

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why are the Post Primary schools organising an Entrance Assessment?

In the absence of new legislation being passed by the Assembly to replace the old 11+ transfer system, many post primary schools in Northern Ireland have decided to continue with academic selection. In this unregulated system, Catholic grammar schools, some of the non-denominational grammar schools and some Integrated schools will use the same standardised assessment in English and Mathematics to determine the academic ability of the children who wish to be admitted.

2. Why do I need to register my child for the Entrance Assessment?

By registering, we will be able to put arrangements in place for your child to take the Entrance Assessment on 21st November.

3. When and where will my child sit the Entrance Assessment?

The assessment will take place on Saturday 21st November and there will be a supplementary assessment on Saturday 12th December for children unable to attend the assessment on 21st November.

Your child will take the assessment in one of the post primary schools (listed below) in your area which is continuing to use academic selection as part of its admission criteria. On the Registration Form, you will have the opportunity to indicate the Assessment Centres which are the most convenient for you. In most areas, the post primary schools will be working together to provide sufficient accommodation for children registered to take the assessment and your child will be allocated to one of the centres you have indicated on your Registration Form.

4. What will be the format of the Entrance Assessment?

The Entrance Assessment will consist of two standardised assessment papers to be taken on 21st November 2009. The assessment will be multiple choice in format. The first paper, assessing English, will last 50 minutes and the second paper, assessing Mathematics, will last 45 minutes. There will be a short practice session before each of the papers and, between the papers, the children will have time for a snack and a toilet break. The children will record their answers on a separate computer marked answer sheet. The Entrance Assessment will be marked independently of the post primary schools by GL Assessment. The aspects of English and Mathematics covered by the Entrance Assessment are consistent with the legal requirements of the Northern Ireland Key Stage 2 curriculum.

5. Why is an English and Mathematics assessment being used?

Literacy and numeracy reflect the knowledge and skills being developed by children being taught the revised Northern Ireland curriculum in primary schools. There are no requirements for additional preparation of children for the Entrance Assessment by primary schools beyond their work in teaching the Key Stage 2 curriculum in numeracy, literacy and skills based learning.

6. Will the allocation of an Assessment Centre affect the school I want my child to attend?

No, the assessment and admission processes are entirely separate. If your child takes the Entrance Assessment in any of the Assessment Centres listed at the end of this document, you may apply for a place in any of these schools irrespective of where your child has taken the Entrance Assessment. All of these schools have agreed to accept results of children who take the Entrance Assessment regardless of the centre where they have taken the assessment.

7. Who has set and will mark the assessment?

The standardised Entrance Assessment is being set and marked by GL Assessment.

8. Who is GL Assessment?

Originally founded by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), with whom they continue to work today, GL Assessment has been part of the Granada Learning Group since 2000. Renowned for their rigour and high quality, GL Assessment tests are used every year by over 85% of all UK and N.Ireland primary and secondary schools. This makes GL Assessment the UK's largest independent provider of educational assessments. With over twenty five years of experience in this field, GL Assessment enjoys an established, trusted reputation for high-quality assessment resources and services.

9. Who should sit the Entrance Assessment?

Children born between 2nd July 1998 and 1st July 1999 are eligible to take the Entrance Assessment. Applications for transfer outside of this age range will be facilitated where the Principal of the child's primary school provides a written statement that in his/her professional opinion the child is capable of working alongside others in a selective school environment and able to deal with the academic and social implications of early or late transfer. A child who takes the Entrance Assessment a year early must be in Primary 7 in his/her primary school and cannot be registered for the test in the following year.

10. How much will it cost for my child to take the Entrance Assessment?

There will be no charge to parents for any part of the assessment process.

11. Will my child have any recognition of his/her special needs, medical or dietary requirements?

Yes. When you complete the Registration Form, please indicate that your child has particular requirements and complete the Access Arrangements claim form. This may require us to make access arrangements for your child and to make provision for your child's needs. It is important that you provide us with sufficient detail of your child's needs when completing the Registration Form. Please ensure that you are fully aware of the Guidance Notes available with the Registration Form with regard to requesting us for Access Arrangements.

12. Can my child receive special consideration for illness, injury or indisposition?

If your child experiences illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the Entrance Assessment, you must inform the Assessment Centre before 18th December by lodging a claim for Special Circumstances. Your claim should provide all of the details of the illness, injury or indisposition that your child has experienced. Later in the application process, you will be required to provide documentary evidence from medical and other professional sources to substantiate your claim for Special Circumstances for the Board of Governors of the school to which you apply for the admission of your child. Full details are provided in the policy on Access Arrangements & Special Circumstances.

13. Can my child take the supplementary Entrance Assessment?

The supplementary assessment is only available to a child where one or both of the papers are missed or not completed through illness or other unforeseen exceptional reasons. If your child is unable to attend or complete the assessment on 21st November you should inform the Assessment Centre as soon as possible and arrangements can be made for your child to attend on 12th December. By taking the supplementary Entrance Assessment, all parts of the assessment taken on 21st November will be discounted.

14. Is the supplementary assessment easier?

No. Obviously each set of assessment papers will contain different questions. The range of material covered in each paper will also vary. However, the standardisation processes are designed to ensure that each set of papers will produce the same result for any given child. All of the Entrance Assessment papers including the supplementary assessment papers are developed to the same rigorous and consistent standards.

15. When will I receive my child's results from the Entrance Assessment?

The results posted to you by the Assessment Centre on 5th February 2010.

16. How will my child's results of the Entrance Assessment be reported?

As with the previous CCEA Transfer Test, your child will receive an overall grade, i.e. A, B1, B2, C1, C2 or D. However, with the Entrance Assessment, you will also receive the Standardised Age Score and National Percentile Rank achieved by your child in both the English and Mathematics assessment papers. The grades will be allocated on the basis of the mean of the Standardised Age Scores and in line with the guidance provided by the Department of Education for the allocation of grades for the previous CCEA Transfer Test.

We do not provide percentage marks because the final outcomes are not expressed as a percentage because the Entrance Assessment is a standardised test. Standardised Age Scores have a scale running from 70 to 140 with 100 as the mean score. The National Percentile Rank indicates how well your child performed in each paper when compared with how all children of the same age in the United Kingdom would have scored in the assessment, e.g. an NPR of 78 would place your child's result on the 78th percentile, i.e. in the top 22% of all children of that age in the UK.

17. What mark does my child need to obtain a grade A, B1, B2 etc.?

It is not possible to indicate exactly what actual mark is necessary for an 'A' in each assessment at this time. In order to conduct the grading process, the raw marks from the assessments are first transformed into Standardised Age Scores. These scores take into account the ages of the children and are then standardised by a statistical formula onto a scale ranging from 70 to 140 on which the average score is 100. You will probably be familiar with this type of standardisation as it is used by all primary schools though the InCAS (Interactive Computerised Assessment System) assessment process that your child has already completed along with other standardised testing for English and Mathematics, including tests for reading and spelling age calculations.

You will receive details of the grade boundaries along with your child's Entrance Assessment results.

18. Will the age of my child affect his/her final mark?

An age allowance operates within the scoring of the assessment and it is one of the reasons why we will report the results as Standardised Age Scores on which the grades will be based. In calculating the Standardised Age Score, the age of the child is taken into account but no child will lose marks because of his/her age.

19. How can I help my child to prepare for the Entrance Assessment?

You should support the work of your child's teacher in the primary school by ensuring that homeworks are always completed to high standard and by encouraging your child to read beyond the reading homework set by his/her teacher. The post primary schools are not requesting the primary schools to teach beyond the requirements of the revised curriculum or to distort their teaching programmes by concentrating on preparation for the Entrance Assessment. Your child will be well prepared for the Entrance Assessment by being taught to the usual high standards of his/her primary school.

Since the Entrance Assessment is a standardised test, preparation for it differs from the previous Transfer Test in that it is not intended that children should concentrate on completing practice papers. However, you will receive sample papers and the assessment specification with the Registration Pack to allow your child to become familiar with the type of questions in the Entrance Assessment and how to record his/her answers. Your child's primary school will receive the same material.

As a standardised test, you should not expect that your child will be able to answer all of the questions in the Entrance Assessment because it is designed to assess the full ability range of children. It will have questions to suit all children within the age range being assessed. As a multiple choice test, your child does not need to write the answers. Since the possible answers are always written below the questions, your child will always be able to select an answer.

20. Can I purchase practice materials for use at home?

GL Assessment sells packs of practice papers for a range of assessments. These can be used to prepare for the Entrance Assessment but they do contain questions on topics which are not on the Entrance Assessment. These packs are available from the GL Assessment website (www.glassessment.co.uk) as well as WH Smith and Easons, if you wish to purchase this material, just buy the English and Mathematics papers.

POST PRIMARY TRANSFER CONSORTIUM

Assessment Centres

Aquinas Grammar School	Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 0BY	www.aquinasgrammar.com
Assumption Grammar School	24 Belfast Road, Ballynahinch BT24 8EA	www.assumptiongrammar.org.uk
Ballymena Academy	Galgorm Road, Ballymena BT42 1AJ	www.ballymenaacademy.org.uk
Christian Brothers' Grammar School	Kevlin Road, Omagh BT78 1LD	www.cbsomagh.org
Christian Brothers' Abbey Grammar School	Courtenay Hill, Newry BT34 2ED	www.abbeycbs.org
Dominican College, Belfast	Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AQ	www.dominicancollege.org.uk
Dominican College, Portstewart	2 Strand Road, Portstewart BT55 7PF	www.dominican-portstewart.org.uk
Lagan College	44 Manse Road, Belfast BT8 6SA	www.lagancollege.com
Loreto College, Coleraine	Castlerock Road, Coleraine BT51 3JZ	www.loretocollege.org.uk
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh	James' Street, Omagh BT78 1DL	www.loretogs.com
Lumen Christi College	Bishop Street, Derry BT48 6UJ	www.lumenchristiccollege.co.uk
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	Belmore Street, Enniskillen BT74 6AB	www.mountlourdes.com
Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock	Kingsway Gardens, Belfast BT5 7DQ	www.knock.co.uk
Our Lady's Grammar School	Chequer Hill, Newry BT35 6DY	www.ourladygrammar.org.uk
Portora Royal School	Derrygonnelly Road, Enniskillen BT74 7HA	www.portoraroyal.co.uk
Rainey Endowed	79 Rainey Street, Magherafelt BT45 5DB	www.raineyendowed.com
Rathmore Grammar School	Kingsway, Finaghy, Belfast BT10 0LF	www.rathmoregrammarschool.org
Sacred Heart Grammar School	10 Ashgrove Avenue, Newry BT34 1PR	www.shsnewry.com
Slemish Integrated College	147a Larne Road, Ballymena BT42 3HA	www.slemishcollege.org.uk
St Colman's College	Violet Hill, 46 Armagh Road, Newry BT35 6PP	www.stcolmans.org.uk
St Columb's College	Buncrana Road, Derry BT48 8NH	www.stcolumbs.com/joomla
St. Dominic's High School	135-137 Falls Road, Belfast BT12 6AE	www.stdominics.org.uk
St Joseph's Grammar School	58 Castledawson Road, Donaghmore BT70 3HE	www.stjosephs.donaghmore.ni.sch.uk
St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena	Cullybackey Road, Ballymena BT43 5DW	www.stlouisgrammar.com
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	151 Newry Road, Kilkeel BT34 4EU	www.stlouis.org.uk
St Malachy's College	36 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 2AE	www.stmalachyscollege.com
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School	147a Glen Road, Belfast BT11 8NR	www.stmaryscbgs.com
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	3 Castledawson Road, Magherafelt BT45 6AX	www.stmarysmagherafelt.com
St Michael's College Enniskillen	Chanterhill Road, Enniskillen BT74 6DE	www.saintmichaels.org.uk
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	35 Killymeal Road, Dungannon BT71 6DF	www.stpatricksacademy.org.uk
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh	Cathedral Road, Armagh BT61 7QZ	www.stpatricksarmagh.org
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	Saul Street, Downpatrick BT30 6NJ	www.stpatricksdownpatrick.org.uk
Thornhill College	Culmore Road, Derry BT48 8JF	www.thornhillcollege.org.uk
Victoria College	Cranmore Park, Belfast BT9 6JA	www.victoriacollege.org.uk