



InCAS has now
evolved into
**Cambridge
Primary
Insight**



Setting international standards

St George International School and Preschool in Sofia, Bulgaria, is evolving rapidly.

Twenty-one years after it opened its doors as a Kindergarten and English language school, St George has gained new owners, moved locations, secured private investment and EU funding, and is enjoying a new lease of life.

The school's brand new building now boasts state-of-the-art science labs, a sport and leisure complex, and plans for a roof-top playground are well under way.

With 250 students currently enrolled, and plans to increase to 650, St George gained Cambridge accreditation in 2016, and is setting the bar high under the leadership of school principal Justin Kilcullen-Nichols. The school is now attracting both Bulgarian and international students who will follow the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), and take the Bulgarian Diploma and Cambridge International GCSEs in Year 11, before moving on to A-Levels. The goal is to provide students with the 'best of both worlds' allowing them to continue their studies in Bulgaria, or abroad if they so wish.



Getting a clear picture of student starting points

Justin Kilcullen-Nichols is no stranger to the challenges of implementing high-quality international standards. His extensive teaching and leadership experience in a wide range of schools in the UK, in the Middle East and across Eastern Europe, means that he understands the importance of getting the fundamentals right.

'We want to provide opportunities for our students and to do that we need evidence-based pupil profiles that give a clear picture of ability,' he says. 'It's common sense and should be standard practice to use an objective and rigorous assessment and tracking system.'

CEM assessments: an obvious choice

Having seen the benefits of CEM assessments in his previous schools, they were an obvious choice. In 2016, St George introduced a range of CEM assessments for primary and secondary pupils:

- InCAS for students aged 5-11
- MidYIS for students aged 11-14
- Yellis for students aged 14-16

Justin explains 'We chose CEM assessments because they give us an unbiased baseline score, a measure of value-added, and help us give parents objective feedback about student ability and potential.'

Understanding pupils' primary needs

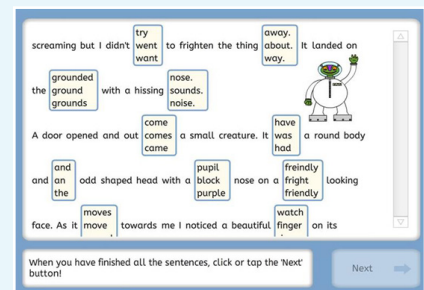
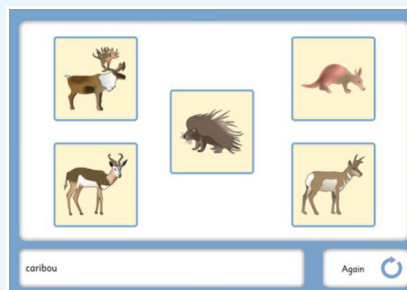
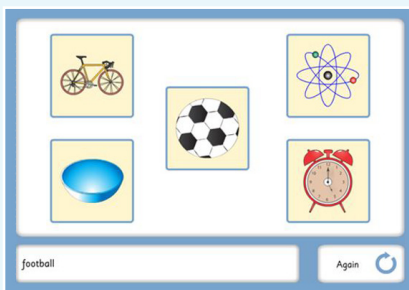
The InCAS assessment for pupils aged 5 – 11 is a diagnostic computer-adaptive assessment that helps teachers identify individual learning needs and make informed decisions around planning and target setting.

InCAS has six modules which can be completed in any order, at any time of the year, although the majority of schools find it most useful to use at the beginning of the school year:

- Reading
- Mathematics
- Developed ability
- Spelling
- Mental arithmetic
- Attitudes

Each module takes around 20 minutes to complete and a whole class or cohort can be assessed at the same time. The computer-adaptive nature of the assessment means that questions are tailored to the individual pupil so the assessment is not too difficult and not too easy. Each child experiences a personalised assessment that is suited to them.

St George assessed 150 pupils (from Year 1 to Year 6) within a three week period. 'It's very straightforward and easy to use,' Justin says, 'the kids enjoyed it. They just followed the instructions on the screen and didn't even realise it was an assessment. For them it was like playing a computer game.'



InCAS assesses a series of key features relating to reading and spelling, including word recognition, Word Decoding and Comprehension, and for each one it provides an adaptive assessment.

A pupil will only be presented with the Comprehension section if they have scored highly enough in the Word Recognition and Word Decoding sections.

Real impact on language learning

In international schools, it's clear that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work, and instead a more refined and tailored practice is required, particularly in relation to language learning.

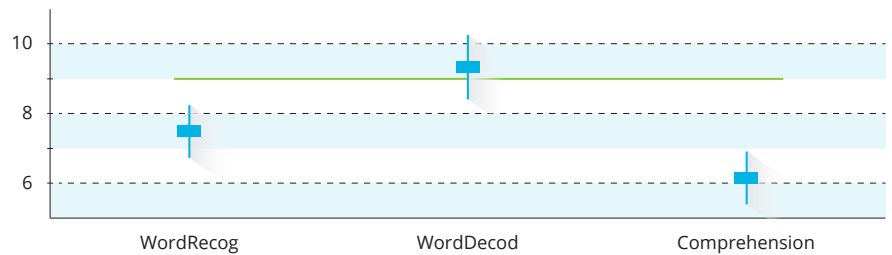
St George rightly prides itself on helping its EAL learners to make rapid progress. The focus is on becoming more confident, motivated and proactive English language learners, as well as developing their academic English and maintaining pride in their identity and language skills.

InCAS reports provide a wealth of information to support individual language learners to fulfil their potential. In particular the Reading module gives detailed breakdowns of scores for individual components including: Word recognition, Word decoding, Comprehension and Spelling. Additionally, specific and refined component and module scores are available for:

- Individual pupils
- The whole class
- The year group
- The whole school

Individual cognitive profile chart

Cognitive profile charts show the age equivalent score for each module that the pupil has completed. In the example shown here the pupil is on track with Word Decoding but the Word Recognition and Comprehension age-equivalent scores are lower than their chronological age.



Improving English for Learning

While EAL learners at St George demonstrate adequate communication skills in everyday English, Justin and his colleagues are acutely aware of the over-riding need to place greater emphasis on improving English for learning.

One of the really useful things about the InCAS feedback is the age-equivalent scores which clearly show the developmental age at which a student is working in each of the component parts of the modules.

Name	Age (Yrs:Mths)	Age Equivalent Scores (Yrs:Mths)			
		WordRecog	WordDecod	Comprehension	Spelling
Chanelle A	8:11	9:0	7:0	7:3	8:10
William A	9:0	10:5	13:2	12:1	10:8
Alex B	8:8	4:0	<4:0	*	4:8
Nuala B	9:0	7:6	9:3	6:1	*
Joe C	9:1	7:10	11:8	9:1	*

Additionally, the age-standardised scores give a clear comparison of each student's performance in relation to other students of the same age, showing the areas they are under-performing in and therefore where additional support is needed.

'We have confidence in the statistics,' Justin says. 'InCAS gives us the most useful high impact feedback.'

The analysis of St George's Reading, Spelling and Developed ability scores, in particular, have enabled them to see their cohort and whole school objectives clearly, set appropriate targets and plan interventions, such as phonics support in the early years.



Building good foundations

The robust and objective baselining in the primary years at St George helps the school to map and measure the trajectory of student progress.

Like InCAS, assessments used in the secondary years, MidYIS and Yellis, also offer a breakdown of standardised scores in key cognitive areas and help the ongoing monitoring of student needs and progress throughout their time at the school.

In 2018, St George will reach a major milestone, with its students sitting the iGCSE exams for the very first time after being accredited as a Cambridge Primary and Cambridge International School. St George's key efforts are based on developing the secondary school and ultimately opening the doors to future pathways for its students.

Their use of CEM assessments from primary all the way through to secondary years supports their aim of providing a comprehensive, inclusive and internationally based education for its Bulgarian and international students.

What works

- All CEM assessments give a robust, standardised and objective baseline measure of ability
- Involve all teachers in interpreting the feedback and help them to use it for planning their programmes of study
- Embed the assessments into the school calendar. By doing assessments at the same time each year, you make it a regular and integral part of the assessment schedule

Sample age comparison chart

The age comparison charts show the overall picture of the reading ability of the whole school on the same chart.

