POST PRIMARY TRANSFER CONSORTIUM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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1. Why is the Post Primary Transfer Consortium (PPTC) 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, 34 schools including Catholic grammar schools, some of the Non-denominational grammar schools and some Integrated schools have joined the PPTC and will use the same standardised Entrance Assessment in English and Mathematics to determine the academic ability of 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 16th November 2019. Only children who are registered can take the Assessment.

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

The assessment will take place on Saturday 16th November 2019. There will be a Supplementary Entrance Assessment on Saturday 7th December 2019. The Supplementary assessment will be held at specified regional Assessment Centres and not necessarily the Assessment Centre initially assigned to a child.

Your child will take the Entrance Assessment in one of the post primary schools (listed on page 4) in your area which is continuing to use academic selection as part of its admission criteria. On the Registration Form, you have the opportunity to indicate, in order, 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 16th November 2019. 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 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. A specification for the Entrance Assessment is provided in this pack.

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 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 it continues 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 post primary schools. You may be familiar with your child taking the Progress in English or Progress in Mathematics assessments in primary school which are GL Assessment products. GL Assessment is the largest independent provider of educational assessments in the UK and N. Ireland. 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 2008 and 1st July 2009 are eligible to take the Entrance Assessment. Applications to sit the Entrance Assessment for children born outside 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.

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

There is 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 Access Arrangements.

12. Can my child receive special consideration for medical or other problems?

Before or during the Entrance Assessment, a child might experience medical or other problems which may have affected his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment. These difficulties are referred to as Special Circumstances. While it will not be immediately known whether these circumstances have had a detrimental effect on a child's Entrance Assessment outcomes, 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 Friday 13th December 2019. 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. A Special Circumstances Pack will be available on the **www.pptcni.com** website or from any Assessment Centre after 16th November 2019. 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.

13. Can my child take the Supplementary Entrance Assessment?

The Supplementary Entrance Assessment is **only available** to a child who was registered but absent on 16th November 2019 or was present initially but was not well enough to be present for any part of the second assessment paper. If your child meets either of these criteria you should inform the Assessment Centre as soon as possible. To request that your child be allowed to sit the Supplementary Entrance Assessment on Saturday 7th December 2019 you MUST write to the ENTRANCE ASSESSMENT OFFICER at the Assessment Centre providing documentary evidence to support your request. The deadline for requests for a child to sit the Supplementary Entrance Assessment is 2.00 pm Monday 25th November 2019. The supplementary assessment will be provided at a number of regional Assessment Centres and not necessarily the Assessment Centre initially assigned to a child.

Where a child sits the Supplementary Entrance Assessment because he/she started the Entrance Assessment on 16th November 2019 but was not well enough to be present for any part of the second assessment paper then any outcomes

from the first assessment paper on 16th November 2019 will NOT be used and only the Supplementary Entrance Assessment outcomes will stand.

14. Is the Supplementary Entrance Assessment easier or more difficult?

No. 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 overall outcomes. All of the Entrance Assessment papers including those used for the Supplementary Assessment are developed to the same rigorous and consistent high standards.

15. How and when will I receive my child's results from the Entrance Assessment?

The results will be posted to you (first class) by the Assessment Centre on Friday 24th January 2020. It is not possible to collect the results.

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 achieved by your child in both the English and Mathematics assessment papers. The grades will be allocated on the basis of the combined total of the Standardised Age Scores. You will also receive a Cohort Percentile which is based on the combined total of the Standardised Age Scores. Percentage marks are not provided because the Entrance Assessment is a standardised test. Standardised Age Scores have a scale running from 69 to 141 with 100 as the mean. Cohort Percentiles range from <30 to 99+ with 50 as the mean.

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 the Entrance 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 69 to 141 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 in standardised testing for English and Mathematics, including tests for reading and spelling age calculations, e.g. Progress in Mathematics and Progress in English.

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 homework is always completed to a 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 English and Mathematics within the Northern Ireland Curriculum 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.

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.

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Assessment Centres

Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	77A Ashgrove Road, Newry BT34 1QN	www.abbeycbs.org
Antrim Grammar School	10 Steeple Road, Antrim BT41 1AF	www.antrimgrammar.org
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 0BY	www.aquinasgrammar.com
Assumption Grammar School	24 Belfast Road, Ballynahinch BT24 8EA	www.assumptiongrammar.org.uk
Campbell College	Belmont Road, Belfast BT4 2ND	www.campbellcollege.co.uk
Christian Brothers' Grammar School	Kevlin Road, Omagh BT78 1LD	www.omaghcbs.org
Dominican College Belfast	Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AQ	www.dominicancollege.org.uk
Dominican College Portstewart	2 Strand Road, Portstewart BT55 7PF	www.dcpni.net
Hunterhouse College	Upper Lisburn Road, Finaghy BT10 0LE	www.hunterhousecollege.org.uk
Lagan College	44 Manse Road, Belfast BT8 6SA	www.lagancollege.com
Loreto Grammar School Omagh	James' Street, Omagh BT78 1DL	www.loretogs.com
Lumen Christi College	Bishop Street, Derry BT48 6UJ	www.lumenchristicollege.co.uk
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	Belmore Street, Enniskillen BT74 6AB	www.mountlourdes.com
Our Lady and St Patrick's College Knock	120 Gilnahirk Road, Belfast BT5 7DL	www.knock.co.uk
Our Lady's Grammar School	Chequer Hill, Newry BT35 6DY	www.ourladysgrammar.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 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
St. Dominic's High School	135-137 Falls Road, Belfast BT12 6AE	www.stdominics.org.uk
St Joseph's Grammar School	58 Castlecaulfield Road, Donaghmore BT70 3HE	www.stjosephsdonaghmore.com
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 Downpatrick	Saul Street, Downpatrick BT30 6NJ	www.spgs.org.uk
Thornhill College	Culmore Road, Derry BT48 8JF	www.thornhillcollege.org.uk
Victoria College	2a Cranmore Park, Belfast BT9 6JA	www.victoriacollege.org.uk