

PPTC ENTRANCE ASSESSMENT

**ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS  
&  
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

## 1. Access Arrangements

- Any child who might otherwise be prevented from taking the Entrance Assessment or whose performance is likely to be impaired by illness, injury, condition or disability may be granted Access Arrangements. An example of an Access Arrangement would be the provision of an enlarged paper for a child with a visual impairment.
- While an Access Arrangement can increase a child's access to the Entrance Assessment, it cannot be granted where it will directly enhance performance in the skills, knowledge or understanding that are the focus of the Entrance Assessment.
- Parents/guardians must have applied for Access Arrangements and had them approved before or at the time of the Entrance Assessment.
- Each application for Access Arrangements is considered on its own merit and on the basis of evidence presented.
- Applications will be assessed to determine that it is right for the individual child to benefit from appropriate assistance whilst ensuring, on the other hand, that the child is not unfairly advantaged.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide written evidence, as required in published procedures, in support of an application for Access Arrangements. No provision of Access Arrangements can be made by the Assessment Centre without such supporting evidence.

## 2. Special Circumstances

- Just before or during the Entrance Assessment, a child might experience medical or other problems which affect his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment and these difficulties are referred to as Special Circumstances. When this child applies for a place in a school which is using academic selection, his/her parents can provide appropriate evidence to the Board of Governors to show that their child had experienced Special Circumstances and ask that the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment should be adjusted.
- Recognition or acceptance of a claim for Special Circumstances can only go some way to assist the child affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may have influenced his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment.
- The admissions sub-committee in the admitting schools will assess each claim for Special Circumstances and take a decision on whether to adjust the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment. This process is carried out before any decisions are taken on the children to be selected for admission.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide written evidence in support of a claim for Special Circumstances, as required in published procedures.
- It is the responsibility of each Board of Governors to consider claims for Special Circumstances and to reach a decision in each case. A claim for Special Circumstances cannot be granted in the absence of appropriate supporting evidence.

## 3. The Disability Discrimination Act and Responsibilities

- In respect of the use of the Entrance Assessment for admission to Year 8, we are committed to ensuring that children are protected under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools and the Special Educational Needs Disability Order (NI) 2005, by making reasonable adjustments, if appropriate, to the process of internal organisation and arrangements for conduct of the Entrance Assessment.
- A child does not necessarily have to be disabled (as defined by the DDA 1995) to be allowed an Access Arrangement.

## 4. Conducting assessments to support claims for Access Arrangements

- Private or ELB Educational Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists or Specialist Learning Support teachers such as the SENCO in the child's primary school may conduct assessments used to support claims for Access Arrangements.
- Specialist Learning Support teachers and SENCOs must have a relevant qualification in Special Educational Needs.
- Registered and practising family doctors, hospital consultants and dentists will be required to provide written evidence of medical/dental emergencies and treatment.
- Although most assessments are carried out by educational psychologists, there are cases where a clinical or an occupational psychologist may have been medically responsible for the child. Reports from such professionals will also be accepted.
- If an application for Access Arrangements is supported by a psychologist, assessments must have been carried out by the psychologist, or by another qualified psychologist whose work must be appropriately attributed by the psychologist signing the assessment. Psychologists may not sign off assessments carried out by a teacher.
- If a specialist teacher is signing the AA3 Form, assessments must have been carried out by the specialist teacher signing the form.

## 5. Access arrangements

### • Children's Needs

Access Arrangements are made on the basis of an individual child's needs. Some children may have a number of the needs set out below which means that they are likely to require a range of Access Arrangements. The exemplars given are therefore not exhaustive. However, the decision of the Assessment Centre in respect of all such requests for Access Arrangements must be regarded as final.

#### ▪ Communication and Interaction

Children with communication and interaction difficulties may have problems with written communication skills. They may need extra time to demonstrate written communication skills. They may need, in particular circumstances, to have the assistance of a scribe to write for them or a Sign Language Interpreter.

#### ▪ Cognition and Learning

Children with learning difficulties may require extra time for timed assessments.

#### ▪ Sensory and Physical Needs

Children with sensory and physical needs may require extra time and/or a scribe. They may require papers with modified print or colour. They may require a practical assistant, or adaptations to equipment or furniture.

#### ▪ Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs

Children with behavioural, emotional and social needs may require supervised rest breaks, separate invigilation or alternative accommodation arrangements. Where children also have learning difficulties, they may require extra time and, in the case of a more severe impairment, a scribe.

## 6. Making an application for Access Arrangements

- All applications for Access Arrangements must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the specified time and date for the closure of the registration period. If the child has learning difficulties, the Assessment Centre will consider the needs of the child based on one of the following documents:
  - a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to primary education at Key Stage 1 or 2 which has reached the stage where an assessment has been carried out by the ELB educational psychologist;
  - a Psychological Assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist confirming learning disability during the primary school period at Key Stage 1 or 2 and taking account of standard educational psychology tests such as WISC UK 4, WORD or Weschler Individual Achievement Test;
  - an assessment confirming learning disability during the primary school period at Key Stage 1 or 2 carried out by a specialist teacher qualified to do so and taking account of standard educational psychology tests such as WISC UK 4, WORD or Weschler Individual Achievement Test.
- Any assessment or tests used in support of application for Access Arrangements must be carried out within Key Stage 1 or 2 and show a strong correlation between the assessment or test and the specific Access Arrangement sought.
- In other circumstances, such as a medical, physical or psychological requirement, appropriate written evidence of need completed by a medical/dental practitioner must be provided to the Assessment Centre by the deadline for registration except where medical or other problems arise after this deadline which require Access Arrangements. In these exceptional circumstances the parent/guardian must inform the Assessment Centre as soon as possible before the Entrance Assessment.
- The Assessment Centre will also consider evidence of need in the normal working arrangements made for the child and performance in internal assessments, such as examinations, in primary school. It will also take account of any history of difficulties and any residual effects there may be from those difficulties.

## 7. Time Requirements

- Applications for Access Arrangements must be received by the end of the registration period.
- In exceptional circumstances where arrangements are required because of accident or emergency, the Assessment Centre should be informed as soon as possible.

## 8. Access Arrangements Available

### • Extra time of up to 25%

Applications must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period. If the child has learning difficulties, the Assessment Centre will consider the needs of the child based on at least one of the following documents:

- a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to and carried out in Key Stage 1 or 2 and which has reached the stage where an assessment has been carried out by the ELB educational psychologist;

- a Psychological Assessment carried out by an approved qualified psychologist confirming learning disability during Key Stage 1 or 2;
- an assessment confirming learning disability during Key Stage 1 or 2 carried out by a specialist teacher qualified to do so. (see Appendix 1)

Since there is a minimum of writing in the Entrance Assessment and the assessment is multiple choice in format, extra time may not always be appropriate. Any assessment requesting extra time should specifically establish that the child has difficulties with completing work within a timed period.

- Examples of how Access Arrangements for extra time would apply:
  - ◇ A child was diagnosed as mildly dyslexic in P6. He has made good progress with his reading and writing, which are now within the normal range for his age. He does make spelling mistakes, but these are minor and do not affect the ability of teachers to read and understand his scripts. He is not allowed extra time because the assessment does not involve substantial writing.
  - ◇ A child has a moderate dyslexic condition affecting speed of processing. She may be allowed 25% extra time, depending on her need, to finish writing her papers.
  - ◇ A child has severe cerebral palsy. He manages multiple-choice papers within 25% extra time and this is given.
- **Supervised rest breaks**
  - An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period. Relevant medical evidence from an appropriate specialist is necessary to establish the need for this provision.
  - Supervised rest breaks may be considered as an alternative or addition to any request for extra time. They may be appropriate for a child with poor concentration skills or who suffers from extreme stress. Alternatively, supervised rest breaks may be permitted for medical/psychological reasons.
  - Where it is deemed appropriate for a child to have supervised rest breaks, the timing of the examination will be stopped and re-started when the child is ready to continue. If the child needs to leave the examination room, an invigilator will accompany the child. The timing of these breaks depends on the nature of the child's condition.
  - Medical advice must be sought by parents in cases of serious illness that the child is fit to take the examination
- **Scribes**
  - A scribe is a responsible adult who records a child's dictated answers to the questions. A scribe must be a responsible adult who is acceptable to the Head of the Assessment Centre.
  - An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period.
  - Appropriate written evidence of need completed by a registered and practising family doctor or hospital consultant must be provided to the Assessment Centre in advance of the Entrance Assessment.
  - Scribes should only be requested for children who cannot produce written communication because of physical injury or disability or visual impairment. The provision of a scribe should reflect the child's normal way of working in the primary school, except in cases where temporary injury gives rise to the need for a scribe.
  - A scribe:
    - ◇ must record accurately what the child has said;
    - ◇ must not give factual help to the child, indicate when the answer is complete; advise the child on which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or on the order in which questions should be answered;
    - ◇ may, at the child's request, read back what has been recorded.
- **Prompters**
  - An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period. If the child has learning difficulties, the Assessment Centre will assess the needs of the child based on one of the following documents:
    - ◇ a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to and carried out in Key Stage 1 or 2 and which has reached the stage where an assessment has been carried out by the ELB educational psychologist;
    - ◇ a Psychological Assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist confirming learning disability during Key Stage 1 or 2;
    - ◇ an assessment confirming learning disability during Key Stage 1 or 2 carried out by a specialist teacher qualified to do so and approved in accordance with the requirements of Appendix 2;

- The provision of a prompter should reflect the child’s normal way of working in a primary school.
- A prompter may be permitted where a child has little or no sense of time, or loses concentration easily, or is affected by an obsessive-compulsive disorder which leads them to keep revising a question rather than moving onto other questions. In such instances a child may be assisted by a prompter who can keep the child focussed on the need to answer a question and then move on to answering the next question.
- A prompter is a responsible adult who may sit beside the child in order to keep his or her attention on the task in hand. A prompter is not a reader, a scribe or a practical assistant. The prompter must be a responsible adult who is acceptable to the head of the Assessment Centre.
- A prompter:
  - ◇ must not advise the child regarding which questions to do, or on the order in which questions should be answered;
  - ◇ must not give factual help or offer any suggestions or communicate in any way other than those listed below;
  - ◇ may use the following prompts: “focus on the question”; “move onto the next question”; “there are X minutes left”;
  - ◇ may tap on the desk or on the child’s arm, depending on what is normal practice, in order to remind the child that he or she must pay attention to the question;
  - ◇ may use the child’s name as an appropriate prompt during the examination.
- Examples of how Access Arrangements for prompters would apply:
  - ◇ A child with Asperger’s Syndrome has no sense of time. The prompter sees that the child is doing nothing. She says “Mary, focus on the question, there are 15 minutes left”.
  - ◇ A child with an obsessive-compulsive disorder goes over the first question again and again. The prompter taps on the desk every quarter of an hour. The child knows how many questions have to be done in that time and tries to move on.
  - ◇ A child with attention deficit disorder works for a few minutes then looks out of the window. As he is taking his examination under separate invigilation, the invigilator is able to call out his name to bring his attention back to his question paper.
- **Use of Sign Language Interpreters**
  - An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period. Medical written evidence of need completed by a medical practitioner must be provided to the Assessment Centre in advance of the assessment with appropriate evidence of need held on file.
  - The role of a Sign Language Interpreter is to present the questions without changing the meaning, adding any additional information or providing an explanation as to what the question requires of the child.
  - Since the Sign Language interpretation is done ‘live’ in the presence of the Sign Language Interpreter must be a responsible adult who is acceptable to the head of the Assessment Centre and is proficient in the use of the child’s sign language child during the examination.
  - Sign Language Interpreters can be used to sign the instructions to children taking written papers. Sign Language Interpreters may repeat the translation if requested to do so by the child but an alternative translation should not be given as this would be considered to be an explanation of the question which would be giving the child an unfair advantage.
  - Since Sign Language interpretation is done “live” in the presence of the Sign Language Interpreter, the interpreter must be a responsible adult who is acceptable to the Head of Centre and is proficient in the use of the child’s sign language during the Entrance Assessment.
- **Other Arrangements**  
The following arrangements are also available to children:
  - Alternative centre arrangements

Except in the case of an emergency or accident in the days before the assessment, an application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period. Written medical evidence of need completed by a medical practitioner must be provided to the Assessment Centre in advance of the assessment. In all cases, permission must be requested from the Assessment Centre as far in advance of the assessment as possible, alternative

accommodation should be requested only for those children who have a medical condition which prevents them from taking the paper in the centre but are considered medically fit to take it elsewhere such as a hospital.

- Coloured Overlays/Coloured Paper

An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period and be accompanied by supporting medical or educational psychologist's reports outlining the need. Such an arrangement should reflect the child's normal way of working in the primary school given the child's individual needs. The child will be allowed access to the original examination paper as well as the one printed on coloured paper.

- Modified Papers

An application must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period and be accompanied by supporting medical or educational psychologist's reports outlining the need. Such an arrangement should reflect the child's normal way of working in primary school. It is important that parents/guardians are aware that:

- ◇ In creating a modified paper for an individual child, the Assessment Centre will take due regard to the publication "Best Practice Guidance for the Modification and Production of Examination Papers for Children with a visual impairment". This publication may be accessed from the RNIB website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk). Modified (or enlarged) papers are thus only available when parents have indicated their need at the time of registration and cannot be provided in any other circumstances.
- ◇ Modified enlarged papers are intended for children who have a severe visual impairment which cannot be corrected by spectacles. An A3 enlargement will be provided unless otherwise agreed with the parent/guardian in line with written evidence provided.
- ◇ Modified language papers cannot be provided since the paper tests language skills. The competence standards include an assessment of the child's ability to read and manipulate language and number.

## 9. Limitations on provision

- It is the responsibility of the person carrying out the assessment/tests of the child in support of a request for Access Arrangements to give the results of any tests completed by the child and indicate that the impairment has a significant effect on the child's performance. The status of the person must be specified in any application for Access Arrangements.
- Whether it is reasonable for the Assessment Centre to permit a particular adjustment will depend primarily on the need of the applicant but also on factors such as cost and effectiveness. However, if an adjustment is one which is reasonable to make and considered necessary and suitable to afford the child the opportunity to reach his/her full potential, then the Assessment Centre will do so unless the assessment objectives or competencies being assessed are to be affected. Where a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage by an assessment objective or competency, the Assessment Centre is not under a duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- Each application will be considered on its own merits in light of the child's needs. In adjudicating upon any application it will be material for the Assessment Centre to consider whether the requested adjustment might compromise the competence or ability which is being tested in the assessment.
- Some adjustments may not be considered reasonable if they involve excessive costs, unreasonable timeframes or affect the security and integrity of the assessment itself. Adjustments must not put in jeopardy the health and well being of any person, including the child.

## 10. Recording Access Arrangements

- The Assessment Centre will record all Access Arrangements and retain these on file until after any appeals process may be completed.

## 11. Supplementary Assessment

- A Supplementary Assessment, of the same specification as the original assessment, will be provided on a specified date no less than three weeks after the Entrance Assessment. This Supplementary Assessment is available to children who are unable to take or to complete the Entrance Assessment by reason of illness or other unforeseen exceptional circumstance.
- The Assessment Centre will consider requests from applicants wishing to take a Supplementary Entrance Assessment providing such requests are accompanied by properly documented objective evidence within the deadline as set out in the Registration Form. Such evidence may be a medical certificate from a GP or hospital, a letter from a dentist indicating necessary emergency dental treatment or evidence of a family bereavement. It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to inform the Assessment Centre on the morning of the assessment if a child is unable to sit the assessment and to provide

properly documented objective evidence of the reason which prevented the child taking the assessment. In the absence of such evidence, the Assessment Centre will not give the child access to the Supplementary Entrance Assessment.

- A child entered for the Entrance Assessment may only take the Supplementary Entrance Assessment if this has been agreed in advance with the Assessment Centre. If the parent/guardian informs the centre that the child is ill but chooses to enter the child for the Entrance Assessment, the child may not then take the Supplementary Assessment. In other words, a child may only take either the Entrance Assessment or the Supplementary Assessment but not both.

## 12. Special Circumstances

- Shortly before or during the Entrance Assessment, a child might experience medical or other problems which affect his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment. These difficulties are referred to as Special Circumstances. When the child applies for a place in a school which is using the outcomes of the Entrance Assessment in its Year 8 Admissions process, his/her parents can provide appropriate evidence to the Board of Governors to support their claim that their child experienced Special Circumstances and to seek an adjustment to the outcome secured by the child in the Entrance Assessment.
- Recognition or acceptance of a claim for Special Circumstances can only go some way to assist the child affected by a potentially wide range of emotional and/or physical difficulties, which may have influenced his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment. However, the admissions sub-committee in the admitting schools will consider each claim for Special Circumstances and take a decision on whether to adjust the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment. This process is carried out before any decisions are taken on the children to be selected for admission.
- An application for both Access Arrangements and Special Circumstances cannot be made for the same reason. Where a need or problem is identified in advance of the assessment taking place, an application for Access Arrangements should be made. Special Circumstances should be sought only where events on the day, or shortly before the assessment was held, or factors unknown at the time, are considered to have directly influenced the outcome on the day of the Entrance Assessment.
- Special Circumstances cannot remove the difficulty faced by the child; there will be situations where children should not be entered for the assessment because they are not in a fit state to cope with the assessment. A student who has begun, but who has not completed the Entrance Assessment, may not take the Supplementary Assessment.
- A parent/guardian will usually know whether there have been medical or other problems affecting a child in the period just before or during the Entrance Assessment. While it will not be immediately known whether these circumstances have had a detrimental effect on a child's score in the Entrance Assessment, a parent/guardian is best placed to decide on whether they should be brought to the attention of the schools to which the parent will be applying for a place for the child.
- A pack for claiming Special Circumstances will be available from the Assessment Centre; it includes the forms and guidance notes. Parents/Guardians must ensure that claims for Special Circumstances are registered at the Assessment Centre by the date specified in the timetable available in the Registration Pack. Claims for Special Circumstances may not be considered if the Assessment Centre has not been informed by this deadline.
- The decision as to whether to take Special Circumstances into consideration will not be made at this time by the Assessment Centre. The centre will confirm receipt of the initial claim to the parent/guardian. This confirmation must then be attached by the parent/guardian to the Transfer Form along with full, supporting documentary evidence when an application is made for post-primary transfer for the child.
- Children will be eligible for Special Circumstances if performance in the assessment is affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control occurring at the time of, or shortly before the Entrance Assessment. These include:
  - temporary illness or accident or injury at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
  - bereavement of an immediate family member at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
  - serious and disruptive domestic crisis arising at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
  - serious disturbance during the Entrance Assessment;
  - accidental events such as being given the wrong or a defective Entrance Assessment paper;
  - failure by the post-primary school to implement previously agreed Access Arrangements;
  - terminal illness of a parent/guardian;
  - life threatening illness of the child or member of immediate family;
  - recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative;
  - flare-up of severe congenital conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe asthmatic attack;
  - recent serious physical assault.
- Circumstances relating to application for Special Circumstances must apply at the time of the Entrance Assessment and be supported by appropriate written evidence. A Special Circumstances claim will not be considered without such evidence.

- Information given to the Assessment Centre regarding any claim for Special Circumstances may be shared with schools to which application is made for post-primary Transfer. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that such claims and all verifying information are attached to the Transfer Form.

### 13.Special Provision

- Special Provision will be made for pupils moving or recently moved to Northern Ireland, i.e. children whose parents/guardians wish them to transfer to post-primary schools from schools outside Northern Ireland or children who have received more than half of their primary education outside Northern Ireland. It will also be made for children who were unable to take the Entrance Assessment or the Supplementary Entrance Assessment due to serious medical problems or for another valid reason or has not attended primary school for a substantial period of time in Key Stage 2 due to serious medical problems or for another valid reason.
- It will be for the post-primary school concerned, within the operation of its admission criteria, to decide whether these children should be admitted on the basis that they fall within the ability range of other pupils being admitted in that year.
- Those children to whom this provision applies may, if their parents/guardians wish, sit the Entrance Assessment in which case the grade or mark score obtained may be considered.
- Each school using the GLA Entrance Assessment as part of its admission procedures for Year 8 will publish Admissions Criteria which set out the circumstances in which a parent/guardian may apply for Special Provision for his/her child. Parents should carefully read these criteria to check that they are applicable to their children.

## Appendix 1

### Persons who may provide supporting information and reports for Access Arrangements:

- An ELB/ESA Educational Psychologist or a private qualified Psychologist holding an appropriate third level qualification
- Registered and practising family doctors, hospital consultants and dentists.
- A qualified Specialist Teacher employed within the child's primary school, designated as SENCO and able to fulfil the criteria below:
  - able to teach and assess primary and secondary aged learners who have learning difficulties
  - have the necessary knowledge and skill to carry out assessments in support of applications for Access Arrangements, including a thorough understanding of the Code of Practice following amendments made to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  - be fully trained in and have experience of the objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading speed and comprehension, spelling, with appropriate assessment ceilings
  - be able to define when it is necessary to refer the child to an educational psychologist or other specialist and understand the limitations of their own skills.
  - have completed a course in special education allowing him/her to achieve a recognised third level qualification.
  - have sufficient experience in teaching and assessing primary aged pupils with specific learning difficulties to make recommendations on Access Arrangements.