

2. Preparation for the Secondary Transfer Test

2.1 Background

The selection procedure used in Buckinghamshire schools draws on the results of ability tests, commissioned by The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS). The Local Authority supports test centres and parents on behalf of the thirteen Buckinghamshire grammar schools.

The secondary school allocation is made on the basis of the outcomes of this test and, where requested, the outcome of a review and/or appeal.

The aim of the test is to place every pupil in a school that is well matched to their learning needs recognising that Buckinghamshire provides a first-class education in all types of secondary school, including the secondary special schools.

The validity of the Secondary Transfer Test rests on the reliability of the tests and the professionalism of those who administer them. Fairness is at the heart of the exercise. We must ensure that every pupil entered has the opportunity to perform at his or her best but, of equal importance, we must also demonstrate to others that the process is fair and properly organised.

2.2 Test Centre Protocol

All test centres are provided with a Test Centre Protocol. Test Centre Protocol 1 is for LA schools and Test Centre Protocol 2 is for Partner schools. Annually, Partner schools are required to sign a copy of their protocol and return it to the Admissions and Transport Team. The protocols are in addition to the test provider's agreement in the Test Administration Guide.

The key skills tested in the Secondary Transfer Test are age-appropriate skills and most are an integral part of the National Curriculum (i.e. comprehension, understanding word meanings and spelling, solving mathematical problems). As preparation for the test schools can therefore best support children by ensuring that the National Curriculum is being taught. **No other preparation should be undertaken in school. This includes the use of practice tests other than that provided by TBGS for use two days before the Transfer Test. Schools are also asked not to invite or accommodate commercial companies offering services aimed at coaching children about the contents of the test on the school premises.**

<p>Please ensure you are familiar with, and act in accordance with the relevant protocol for your school. Failure to do so may result in your school ceasing to be a test centre.</p>

2.3 About the Secondary Transfer Test (STT)

The Secondary Transfer Test is taken at the beginning of the autumn term of Year 6. It is independently produced by GL Assessment. The test is designed to assess a child's suitability for

grammar school. The skills measured in the test should make sure that all children go to a school that can best meet their educational needs. The Secondary Transfer Test is a test of children's ability to think through and work out verbal, mathematical and non-verbal problems. This gives children the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a range of ways using words, numbers and pictures or diagrams.

2.4 The Familiarisation Booklet

Naturally, everyone involved in the testing is concerned to ensure that the experience does not cause undue anxiety to pupils. In order to help them to approach the event without the fear of the unknown, a Familiarisation booklet is provided. This is designed by GL Assessment to give pupils the opportunity to get used to the sort of questions that they will encounter and to see what the answer sheets will look like. The Familiarisation booklet contains information about the tests (for example, how long they take and the sorts of questions they will contain) and some advice about how best to tackle the tests. A number of example questions and answers are also included.

For pupils in Buckinghamshire primary schools and Partner Schools, a printed copy of the Familiarisation booklet will be delivered to each child's home address towards the end of the summer term of Year 5. It is intended that parents work through the Familiarisation booklet at home with their child. You do not need to work through the Familiarisation Booklet in school.

For pupils in any other school, or where spare copies are required, a copy of the Familiarisation booklet is available to download from the [website](#)

2.5 Headteacher's Presentation to Year 5 Parents

A PowerPoint presentation is available here: <https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/admissions/>

Links to other helpful documents are also available on this page or on our website: [Grammar schools and Secondary Transfer Testing \(11+\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Further information about the Test can also be found on the TBGS website: <https://www.thebucksgrammarschools.org/>

2.6 Registration Process

The following chart sets out for parents whether they need to formally register their child to be tested.

Primary School Type	Do I need to register my child?	When will children take the Practice Test?	When will children take the Secondary Transfer Test?	Where will children take the tests?
Buckinghamshire junior or combined school	No , this happens automatically. As the tests are not compulsory, write to your child's headteacher now if you do not want your child to be tested.	Tuesday 12 September 2023	Thursday 14 September 2023	At their current school
Partner school	Yes , and register online between 5 May and 3pm on 16 June 2023	Tuesday 12 September 2023	Thursday 14 September 2023	At their current school
All other schools	Yes , and register online between 5 May and 3pm on 16 June 2023	Tuesday 12 September* 2023 * This date may be slightly later for a small number of children.	Thursday 14 September* 2023 * This date may be slightly later for a small number of children.	Venues to be arranged by BC

2.7 Withdrawn Pupils in Buckinghamshire Primary Schools

Taking the test is not compulsory for children in Buckinghamshire primary schools and each year a number of children are withdrawn from the test process where the parents and school agree. If parents wish to withdraw their child from testing, they are asked to write to the headteacher, and a list of withdrawn pupils for the school should be forwarded to the Admissions & Transport Team by Friday 24 June. It is important this list reaches us by the stated deadline so we can make sure test materials are not wasted by overprinting them unnecessarily with the names of non-testing pupils.

Should the experience of the Practice Test result in a late decision for a child to be withdrawn from the Secondary Transfer Test then a note should be made on the tracking sheet. This will ensure neither GL Assessment, nor the Admissions & Transport Team will be concerned that a completed test has gone missing.

2.8 Under- and Over-age Candidates

Any under-age or over-age candidate (i.e. a child whose national curriculum year group does not correspond with his or her date of birth) cannot be considered for admission to a Buckinghamshire grammar school, and hence sit the Secondary Transfer Test, without prior written approval from the Admissions & Transport Team. Additionally, for out county under-age entrants, the child's home LA must also have given approval for early transfer.

For an over-age candidate, approval should ideally be sought as early as possible in Year 5, if not before. If agreement is not given this would enable the child to take the Secondary Transfer Test with their chronological cohort, if parents so wished.

To discuss the inclusion of such children in the testing process please contact the Admissions & Transport Team immediately.

Under- or over-age candidates' raw scores are standardised in line with their age when taking the test and are taken into account when setting the standardisation.

2.9 Access Arrangements under the Equality Act 2010 (EQA)

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty upon Local Authorities (LAs) and schools not to discriminate against disabled pupils in their access to education. The grammar school admission authorities are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled children are not put at a substantial disadvantage during the Secondary Transfer Test. They do this through the operation of the Special Access Panel.

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, or a disability (without having an EHCP) that could be described as having an 'adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities', then parents are advised to discuss their child's access to the test with his or her headteacher. If the disability might affect access, consideration can be given as to whether any special testing arrangements should be made.

If it is felt that adjustments should be put in place for the test, then an application can be made. It is important this is done in good time so that an application can be considered beforehand, and any arrangements put into place ready for the test.

Children with ongoing medical conditions (e.g. type 1 diabetes, epilepsy, asthma) who are being tested in an LA or Partner school who do not require adjustments to the test but whose condition might be exacerbated by the test environment may be tested alone without applying for adjustments. If the school is in any doubt as to whether other adjustments may be required, please submit an application. The invigilation record should record the testing arrangements.

Full guidelines and the form to request adjustments are available in the Resource Pack on the Admissions page of SchoolsWeb.

A number of Special Access Panel meetings will be held. The deadline for submitting applications is 23 June. Parents and schools will be notified of the Panel's decision by end of August.

If the child has an EHCP, we will obtain a copy of the Plan from the Pupil Support Team or request from parents (children attending an out-county school).

Where parents have approached you indicating that they believe their child to be disabled and they are requesting adjustments, an application should still be made under this process even if no day-to-day adjustments are made in school.

Any adjustments offered by the Special Access Panel, must be in place for the Practice Test.

Where adjustments are made (and also where they are not) the case can always be considered again, in full, at the Selection Review and/or admission appeal stage, should a child not qualify.

It should be noted that where adjustments are agreed, in many cases it is recommended that the child should be tested alone due to the adjustments to be put in place. It is worth bringing this to the attention of parents considering applying for adjustments as this is not always fully understood.

2.10 Pupils Joining Year 6 in the Autumn Term

For Buckinghamshire primary schools: Please advise the Admissions & Transport Team, via email, of any changes to the Year 6 cohort.

Please ensure that the parent of any new Year 6 pupil is aware that full information is available online. You should also advise parents that they can apply for their child's secondary school place online at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk until the published closing date. We will accept applications online after the closing date, but they will be considered late applications.

For Partner schools: The parent of a newly admitted pupil, who wishes to be considered for admission to a Buckinghamshire grammar school, should urgently contact the Admissions and Transport Team admissions@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

New arrivals at the beginning of Year 6 will usually be aware that they will sit the test but please ensure they have received the Familiarisation booklet, taken the Practice Test and been issued with a pupil (examination) number by the Admissions & Transport Team. Parents should be advised, in advance, of the test dates.

2.11 Headteacher's Recommendations

The following sections describe the criteria for each level of recommendation, explain what information is provided to the Selection Review Panels, what the panels value as key information and finally some good practice and contextual statistics to help you understand the process.

a) The Recommendation Definitions

Grammar school suitability

		Description
1	Exceptionally able so very highly recommended.	Outstanding student academically.
2	Very able so recommended without any reservation.	Academically very able. Grammar school appropriate.
3	Recommended with reservation.	Grammar school may be appropriate in some cases.
4	Not recommended for grammar school.	Wide range of children from those who could be top ability in an upper school to those requiring support.

Attitude to Learning

1	Enjoys challenge and is a highly motivated independent learner
2	Consistently hardworking and reliable
3	Output varies
4	Lacks self-organisation, requires support (this is not a recommendation)

The Selection Review Panel (SRP) uses the recommendation information to:

- Gain some understanding of the context within which the child was working at the school.
- Consider how unexpected the child's actual result was, when compared with the headteacher's recommendations.

We therefore ask you to provide an overall recommendation score and a score for attitude to work on the Recommendation Form. You should list the children in alphabetical order on the form, and you only need to include the children that you are recommending.

We ask you to provide the above information, on a spreadsheet listing those pupils that you are categorising as a recommendation (1-3 for example). The blank template is available on the SchoolsWeb page. You can return it as a hard or soft copy (we will accept scanned signatures).

In September 2020 the Headteachers Admissions Working Group (HAWG) developed a more detailed analysis linking recommendation to performance levels to support headteachers in the recommendation process. This was further reviewed for 2023 admissions.

Please see STT Guide for Pupil Recommendations – Headteacher's guide

<https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/media/61189/stt-recommendation-guidance-final.pdf>

The Recommendation Form MUST be provided by 29 September 2023.

b) Presenting Information to the Selection Review Panel

We will provide the recommendation scores for the children to the Selection Review Panel in a summary format for each school (LA primary and Partner schools) as a reference document to use when coming to their decision.

The information will be provided to an SRP as a grid, as in the following example. We do not need to know in detail about other children who are not recommended but we will need to know how many children are in the cohort but have not been recommended.

Example School Recommendations for 2023

SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Schools have been asked to submit all children recommended at 1,2 or 3 and with an 'attitude' of 1,2 or 3. The underlined figure is the total number recommended at each level, the figure in brackets is the number of those children that qualified by scoring 121 or more.				
GRAMMAR SCHOOL SUITABILITY				
ATTITUDE TO LEARNING		1	2	3
	1	<u>1</u> (1)	<u>1</u> (0)	<u>0</u> (0)
	2	<u>0</u> (0)	<u>5</u> (2)	<u>1</u> (0)
3	<u>0</u> (0)	<u>4</u> (2)	<u>1</u> (0)	
<u>12 (0)</u> = Total number of children not recommended at levels 1,2 and 3 for grammar school suitability or attitude to learning or who are new to the school (and headteacher did not have sufficient knowledge of the child to complete the recommendation)				

All headteachers of Buckinghamshire primary or Partner schools, have signed up to the protocol which sets out the obligation to submit Recommendation Forms and complete a 'Headteacher's Review Summary Sheet' for each review applicant. This does not require you to couch your comments as a recommendation, but we do ask that you provide the data requested on the form for each review applicant.

c) Good Practice

- Do discuss your recommendations with your class teachers. Increased liaison at this point will reduce the circumstances in which a class teacher, if prevailed upon by parents to add a separate comment, contradicts the headteacher's submission. If you and your class teachers feel there is value in recording your comments separately on the Headteacher's Selection Review Summary Sheet then you may do this, adding in an appropriate heading and including the additional signature. This is optional, but you may find it reduces separate requests from parents to class teachers if you find this particularly prevalent in your school.
- Children should only be included on the Recommendation Form if you expect they will be appropriately placed in a grammar school.
- Consider the known data from your ongoing performance monitoring – both the grid and 'Headteacher's Selection Review Summary Sheet' should begin from this point.
- Tests are designed for different purposes and therefore how a child performs in one test does not necessarily correlate or predict similar performance in another different test.
- Don't rank all children as 1:1 unless this truly reflects the case. The template will show you have been over optimistic if not. The summary does indicate clearly where headteachers have erred on the over optimistic side.
- The Buckinghamshire tested cohort is an able group compared to the national group. This is because children in Buckinghamshire generally perform better than the national averages. Those attending a Buckinghamshire primary school are offered an 'opt out' of taking the Secondary Transfer Test and where this happens, it is often because the STT is not felt relevant as the child is in the bottom quartile of the group. Therefore, the tested group is not nationally representative. Children entering from out of county and Partner schools are a self-selecting group which includes fewer lower performing candidates, again meaning the tested group is not nationally representative.

SRPs are provided with a copy of the advice above in their training and will be expecting headteachers to follow this practice.

d) Context

The most recent SRP decisions are summarised below:

This is the 2023 entry data following the completion of the selection review process –

Secondary Transfer 2023 - Summary results of Selection Review Process				
STTS	Cases heard and Qualified	Cases heard and not qualified	Grand Total	% qualified
85		1	1	
89		1	1	
91		1	1	
92		4	4	
93		5	5	
94		2	2	
96		1	1	
97		1	1	
98		2	2	
99		5	5	
100		4	4	
101		5	5	
102		3	3	
103		3	3	
104	1	6	7	14.28%
105	1	8	9	11.11%
106		13	13	
107		12	12	0.00%
108		15	15	0.00%
109		16	16	0.00%
110	1	18	19	5.26%
111	2	29	31	6.45%
112	1	26	27	3.70%
113	6	37	43	13.95%
114	9	50	59	15.25%
115	13	48	61	21.31%
116	20	48	68	29.41%
117	44	64	108	40.74%
118	56	55	111	50.45%
119	68	39	107	63.55%

120	116	23	139	83.45%
Grand Total	338	545	883	38.28%

There is a bar chart showing the results profile of the whole cohort on The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS) website:

https://www.thebucksgrammarschools.org/files/ugd/ab3fe9_a1c4057bbe3944519836a87c703ef65b.pdf

The appeal statistics for 2022 entry were as follows:

[Results of school admission appeals 2022 | Buckinghamshire Council](#)