- **Overview**

This is a short introduction which describes the test content and how the test works. This will be useful when sharing reports with colleagues who may not be familiar with *NGRT*.
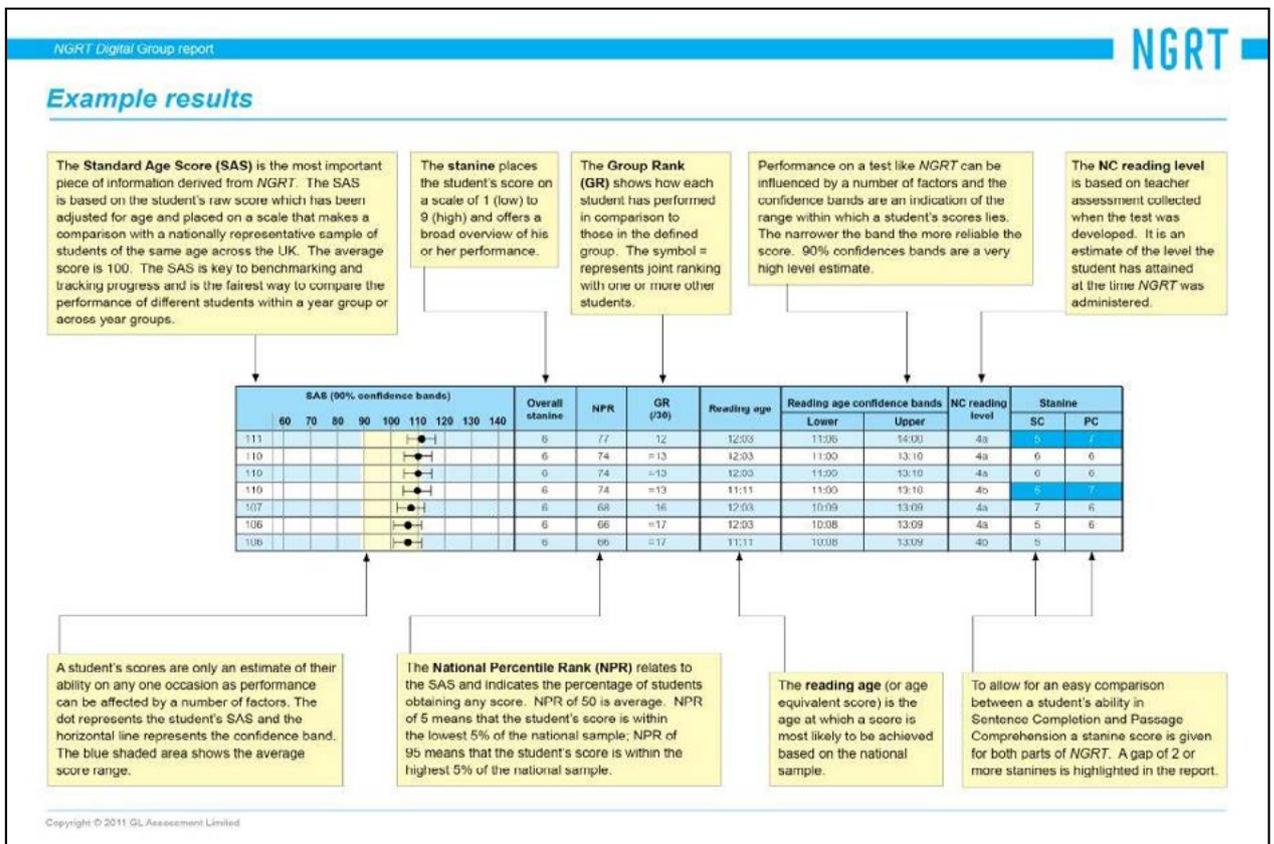
- **Why use *NGRT*?**

Again, this is a short section setting out the main uses of *NGRT*.

- **Relationship between *NGRT* scores**

This comprises a simple diagram showing how standard age scores (SAS), stanine scores and national percentile ranks relate to each other.

- **Example results**

This page shows an annotated version of the group report table with a glossary of terms used.

- **Group scores for sentence completion and passage comprehension**
Scores for the pre-determined group include SAS, stanines, group rank and national percentile rank. Importantly, this table highlights a gap of two or more stanines between the Sentence Completion and Passage Comprehension parts of the test.

- **Analysis by reading age**
This shows the spread of reading age for the whole group and for males and females.

- **Group scores for phonics**

This shows raw scores by section for students who answered the phonics questions.

- **Group demographic comparison with gender as the baseline**

This compares the group's score for each gender against all students as part of the group average and the national average.
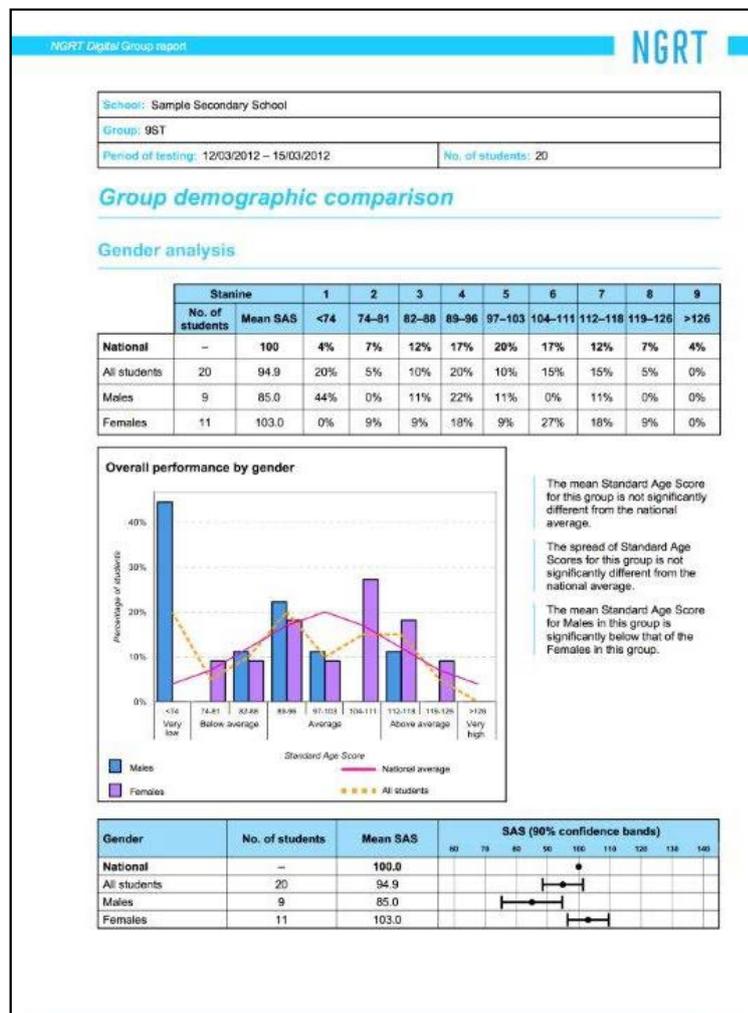
NGRT Individual report for teachers

This report focuses on results for an individual student. It opens with the sections:

- Overview
- Why use *NGRT Digital*?
- Relationship between *NGRT Digital* scores

which are very similar to those in the *NGRT Digital* Group report.

Example results are annotated.
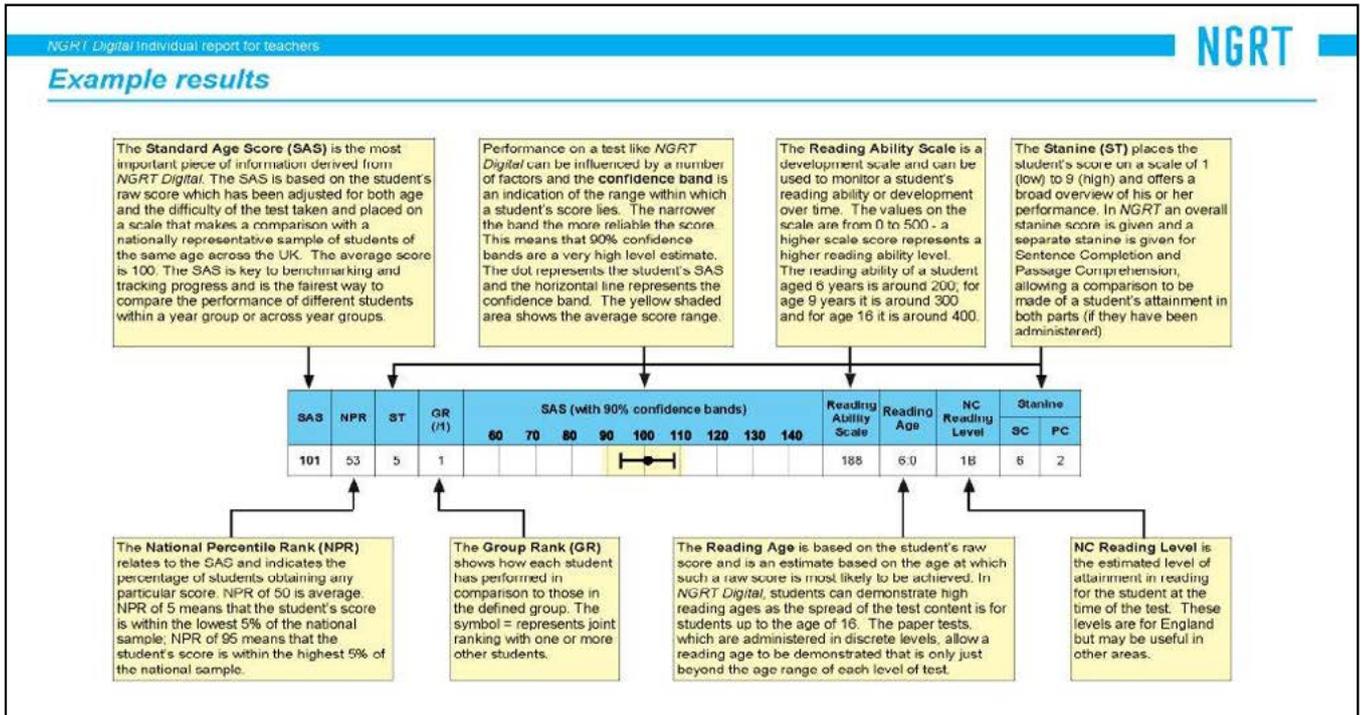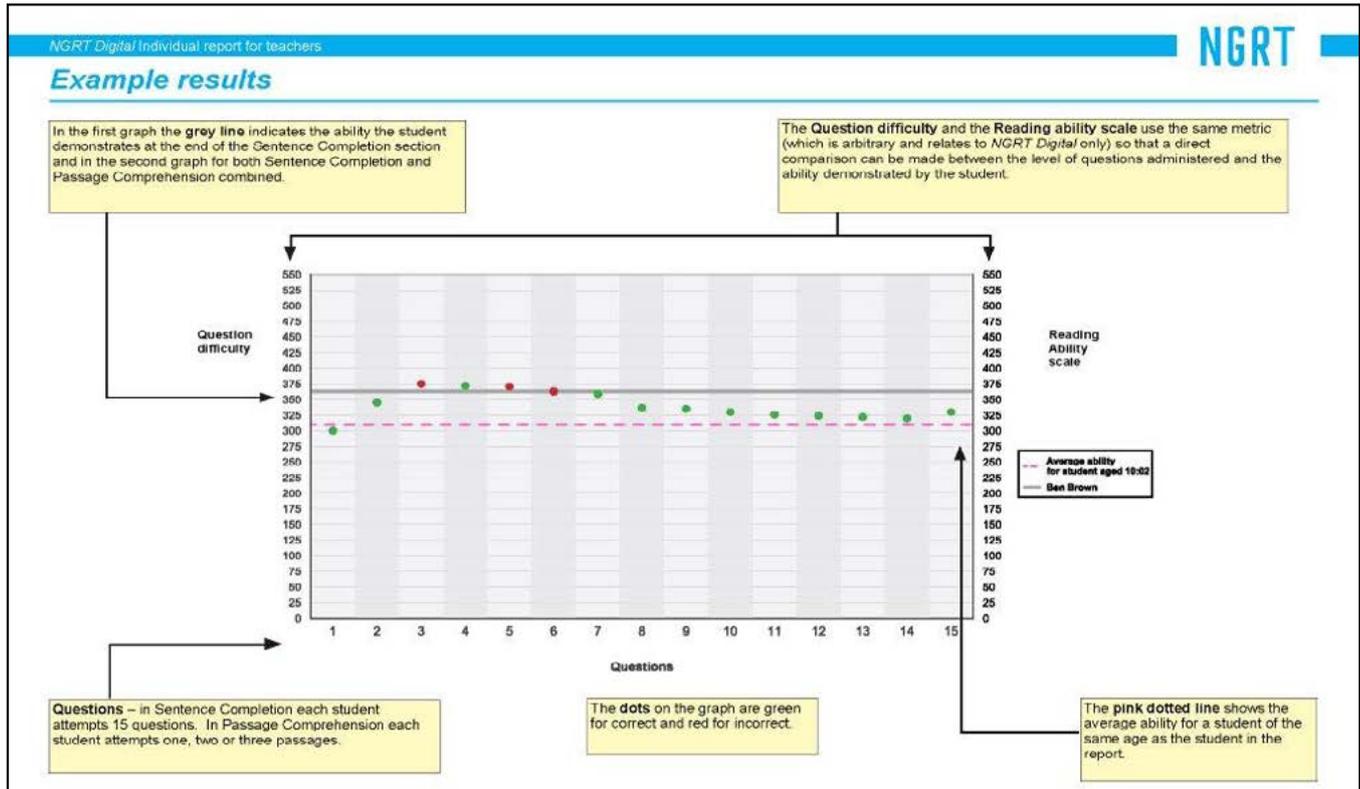
The *NGRT Digital* Individual report for teachers offers an analysis of responses to both the sentence completion and passage comprehension parts of the test and an analysis of the types of comprehension questions achieved by each student.
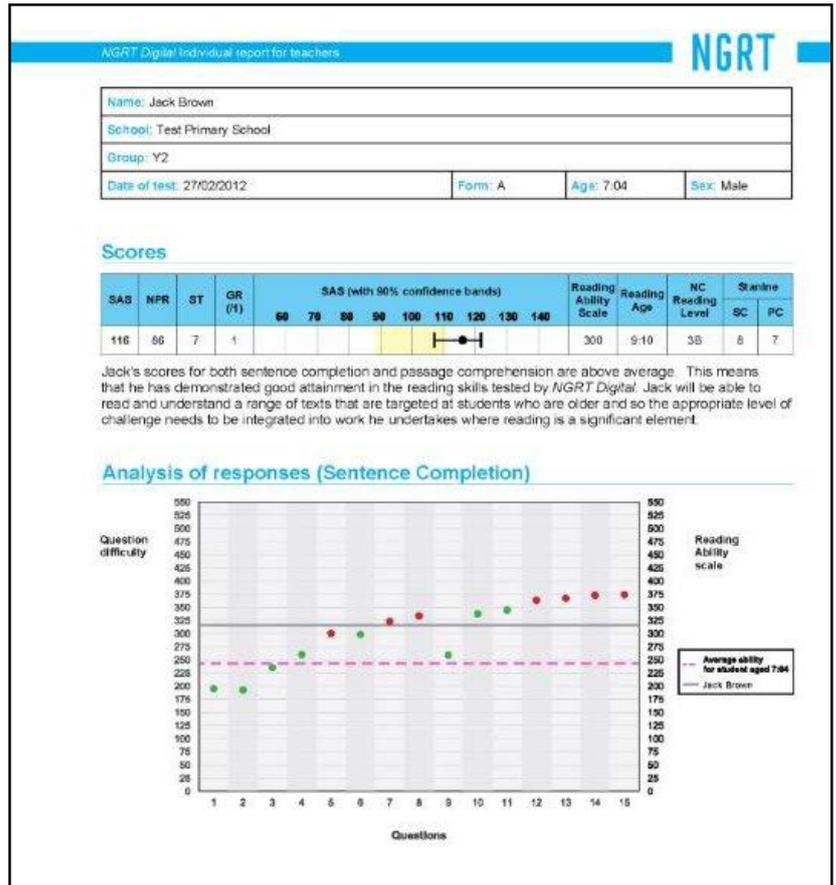
The page above shows the full set of scores and a graphical representation of the results from the sentence completion part of the test.

All questions have been put onto a scale representing the difficulty of each question and the same scale has been used to establish the reading ability level of an average student at any given age. Thereby, a student begins the sentence completion test with a question that is slightly below the difficulty level that would match the age-related reading ability level. This is shown on the graphic about as 'Question difficulty' and 'Reading Ability scale'.

The test adjusts quickly to present questions of either increasing or decreasing difficulty depending on whether the student answers correctly or incorrectly.

At the end of this part of the test, the student's reading ability is recalculated and this new Reading Ability Scale score determines which part of the *NGRT Digital* will be administered next.
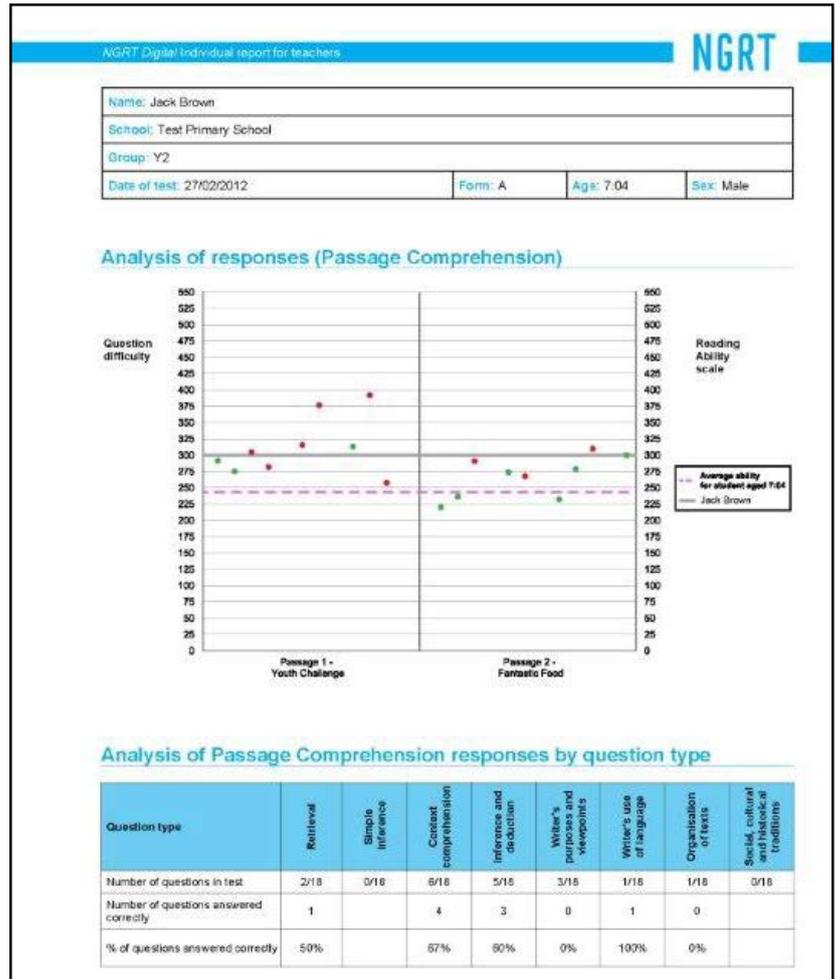
The page above shows the graphical representation of responses to the passage comprehension part of the test. The same 'Question difficulty' and 'Reading Ability scale' have been used. In this part of the test, students must read and complete each passage before moving onto the next one; that is, the passages are not adaptive. However, after the initial passage, the student's reading ability is re-calculated and an appropriate next passage is administered.

Comprehension questions have been classified and an analysis of which questions have been achieved by the student is shown in the table.

Finally, this report includes a short narrative which will highlight the need, if any, for further assessment and recommend an appropriate next step.

Where students have been administered the Phonics part of *NGRT Digital*, these scores are given in a table with a short narrative which takes into account both the age of the student and the test results.

NGRT Digital Individual report for teachers

| Name: John Green |
| School: Test Primary School |
| Group: Y2 |

| Date of test: 21/02/2012 | | Form: A | Age: 6.06 | Sex: Male |

Phonics

Initial letters (/4)	Sounds like (/5)	Final letter sounds (/5)	Initial letters sounds (/5)	Overall score (/19)
0	0	1	5	6

John's low score in Sentence Completion has meant that it was most appropriate to administer the Phonics tasks rather than the Passage Completion.

The *NGRT Digital* Phonics tasks sample just four aspects of phonics which are the foundation of successful reading. These are:

- identifying the initial letter of a word;
- matching words that rhyme;
- identifying the final letter sound of a word; and
- identifying the initial letter sound of a word.

In these tasks John is not secure and it is recommended that a further assessment, at phonic and/or word reading level is carried out. GL Assessment's *Phonological Assessment Battery* or *York Assessment of Reading Comprehension: Early Reading* are recommended.

Comparing students' performance on sentence completion and passage comprehension

NGRT provides a standard age score derived from the test as a whole which gives the most accurate and reliable indication of a student's reading ability. However, it is possible to look at sub-scale scores for each section of the test in order to determine if students have particular areas of strength or areas for further development in their reading skills.

The scores for the sub-scales are presented using stanines rather than standard age scores. Stanines minimise the over interpretation of small, insignificant differences among test scores. As a rough guide, if the sub-scale stanines are the same or differ by one, this indicates similar performance on the two sub-scales. If the stanine score differs by two or more, it may be an indication of significantly different performance on the two sections of the test.

Therefore it is important to recognise that any **significant differences in the two subscale scores may only be indicative of a difference in performance** and would benefit from further investigation. For example the Suffolk Reading Scale (*SRS*) could be used to confirm students reading ability at sentence level and the York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (*YARC*) could be used to confirm their ability in reading comprehension.

Sentence completion

The sentence completion section of the *NGRT* assesses students' reading skills at sentence level. These skills are slightly different from those used when reading a whole text and answering retrieval and inferential questions about that text. In the sentence completion questions students have much less contextual information to use in order to determine the missing word. Therefore students who rely heavily on contextual cues to draw even simple inferences may score less well on this section of the *NGRT*. The lack of contextual cues will mean that students have to rely more heavily on their word knowledge (vocabulary) in order to successfully answer the more difficult sentence completion questions where the vocabulary may be considered challenging for students in that age range. Therefore students with a more extensive vocabulary may perform better on the sentence completion questions.

In sentence completion questions the students also need to rely more heavily on syntactic cues (the structure of a sentence) and their own knowledge of grammatical features when deciding which of the five possible options best completes the sentence. Some of the distracters that are used in the sentence completion questions have been chosen as they are semantically (in meaning) or graphically (in written form) similar to the target word; however using any of these distracters would make the sentence grammatically incorrect. Therefore the student is required to read both the sentence and all five of the answer options very closely in order to determine the correct answer.

Although students need to be able to make single local inferences in order to answer the sentence completion questions they do not need to employ any of the more complex global inferencing skills required in the passage completion section of the test. Therefore a student who has difficulty understanding longer texts or making complex inferences may perform significantly better on the sentence completion section of the *NGRT*.

Passage comprehension

In the passage comprehension section students need to use a variety of reading skills to read up to three passages and answer a number of questions on each passage. In reading and answering the texts students are expected to make global as well as local inferences. Each text is accompanied by a range of question types including:

- Context comprehension
- Retrieval
- Inference and deduction
- Organisation of texts
- Writer's use of language
- Writer's purpose and viewpoints
- Social, cultural and historic tradition.

The scores students obtain on this section of the test are influenced by their ability across a wide range of reading skills. Students who are very good at decoding but poor at inference and deduction may obtain a significantly lower stanine score on this section of the test.

The majority of students will achieve scores that are within one or two stanines: for example 2:3 or 7:6 and for exceptionally good readers 9:8 or 7:9. It is likely that just a small number of students will need additional investigation as indicated above but this aspect of *NGRT* now enables screening and progress tracking for large groups of students and more meaningful individual profiling from a single test.

Testwise Technical Support Team

If you have any problems using Testwise, email the Testwise Technical Support Team at support@gl-assessment.co.uk.

You can view our full Testwise Support Services on our website:

https://support.gl-assessment.co.uk/testwise/