

The Association for Quality Education Limited

CEA: A GUIDE for PARENTS

GS/11/04

Please note that while every effort has been made to present accurate information in this guide, some of the details may be subject to revision.

1. What is the Common Entrance Assessment? The CEA is the method which the grammar schools listed below will use to facilitate the continuation of academic selection following the ending of the 11+ transfer tests.

2. Why is the CEA necessary? Schools are legally entitled to include an assessment of academic ability in their menu of criteria for admission. The Minister of Education, Ms Ruane, ended the 11+ but refused to offer an alternative method of selection. Without some form of selection grammar schools would become all-ability comprehensives. The schools named here have adopted the CEA to fill the vacuum and avoid children being asked to sit a series of tests in different schools.

3. Which schools are participating? Schools offering the CEA are:

BELFAST AREA

Belfast Royal Academy
Bloomfield Collegiate
Campbell College
Grosvenor Grammar
Hunterhouse College
Methodist College
RBAI
Strathearn School
Victoria College
Wellington College

SOUTH EAST AREA

Bangor Grammar School
Down High School
Friends' School Lisburn
Glenlola Collegiate
Regent House School
Sullivan Upper School
The Wallace High School

NORTH EAST AREA

Antrim Grammar School
Ballyclare High School
Belfast High School
Cambridge House G.S.
Carrickfergus Grammar
Coleraine Acad Inst
Coletaine High School
Dalriada School
Larne Grammar School

WESTERN AREA

Collegiate Grammar, Enniskillen
Foyle and Londonderry College
Limavady Grammar School
Omagh Academy
Strabane Academy

SOUTHERN AREA

Banbridge Academy
Royal School Armagh
Royal School Dungannon

4. Will all children have to sit the CEA? No. Only those hoping to be admitted to one of the schools on the above list will have to sit the CEA.

5. What will be the format of the CEA? The CEA will be based on three one-hour assessments which take account of the English and Mathematics components of the present primary school curriculum. Only marks in the best two will count. If they wish, parents may elect to enter their child for only two of the three papers. Unlike the 11+, there will not be a supplementary paper.

6. What have parents to do if they wish to enter their child for the CEA? They will have to register an application with AQE. Forms will be available from 13th May in the final term of the P6 year, from the AQE Office, from the AQE website or from the participating schools. Advice about completion will be available if required.

7. Will there be a charge? A fee of £39.50 to cover costs of administration will be payable at the time of registration. This will apply irrespective of whether the child is being entered for two or three tests. The fee will be waived if the registration form is accompanied by proof that the child is entitled to free school meals.

8. When will the CEA be held? The assessments will take place on November 12th and 26th, and on December 3rd, 2011.

9. Where will the CEA be held? Pupils will sit the assessments in the participating grammar schools. Parents will be asked by AQE to list in order of preference three schools at which they would like their child to sit the tests. If any special arrangements are required in order to access the assessments, this should be indicated at the time of registration and in such cases parents will be advised of the arrangements that can be made.

10. Will it not be particularly stressful for pupils to sit the tests in the surroundings of grammar schools with which they are unfamiliar? Once parents are advised where their child will sit the CEA, there will be an opportunity to visit the school, to see where the assessments will take place and to be briefed on arrangements.

11. Why are there three papers? There are three papers to give pupils the best opportunity to display their abilities and to reduce the chances of them not doing themselves justice by having “an off day” when one of the assessments is held.

12. Will the CEA be available in the Irish language? Yes. Parents will have the opportunity to indicate on the registration form that they wish their child to sit the CEA in Irish.

13. Will there be any provision for special circumstances? Yes. Many circumstances will be accounted for by discounting the paper in which the pupil gains the lowest mark; however any parent who feels that their son or daughter under-achieved due to circumstances beyond his or her control or whose child was not able to complete any assessments, may make a claim. A form SC 11 and an information sheet may be obtained from the AQE Office, from the AQE website or from any AQE school after the assessment.

14. How has the CEA been designed? The CEA has been designed employing procedures similar to those used for “A” levels, having a Chief Examiner with extensive knowledge of test design, together with a team of revisers who are teaching professionals at primary level with long experience of preparing pupils for the 11+.

15. Will primary schools prepare pupils for the CEA? There is no obligation on primary schools to undertake specific preparation for the CEA, but it should be remembered that these assessments will reflect the teaching given to pupils in their normal classes. A sample paper, the three 2009/10 papers and the three 2010/11 papers will be available on the AQE website to enable pupils to familiarize themselves with the format of the assessments, and materials available for 11+ preparation, with the exception of the science items, can still be used.

16. How will parents be informed of the outcome of the CEA? AQE will inform parents on 4th February of the marks gained by their child.

17. What is the procedure parents have to follow after they have been informed of the marks? The process will be very similar to what has happened in previous years. All post-primary schools will be required to publish a menu of their admissions criteria. Schools participating in the CEA will indicate how the results will be applied within their individual framework. Parents will nominate their post-primary choices in order of preference and submit their application to the relevant Education and Library Board. Schools which are oversubscribed – i.e. they have more applications than places available – will apply their published criteria to determine their intake. Admission numbers and total enrolment for each school will continue to be set by the Department of Education.

18. Will children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs have to sit the CEA if they are to be considered for a grammar school? No, as at present this decision will be made in conjunction with parents, the relevant Education and Library Board and the receiving school.

19. Will children, other than children with a statement of Special Educational Needs, be considered for a school participating in the CEA if they have not sat the CEA? Parents should consult the admissions criteria of the schools to which they wish to have their child admitted. The CEA will be used to determine which applicants best satisfy a school’s academic criteria. As with the 11+, however, there will be a small number of exceptional circumstances in which this will not be the case. These will be explained in the criteria of individual schools. Since the 2006 Education Order requires all schools to fill to their enrolment, schools will be required to allocate places using other criteria in the unlikely event that they receive insufficient applications from pupils who have sat the CEA.

20. What will be the position in regard to grammar schools not offering the CEA? Parents are advised to contact these schools directly to ascertain what criteria they will use to determine entry.