



## CAT4 and PASS: The journey to happiness and success at Bromsgrove International School Thailand

### A GL Education Case Study

Set in peaceful surroundings and yet close to the bustle of Bangkok, Bromsgrove International School Thailand is committed to identifying and developing the potential of each student. The *Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4)* and *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* survey are helping the school achieve this.

A small school of just 400 students aged two to 18 years, Bromsgrove International School Thailand offers a curriculum based on the English National Curriculum. Over 90% of the students speak English as an additional language.

The school's aim is for each child to feel that every lesson has been personalised and designed specifically to meet their needs. They call this the 'The Mona Lisa Effect', after the way Mona Lisa's eyes are said to look at viewers wherever they stand.

Matthew Savage, Deputy Headmaster, strongly believes that data is the key to making this happen. He explains: "I joined the school quite recently, and one of the platforms on which I was appointed was my passionate belief in the effective use of robust data. It's not yet commonplace in international schools routinely to get information in this way, but having used cognitive ability testing previously for many years, I knew how insightful the data could be."

*CAT4* assesses a child's ability to reason through a series of verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial ability tests. The results can then be used to identify a pupil's strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences to help set challenging but realistic targets.

Matthew continues: "Following conversations with GL Education, I decided to carry out a *PASS* survey of the school. *PASS* looks at nine factors, such as feelings about school and perceived learning capability, all linked to key

educational goals. I was completely bowled over by the data it could give us. It's incredibly difficult to see through the mask of 'teenagehood' but this assessment gave us a way through.

"It was an epiphanous moment and I could immediately see the benefits of using it in conjunction with *CAT4*. It's no exaggeration to say *PASS* has been one of the most exciting educational discoveries I've made."

#### Assessing the school

Matthew trained some staff and oversaw proceedings, ensuring translations for *PASS* were available in Thai, Mandarin and Korean where appropriate.

"The implementation was very straightforward. We're blessed with very positive staff here who approached the assessments with a healthy cynicism. They wanted to know what value the results could add, but they were also excited to find out what information could be gleaned."

#### Looking at results

When the *CAT4* results came out, Matthew noticed one salient trend straightaway. "We have a large proportion of students with high non-verbal scores but low verbal scores, which indicates language acquisition isn't keeping pace with the exceptional level of students' ability. You might expect to see this in an international school with so few native English speakers to some degree, but we hadn't realised it was so prevalent.

“As our school is small, staff tend to know the students very well, but there were other surprises. For example, one child who had not distinguished himself academically scored at the top end for three out of the four batteries in *CAT4*, whereas another child who has always been a high attainer had very average scores. I felt the answers to why this was the case could lie in their *PASS* results.”

The *PASS* results confirmed that a positive or negative attitude made a huge difference to achievement. “Overall, we saw many students had low confidence in their perceived learning capabilities and poor self-regard. We also uncovered the fact that the style and content of the curriculum wasn’t necessarily perceived as a sufficiently close fit for some of our students.”

#### Charting progression

It was by comparing *CAT4* with *PASS* scores that the school gained some of its most profound insights. “The results were astounding. We have very able students who don’t think they are able at all because they are making a false association between their proficiency in English and their intellectual capability. This was so widespread that, over the next three to five years, it will inform how we resource ourselves to improve our students’ grasp of English in a dramatic way. It showed us one of the true needs of our students and we can start to address this ‘verbal deficit’ via specific EAL intervention.

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*Matthew Savage, Deputy Head, Bromsgrove International School Thailand*

“I also compared the scores for ‘response to curriculum demands’ with students’ mean *CAT4* scores. I discovered that the more able the student, the more likely they are to feel our

curriculum is suitable and vice versa. It’s important for us to create pathways to success for all our students so these results will be fed into the strategic development of our school.”

#### Ambitious and visionary

Matthew says that *CAT4* and *PASS* results have made the Senior Leadership Team really question how they want their students to develop in the long term. “Students here tend to be shy and deferential to teachers, which is partly cultural and perhaps partly to do with us being a warm and friendly school which attracts a certain type of student.

“However, we’ve now seen just how glaring the correlation is between the view of teachers as superior and learners as inferior. It’s important that our students feel able to take risks and are confident in occasionally getting things wrong or challenging teachers.

The school wants to encourage students to be more bold and ambitious, and not to accept everything at face value.

“Shifting our students’ mindset from playing it safe to risk-taking is one of the most critical priorities to come out of using *PASS* and *CAT4* so far, as is the need to maximise their grasp of the English language, and redefining what ‘knowing your students’ means for teachers.

“The most wonderful outcome has been staff having very focused discussions about individual students’ attitudes and abilities – conversations they wouldn’t have been able to have before. We all share a real hunger to do something with the results.

#### Going boldly forward

Bromsgrove International School Thailand might have been using *CAT4* and *PASS* for less than one academic year but the potential impact has already been significant.

“We’ve hardly had time to scratch the surface, but I’ve got lots of plans for future use. We don’t yet share this data with parents or the student body, but this is definitely on the cards.

“I’m looking forward to discovering further trends and correlations, perhaps by ethnicity or gender, and to develop a ‘value added’ picture for the school. I’m also keen to find ways of personalising the data for specific teachers, to ensure it’s as meaningful as it possibly can be.

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“With *CAT4*, it’s quite simple to instigate interventions such as peer or staff mentoring. The results from *PASS* mean we need to investigate creatively what the remedies might be but, within a few more months, we hope to be able to prescribe solutions that really answer our needs.

“Our mission statement talks about happy and successful students. I can’t achieve that without *PASS* and *CAT4*.”

