

Post Primary Transfer Consortium

ENTRANCE ASSESSMENT

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

POLICY

2021-22

1. Access Arrangements – additional support which can be provided during the Entrance Assessment

- 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.
- Access Arrangements are different to claims for Special Circumstances – see box below and Section 10.

Special Circumstances – Claimed for after the Entrance Assessment

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 this child applies for a place in a school which is using academic selection in its Year 8 Admissions process, his/her parents can, when completing the Application for post-primary education, choose to make a Claim for Special Circumstances supported by appropriate evidence. In making the Claim the parents are asking that the grade/score/cohort percentile achieved in the Entrance Assessment should be adjusted by the Board of Governors of the post- primary school to take account of the Special Circumstances.

2. 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, the Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools, the Special Educational Needs Disability Order (NI) 2005 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016 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.

3. Conducting assessments to support claims for Access Arrangements

- Private or Education Authority 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.

4. 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 adjustments to print size 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.

5. 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 Education Authority 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.

6. 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.

7. 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 Education Authority 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 Education Authority 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 1;
- 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 help 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', 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 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 give the child an unfair advantage.

- **Use of an Examination Reader Pen**

- An Examination Reader Pen, such as the C Pen Examination Reader is a device which assists a pupil to read but does not contain a thesaurus, dictionary, spell-checker or other additional aid.
- An application for use of an Examination Reader Pen must be submitted to the Assessment Centre no later than the end of the registration period.
- The provision of an Examination Reader Pen should reflect the child's normal way of working in their primary school.
- The child's primary school SENCO must provide recorded written evidence of where and how his/her Access Arrangement of an Examination Reader Pen has been used during internal assessments in the primary school. This is to demonstrate normal way of working and use of an Examination Reader Pen must have been in place long enough for the child to have acquired competency in its use. An application for a reader/computer reader where a child has no previous experience of using a reader/computer reader during internal assessments will not be accepted.
- The specific Examination Reader pen to be used by a child in the Entrance Assessment must be pre-approved by the Assessment Centre, prior to its use in the Entrance Assessment.
- Where use of an Examination Reader Pen has been approved, the pupil will be allocated his / her own room for the Assessment and will be granted the 25% maximum additional time allowance.

- **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**

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 with use of an appropriate overlay.

- **Enlarged (non-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 an enlarged (non-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. Enlarged (non-modified) papers are only available when parents have indicated their need at the time of registration and cannot be provided in any other circumstances.
- ◇ Enlarged (non-modified) 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.

8. Limitations on provision

- A Reader cannot be provided to any child taking the Entrance Assessment or the Supplementary Assessment because it provides the child with assistance on a specific skill being tested by the assessment, i.e. the Entrance Assessment tests the reading skills of each child. This is in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications policy on access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration. Please note, however, that there are circumstances in which use of an Examination Reader Pen may be allowed (see Section 7).
- 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.

9. Recording Access Arrangements

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

10. Special Circumstances

- 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. Special Circumstances are mentioned in the Admissions Criteria of post-primary schools but this process is not administered or organised by PPTC. Each post primary school makes its own arrangements for Special Circumstances.
- A parent/guardian will usually know whether there have been medical or other problems affecting a child in the period 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. As a preliminary step, parents who may be considering making a Claim for Special Circumstances should complete and submit an SCR (Special Circumstances Registration) Form to the Assessment Centre by **2:00 pm Wednesday 15th December 2021**. Depending on the actual outcomes achieved by the child the parents can then decide whether to make a Claim for Special Circumstances when completing the Application for post-primary education.

Appendix 1

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

- An Education Authority 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.