

POST PRIMARY TRANSFER CONSORTIUM

Entrance Assessment provided by GL Assessment

Specification of Use

1.0 Introduction

The following information, provided by GL Assessment, describes the Entrance Assessment with papers in Mathematics and English and their associated procedures. The areas covered are:

- Assessment Formats
- Assessment Content
- Assessment Administration
- Assessment Marking and Scoring
- Timetable

2.0 Assessment Formats

Each assessment paper has an assessment booklet, containing any reading passages and questions, and a separate answer sheet. Additional paper is provided for children to use for any rough work.

All questions are multiple-choice, with either 4 or 5 potential answer options depending on the type of question.

2.1 Practice Assessments

Each assessment paper is split into two parts: a Practice Assessment and a Main Assessment. The Practice Assessment precedes the Main Assessment and is intended to provide children with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the style of questions in the Main Assessment, and to become accustomed to the multiple-choice method of responding and the use of a separate answer sheet.

The Practice Assessment contains both familiarisation questions and practice questions. The familiarisation questions are worked through with the children and the correct answers are provided with explanations of those correct answers given by the Assessment Invigilator. They also provide an exercise in the use of a separate answer sheet where children are required to mark their intended answer. The practice questions allow the children some time to work independently through some questions in preparation for starting the Main Assessment. Answers are provided for these practice questions prior to the start of the Main Assessment.

2.2 Main Assessment - Mathematics

The Mathematics assessment paper begins with a Practice Assessment comprising of 3 familiarisation questions and 6 practice questions. The 3 familiarisation questions are worked through with the children and then they are provided with a further 10 minutes to complete the remaining 6 practice questions.

The Main Assessment then begins and requires the children to work through 45 questions in 45 minutes.

2.3 Main Assessment - English

The English assessment paper begins with a Practice Assessment comprising of a short reading passage with 3 familiarisation questions (comprehension) and 7 practice questions (4 spelling and 3 punctuation) which takes 20 minutes to complete. Answers are provided for these practice questions prior to the start of the Main Assessment.

The Main Assessment then begins and requires the children to work through 3 reading passages and 65 questions in 50 minutes. It starts with a reading passage followed by 10 comprehension questions. There are then 10 spelling questions followed by 8 punctuation questions. These have a valid answer option of no mistake where no correction was necessary. There is then another reading passage followed by 14 comprehension questions. There is then a final reading passage followed by 13 comprehension questions. Finally there are 10 general questions.

2.4 Sample Materials

A sample of both English and Mathematics material, laid out in the format of the assessment papers, including answer sheets, is available in the Registration Pack issued by each Assessment Centre.

3.0 Assessment Content

3.1 Mathematics

The content of the Assessment is intended to reflect the diversity of the curriculum; however a few questions covering areas which may not feature in any curriculum, such as elementary logic, are also included to assess intuitive understanding.

Most questions have been written either to assess the understanding of mathematical concepts and processes, or to assess the use of mathematics as a practical skill in a range of everyday situations. The remainder of the questions require recall of mathematical facts, properties or geometric names. The assessment includes the following:

Number:

- Value and place-value
- series and properties
- figurate numbers
- equivalence of operations
- decimal and vulgar fractions
- percentages
- indices (squared measurement only)

Money:

- Computation of change from up to £10
- Proportion
- Currency

Measurement:

- Scales
- Units
- Rate & proportion
- Length
- Area & Volume
- Weight
- Temperature
- Time

Geometry:

- Triangle, quadrilateral, polygon and circle
- Angle & Compass
- Solid geometry
- Symmetry (line & rotational)
- Co-ordinates (to one quadrant)
- Parallel & Perpendicular
- Internal angles of geometric shapes

Data Representation:

- Venn diagram, Pie chart, Table, Graph and Histogram.

Statistical Ideas:

- Average

- Simple probability

Mathematical Processes:

- Logic
- Mappings

3.2 English

The content of the English assessment paper is intended to reflect aspects of English language involving comprehension, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and study skills.

The assessment booklets have been designed as simulations of the usual book layout; title and contents pages at the front, index, and glossary at the back. The passages chosen have been selected to represent a variety of styles and authorship and the types of passage a child might come across in the normal course of reading in school or at home. The content of the passages is suited in difficulty and interest to children in the age group being assessed.

Comprehension is considered to be of over-whelming importance, and this is reflected in the structure of the assessment paper. Other skills occupy a much smaller proportion of the assessment questions. The questions themselves are phrased in language which is simpler in structure and vocabulary than the assessment passages. They are presented in groups relating to a preceding passage, usually on the facing page.

The spelling and punctuation exercises use short passages of dialogue taken from children's literature. Finally, at the end of the assessment booklet there is a general section which includes questions designed to encourage children to review mentally all the passages they have read (although not in specific detail). This section also includes general questions relating to study skills.

The assessment includes the following:

- Comprehension: literal and inferential interpretation of statements in the passages.
- Vocabulary: meanings of selected words in the context of the passage.
- Spelling and Punctuation: proofreading skills in detecting mistakes in printed material.
- Study Skills: knowledge of book layout and methods of finding a reference.

4.0 Assessment Administration

The Entrance Assessment is formally standardised which requires the Assessment Invigilators to read strictly word-for-word from a provided set of administration instructions ensuring that all children taking the Entrance Assessment have an identical experience. This also ensures that the correct level of support is offered by each Assessment Administrator, regardless of experience.

All answer sheets will be pre-printed with the children's personal details therefore eliminating the need for children to complete the appropriate boxes at the top of the answer sheet. This has also reduced the amount of time that children will need to be within the formal assessment environment. Assessment Invigilators will be supplied with spare answer sheets in case any of the personal details are incorrect, however the Assessment Invigilator will still be required to complete the child's personal details manually.

5.0 Assessment Marking and Scoring

5.1 Marking Process

The answer sheets will be returned to GL Assessment for independent marking and scoring. The answer sheets will be scanned using optical mark reader (OMR) technology which has 99.8% accuracy.

The answer sheets are prepared and scanned using OMR scanners and compatible software. GL Assessment enforces stricter levels than those specified by industry standards in the detection, discrimination and handling of all marks on answer sheets.

Any question which has multiple answers detected will prompt permanent internal staff to interpret whether the child's intended answer is clear, and if so override the question with the child's intended answer. Where there is doubt senior scanning staff are consulted to obtain 3 views, whereby the majority rules.

In the event of any score being in doubt after results are returned to the Assessment Centre, GL Assessment will hand score answer sheets as requested by the Assessment Centre to alleviate any concerns with the technology, processes or procedures being used.

5.2 Scoring

Children are awarded one mark for a completely correct question based on their clearly intended answer. There are never any fractional marks awarded. Raw scores are calculated (the number of questions answered correctly) per assessment paper per child. A valid Mathematics raw score will be between 0 and 45 (as there are 45 questions in total). A valid English raw score will be between 0 and 65 (as there are 65 questions in total).

Children's ages are calculated using their dates of birth and dates of assessment to the number of completed months old. For example, a child born on 21/06/1999 and tested on 15/03/2010 will be 10 years and 8 completed months old (he/she would not be 10 years and 9 completed months old until the 21/03/2010).

Standardised scores (a measure of a child's standing compared to the national sample) are then calculated per assessment paper per child based on the national standardisation tables for the particular assessment. This is done using the raw score and age in completed months. Valid standardised scores range from 69 to 141.

Grades will also be calculated as specified by the Post Primary Transfer Consortium.

6.1 Timetable

The Entrance Assessment will be held on the 19th November 2011 and a supplementary assessment will be held on the 10th December 2011.