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Association for Quality Education Limited

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following topics are covered in this document.

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Registering your child for the Common Entrance Assessments

1. What is the Common Entrance Assessment (CEA)?

The CEA is the method which 34 grammar schools use to facilitate the continuation of academic selection following the ending of the 11+ Transfer Test.

2. Who should apply for the CEA?

Those who hope to be admitted to one of the 34 grammar schools listed on the website which is using the CEA in its admissions criteria, will have to sit the CEA.

3. When should I register my child?

If your child is due to start Primary 7 in September 2013, then you can register him or her for the CEA. Registration Forms may be sent in to AQE from the **5th May 2015** (during your child's Primary Six year) **through to 11th September 2015** (during your child's Primary Seven year).

Completing the Registration Form

1. Where can I get a Registration Form?

You can get a Registration Form from the AQE website (under Registration Forms), from an AQE Grammar School or from the AQE Office. Some Primary Schools may also be able to give you a form. Forms are available from **1st May 2015,** and photocopies/black & white printed forms are perfectly acceptable.

2. Is there a fee for the CEA?

Yes. There is a fee of **£46 per candidate** which covers all three assessments. You **do not have to pay the fee if your child is entitled to Free School Meals**, so long as evidence of this entitlement is sent with the Registration Form (i.e. your letter of confirmation from your Education and Library Board).

3. I do not have the letter from my Education and Library Board confirming my child's entitlement to Free School Meals. Is there anything that I can send instead?

Please contact your Education and Library Board to see if a copy can be issued to you. If this is not possible, a letter of confirmation from your Primary School would be acceptable.

4. I cannot find my child's birth certificate; are there any other forms of identification that would be acceptable?

We request photocopies of the short or long version of a birth/adoption certificate. If this is unavailable, then a photocopy of the back page of a passport will be accepted.

5. Do I attach original documents (e.g. birth certificate or Free School Meals letter)?

No. Documents are not returned, so please send photocopies.

6. What sort of photographs should I send with the Registration Form?

You should send three **identical** and recent passport-sized photographs.

7. How should I attach the photographs to the Registration Form?

Photographs should be **stuck on with "prit stick" type paste.** Your child's name should be written on the back of each photograph in case they become detached.

8. We are due to move house during the time we are registered with AQE; whom should we inform?

Please contact AQE as soon as possible when you move. The grammar school where your child is sitting the assessment should also be informed prior to the assessments (the grammar school may wish to contact you about Familiarisation Days etc.).

9. We require copies of the results (and any other information that is sent out) to go to two addresses; is this possible?

Yes; please contact the AQE Office for assistance,

10. Do the contacts on the form have to be parents?

In the vast majority of cases, parents' names will be on the forms. Sometimes the second contact may be a grandparent. Also the contact details of legal guardians may be used.

11. Which school should I put down as the one where my child will sit the assessments?

You should choose whichever one of the 34 grammar schools is easiest for you to get to on the mornings of the assessments; it would be good, too, if your child were to go to the same venue as his/her friends.

12. Does the school that is selected for my child to sit the assessment have to be the same one to which we will eventually be applying for a place?

No. The school that you select is for sitting the assessments only. Once the assessment is over, you may apply for a place to any other AQE school. Applications for school places happen in February, through the Education and Library Boards. Your Primary School Principal will provide further information on the application process.

13. Will I be sure of getting my choice of school to sit the assessments?

Schools are allocated on a first come, first served basis. In the vast majority of cases, parents get their first school but, if your first choice has met its allocated number, we allocate the second choice.

Assistance during the assessments (Access Arrangements)

1. Who makes the decision regarding the needs of my child, if I claim for disability or language?

The decision is taken by a panel of professionals in the field of education.

(a) Applying for extra assistance with regard to 'disability'.

1. My child has a learning difficulty, is it possible to get any help during the assessments?

Yes. The word disability referred to in Section B of the Registration Form is used to cover a wide range of conditions including (but not exclusively):

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- ADHD
- ADD
- Vocal Tics
- Diabetes
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Autism
- Hearing Loss
- Eyesight Problems
- Various heart conditions
- Spina Bifida
- Cerebal Palsy
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Dyscalculia
- Epilepsy

2. For what kind of assistance can I apply?

Please see the document Access Arrangements on our website under the section *Access* for an extensive list of arrangements than can be requested.

3. How should I apply for Access Arrangements ?

Parents should tick the appropriate box in Section B of the Registration Form. We will then send you out a specific form and information relating to your request.

4. What evidence should I send?

You should send any evidence that supports your claim. This can include, where appropriate:

- Any medical evidence

- Educational evidence from an educational psychologist (key stage 2)
- Evidence from the primary school of the pupil's normal way of working.

5. I don't have an Educational Psychologist's report from Key Stage 2. What else can I provide as evidence?

Reports from an independent Psychologist's or Educational Psychologist's Report from Key Stage 1 will be accepted, but you will need strong backing from your Primary School to show your child's normal way of working in the classroom.

6. Does my child have to sit the assessments if he/she has a Statement of Special Educational Needs?

A child with a Statement of Special Educational Need is not required to sit the CEA and is admitted to secondary education under a different statutory procedure which has a much broader remit in terms of evidence of aptitude. If a child who has a Statement of Special Educational Needs is entered for the CEA, he or she will not be prevented from sitting the CEA, but if an application is made for Access arrangements, the Access Committee may not necessarily award as an Access arrangement all to which a Statemented child is entitled under his or her statement, because a balance has to be struck between making reasonable adjustments and maintaining fairness and consistency for all candidates.

(b) Applying for extra assistance with regard to first language

1. My child's first language is neither English nor Irish; can they sit the assessment in their own language?

No. It is possible to sit the assessment in English and Irish only. However, if your child's first language is neither English nor Irish and he/she will have spent less than three years in the United Kingdom/Ireland before September 2015, it will be possible to get some assistance.

PLEASE NOTE: If your child is not eligible for extra assistance, it may be possible for parents to ask for special consideration later on in the process (see the section on Special Circumstances and Special Provision at the end of this document).

2. How should I apply for extra assistance (Access Arrangements)?

Parents should tick the appropriate box in Section B of the Registration Form. We will then send you out specific forms relating to your request.

3. For what kind of assistance can I apply?

Normally this will involve extra time to sit the assessments and the use of a bilingual dictionary.

4. What evidence should I send?

You should send any evidence that supports your claim. This should include::

- Evidence of entry into the UK or Ireland (i.e. a stamp from a passport);
- A letter from your Primary School confirming the date your child enrolled with them.

5. My child has just arrived in Northern Ireland. Does he/she have to do the assessments?

If your child arrives in Northern Ireland in time to register (i.e. before 11th September 2015), then he/she should do the assessments. If your child arrives after the registration period, then he/she cannot sit the assessments, but you should make use of Special Provision to apply for a grammar school. (See the section on Special Circumstances and Special Provision below).

6. My child does not speak any English; does he/she have to do the test?

Yes. As stated earlier, Access Arrangements will provide extra assistance. In addition, later on, you will be able to apply for Special Circumstances. (See the section on Special Circumstances and Special Provision below)

(c) Applying for extra assistance with regard to Emergency Access

1. My child is due to sit the assessments but has sustained an injury which will affect their performance; what should I do?

There are Emergency Access Arrangements in place to cover such unforeseen difficulties, for example, a broken arm. Please contact the AQE Office immediately.

Assessment Days

1. How will we know about the arrangements for sitting the assessments?

After you send in the Registration Form, you will be sent out your son's or daughter's admissions card, which should be kept very securely. It will give details about the times of the assessments and what your child will need to bring. **Your child will need to take this card to each assessment**. At a later stage, after the admissions cards have been sent out, all parents will be contacted by the schools in which their children will be sitting the assessments, inviting them and you to Familiarisation Days or Evenings, where much more information will be given. Your child will see the room or hall where he/she will be sitting the assessment and will meet the person who will be supervising. Normally children from the same Primary School will sit together.

2. Can I take my child to see the school where they will be sitting the assessments?

The grammar school will contact you about a Familiarisation Day or Evening before the assessments.

3. Are parents allowed to remain on site during the assessments?

This varies from school to school. Information will be provided by the grammar school prior to the assessments.

4. My child is ill for one of the assessments. What should I do?

You should not panic. Children only have to sit two out of three papers to obtain a result. This is to allow for situations such as illness or an 'off day'.

5. Should my son or daughter wear their school uniform to the assessment?

There is no requirement to wear school uniform to the assessments; this issue and others (including what to bring to the assessments) will be dealt with directly in correspondence from the Grammar School Centre and from the AQE Office. AQE would not wish to prescribe any dress code (we would, however, counsel against football jerseys), but on the whole we believe that the children would be happiest in their school uniform.

The Assessment Papers

1. What is the format of the CEA?

The CEA is based on three one-hour assessments which take account of the English and Maths components of the present primary school curriculum.

2. Does my child have to sit all three assessments?

No. The result is taken from the best two scores, so only two assessments have to be sat. However, we strongly recommend that candidates take advantage of the option to sit all three papers, and the vast majority do so.

3. What is included in the assessments?

Each paper has 58 questions counting for 64 marks. There are 32 marks for English and 32 marks for Maths.

4. What font and page layout are used for the assessment papers?

The text is size 14 font and the paper comes in booklet form. This has proved to be very suitable for this type of assessment.

Marking and Results

1. How are the papers marked?

The papers are marked over a twelve day period at two marking centres, which are supervised by highly experienced Managers and Deputy Managers. Each paper is marked three times and there is a Quality Control Process which keeps a check on the system. In addition a further 20% of papers is marked again, and a further 20% is totalled again. In the Office, all papers are totalled for a final time.

2. When do the results come out?

The results will arrive with you by post on 30th January 2016.

3. Who else gets a copy of my child's result?

Your child's primary school will get a copy of the result.

4. What way is the result presented?

The result is a standardised score, a whole number between 55 and 145, with a mean of 100. Last year the highest score was 130. Grades will not be used.

5. Will my child be disadvantaged by age-standardisation.

No; a computer programme has been developed specifically for AQE Ltd to ensure that no child is disadvantaged. For each test, pupils are assigned to groups according to their age, calculated to the nearest month. This ensures that, for each paper, pupils are only compared with pupils of the same age, to the nearest month. A pupil who takes all 3 tests will have three age-standardised scores (one for each paper). The average of the best two scores is computed for each pupil. For pupils who take only two papers, the average of these two scores is computed.

6. How do I know if my son/daughter's result is good enough to get them into the school of their choice?

Parents should contact the school in question to find out what the lowest score was that they accepted in previous years. Although these vary from year to year, they may act as a guide.

7. Can I get my child's paper re-marked if I am unhappy with the result?

Yes, there is a process of re-marking; this will be communicated to you when the result is sent out. You should bear in mind that there is a charge for this, that the mark, if changed, can go down as well as up and that there have been very few changes over the past three years, because of the quality of the marking process. When you receive the result, if you wish to arrange for a re-mark, you should telephone the AQE Office and a re-mark registration form will be sent out to you.

8. When will I find out what school accepts my child?

This information does not come from AQE but from your Education and Library Board at the end of May.

Special Circumstances and Special Provision (Special Cases)

1. What are Special Circumstances and Special Provisions (Some schools have combined Special Circumstances into a single category called Special Cases)?

These are separate from the Access Arrangements which are made by AQE Ltd; Special Circumstances and Special Provision are handled by the individual AQE Grammar School. There is a Form which may be viewed on our website, which covers **both** Special Circumstances and Special Provision

2. My child sat the assessments but his/her performance was affected by personal circumstances. What should I do?

This is known as **Special Circumstances** (the term **Special Cases** is used by some schools). After your child sits the assessment, you should complete SC 15 form and ask for it, and any evidence, to be attached to your transfer form when you are having the Transfer Interview with your Primary School Principal in early February. Please see the section on our website *Special Circumstances and Special Provision* for further information.

3. My child did not sit the assessments; can we still apply to a grammar school?

Yes, but unless Special Provision applies, AQE Grammar Schools give preference to pupils who have sat the CEA.

Special Provision (the term **Special Cases** is used by some schools**)** is in place to cover the following circumstances:

- Children whose parents wish them to transfer to grammar schools from schools outside Northern Ireland.
- Children who have received more than half their primary education outside Northern Ireland
- Children, entered for the CEA, who because of unforeseen and serious medical or other problems, were unable to participate in any of the assessments

If your child was not able to sit the assessments and you intend to apply for a grammar school place for him or her on the Transfer Form with the Form SC15 for Special Provision, AQE Ltd would strongly recommend that you also contact the grammar school(s) concerned beforehand, in order to let it/them know and to seek guidance.

4. Do I need to complete form SC 15?

Yes. You need to complete the Form SC 14 for either Special Circumstances or Special Provision and attach any evidence. For Special Circumstances, it is particularly important that evidence **is gathered at the time of any incident which may have affected a performance**. You need to ask for SC 15 and accompanying evidence to be attached to your transfer form at the Transfer Interview with your Primary Principal, when applying to a post-primary school. Please see the section on our website *Special Circumstances and Special Provision* for further information.

5. Where can I get the Form SC 15?

SC 15 will be available from September 2015; the previous year's (SC 14) is kept on the website for a while for illustration purposes only. You will be able to get SC 15 from our website or any AQE grammar school. If this is not possible, you should contact the AQE Office (02890224002), and we shall send you out a copy.

6. My child arrived in Northern Ireland during their P5 year; should he/she sit the assessment?

Yes. Your child would be advised to sit the assessment and you should also apply for Special provision.