

# Parents seek school readiness tests for children

January 19 2015, by Debra Nowland

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Four-year-old Nate Gardner with Dr Bethany Mackay at QUT's back-to-school health clinics.

Do children have the self-help, social-emotional and cognitive skills to cope with the school year ahead?

These questions are just some of the back-to-school issues being addressed by a team of clinicians at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus in Brisbane.

In January, QUT Health Clinics has offered free screening health tests for [children](#) aged between four and 13 years.

The tests are conducted by optometrists, podiatrists, dieticians and psychologists.

QUT clinical psychologist Dr Bethany Mackay said more and more parents had sought school readiness tests to provide "peace of mind" before the start of a busy school year.

She said there had been strong interest for psychological assessments at the service.

Dr Mackay said the tests allowed the assessor to easily identify potential developmental delays and giftedness in language, motor, self-help, social-emotional and [cognitive skills](#).

"It allows quick and accurate screening for [developmental delays](#) such as language impairment, cognitive delay or learning disability," Dr Mackay said.

"If a delay is identified additional support can be tailored to suit their abilities while it is also possible to identify children who are gifted."

QUT Optometrist Damien Fisher said the vision screening tests may find potential problems that may otherwise go unnoticed at school.

He said the tests screen for problems such as squinting, headaches, dizziness and difficulty concentrating.

He also said the vision screening can pick up minor issues such as refractive errors or more serious problems such as ocular disease.

"At this age, from a vision aspect, there is a lot that is required when you look at reading and computer-based learning so children's eyes need to be performing at a high rate," Mr Fisher said.

"Nowadays, even if a child has a minor problem it impact on their learning ability, particularly from an earlier age when they are learning the basics."

He said the prognosis for children who are picked up during the [screening](#) process is quite good.

"Any students that are lacking or falling behind tend to catch up quite well, so if you can identify a possible problem at an earlier age then the better the prognosis; conversely the later the diagnosis then the treatment needs to be more ongoing."

The health checklists for children also include foot checks by trained podiatrists who can provide orthotic advice while nutritionists will also be on hand for children with allergies or intolerances and to provide handy ideas for healthy lunch boxes.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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