

POST PRIMARY TRANSFER CONSORTIUM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (updated Sept 2020)

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 decided to continue with academic selection. In this unregulated system, 33 schools including Catholic grammar schools, some Non-denominational grammar schools and some Integrated schools joined the PPTC in order to be able to use the outcomes from the same standardised Entrance Assessment in English and Mathematics as part of their Admissions Criteria for year 8.

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

By registering, PPTC will be able to put arrangements in place for your child to take the Entrance Assessment on **30th January 2021**. Only children who are registered can take the Assessment.

3. Who should sit the Entrance Assessment?

Children born between 2nd July 2009 and 1st July 2010 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.

4. My child has a Statement of Educational Needs. Does he / she need to sit the Entrance Assessment?

No. Children who are at Stage 5 of the Code of Practice and have a Statement of Educational Needs are exempt from the post-primary admissions process and do not need to sit the Entrance Assessment.

5. 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.

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

The assessment will take place on **Saturday 30th January 2021**. There will be a Supplementary Entrance Assessment on **Saturday 6th February 2021**. 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) which uses academic selection as part of its admission criteria. On the Registration Form, you should indicate, in order, the 3 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.

7. 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.

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

The Entrance Assessment will consist of two standardised assessment papers to be taken on **30th January 2021**. The assessment will be multiple choice in format. The first paper, assessing English, will last 60 minutes and the second paper, assessing Mathematics, will last 50 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.

9. Why is an English (or Irish) 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.

10. Why will the 2020-21 English paper last 60 minutes, when in past years it was 50 minutes?

Pupils are normally allowed 50 minutes to complete the English Assessment paper and 45 minutes for the Mathematics. However, pupils' normal education provision has been disrupted in 2020. **All** pupils are therefore being allowed 60 minutes for the English Assessment paper and 50 minutes for the Mathematics, even though the papers are not any longer. This will provide **every** pupil with more time to answer each question in both papers than in any previous year. For English, with its 3 comprehension passages, an extra 10 minutes has been added and for the Mathematics paper it is an extra 5 minutes. The same extra time provision has been made for pupils sitting the Gaeilge versions of the papers. Pupils entitled to additional time through Access Arrangements will have their additional time added to the times outlined above.

11. Who has set and will mark the assessment?

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

12. Who is GL Assessment?

GL Assessment is the leading provider of formative assessments to UK schools and is a main provider of 11+ assessments, as well as providing assessments in over 100 countries worldwide. You may be familiar with your child taking the Progress Test in English (PTE) and Progress Test in Mathematics (PTM) standardised assessments in primary school which are GL Assessment products. For over 30 years, GL Assessment has provided assessments for children's education, mental health and wellbeing across the UK. They have pioneered a powerful digital assessment system, which has delivered over 7 million online tests across the globe. GL Assessment works with a very large pool of experts, to ensure that their assessments are rigorous, academically sound and in line with current best practice in education.

13. 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.

14. 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 Thursday 11th February 2021**. Depending on the actual outcomes achieved by the child 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 from any Assessment Centre after **30th January 2021**. In making a Claim parents are asking that the grade/score/cohort percentile achieved by their child in the Entrance Assessment should be adjusted by the Board of Governors of the post-primary school to take account of the Special Circumstances.

15. Can my child take the Supplementary Entrance Assessment?

The Supplementary Entrance Assessment is **only available** to a child who was registered but absent on **30th January 2021** 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 6th February 2021** 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 Tuesday 2nd February 2021**. The

supplementary entrance 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 30th January 2021 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 30th January 2021 will NOT be used and only the Supplementary Entrance Assessment outcomes will stand.

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

Neither. 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 Entrance Assessment are developed to the same rigorous and consistent high standards.

17. 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 5th March 2021. It is not possible to collect the results.

18. 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.

19. 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 the difficulty of the assessment paper and are then standardised by a statistical formula onto a scale ranging from 69 to 141; the average score is 100. You may be familiar with this type of standardisation as it is used by all primary schools in standardised testing for English and Mathematics, The Progress Test in Maths (PTM) and Progress Test in English (PTE) are examples of GL Assessment age standardised tests. You will also receive details of the grade boundaries along with your child's Entrance Assessment results.

20. 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.

21. 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, for example 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. PPTC schools do not request 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.

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 familiarisation booklets and sample answer sheets along with the specification of the assessment as part of 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.

POST PRIMARY TRANSFER CONSORTIUM

Assessment Centres

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| 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, Belfast | Belmont Road, Belfast BT4 2ND | www.campbellcollege.co.uk |
| Christian Brothers' Grammar School | Kevlin Road, Omagh BT78 1LD | www.omaghcbs.org |
| Dominican College Belfast | 38 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AQ | www.dominicancollege.org.uk |
| 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.ourladygrammar.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 6BE | www.stmarysmagherafelt.com |
| St Michael's College Enniskillen | Chanterhill Road, Enniskillen BT74 6DE | www.saintmichaels.org.uk |
| St Patrick's Academy Dungannon | 37 Killymeal Road, Dungannon BT71 6DF | www.stpatrickscademy.org.uk |
| St Patrick's Grammar School Downpatrick | 109 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 |
| Wellington College Belfast | 18 Carolan Road, Belfast BT7 3HE | www.wellingtoncollegebelfast.org |

As of 4th September 2020, the PPTC Member schools listed in lighter type have indicated that they will not be using Entrance Assessment outcomes in their Admissions criteria for 2021.