



# Buckinghamshire County Council

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## TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 2010

### QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED BY PARENTS

### THE SELECTION PROCESS (Timelines, testing and results)

#### 1. WHAT IS THE TESTING TIMELINE?

Those children whose parents want them to be considered for grammar school entry take the 11+ tests. The earliest test dates are 1 and 7 October 2009. The results are released on 20 November 2009. Selection appeals begin on 6 January 2010. National Offer Day (allocation day) is Monday 1 March 2010 (each child is offered one school place).

#### 2. DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO SIT THE TESTS?

No – parents can ask (in writing) that their child does not sit the 11+ tests. You may want your child to attend an upper school in Buckinghamshire, or you may wish them to attend an independent school or a school out of the county. You may not feel that it is educationally appropriate for your child to sit the tests.

#### 3. DOES A GRAMMAR SCHOOL SUIT ALL CHILDREN?

Not all children are comfortable learning at the pace and depth that a grammar school requires. Children are expected to widely read around the curriculum, which is more academic than vocational. Children are expected to be self-motivated and self-directed learners. Ask yourself: Will it suit my child? Will they be happy?

#### 4. THE TESTING PROCESS

Happens in the school year the child reaches the age of 11 – Year 6. Most children are 10 when they take the 11+. Tests are taken during the autumn term of the school year before entry to secondary school. Earliest test dates for Year 7 entry in September 2010 are: 1 October 2009 and 7 October 2009.

#### 5. THE FAMILIARISATION PACK

During the latter part of the summer term or at the very beginning of the autumn term, children will work through 5 preparation sessions (each about half an hour in duration) called 'familiarisation'. The correct answers are discussed with the children. All the different 'types' of questions are covered. Your child can bring the completed pack home.

#### 6. THE PRACTICE TESTS

At the beginning of the autumn term, once the familiarisation is complete, three practice tests are taken under exam conditions. The first practice test (Test A) is easier than the real tests but the testing process is the same. The second and third practice tests (Tests 1

& 2) are broadly of the same level of difficulty as the real tests. They will not be marked at school but the answers are provided and your child can bring them home once completed.

## **7. WHAT IF MY CHILD MISSES THE FAMILIARISATION OR PRACTICE IN SCHOOL?**

The school may be able to reschedule the missed session before the real tests but sometimes this is not possible. If time does not permit, all the necessary information is included in the pack for you to finish working through it at home with your child.

## **8. HOW MANY QUESTIONS ARE ASKED?**

2 test papers – 80 questions each. 50 minutes each test – each question carries 1 mark.

## **9. ADJUSTED TESTS**

Tests may be adjusted for disabled children for whom the day-to-day delivery of the curriculum in the classroom is adjusted to meet their needs. In the summer term headteachers advise the Local Authority (LA) of children who may need adjustments to test materials or conditions and suggest reasonable adjustments.

## **10. WHO PRODUCES THE TESTS?**

They are produced for Buckinghamshire LA by GL Assessment (formerly nferNelson).

## **11. WHAT SORT OF QUESTIONS ARE ASKED?**

All are verbal reasoning questions. The questions are not related to the National Curriculum. Multiple-choice format. Answer sheets are 'marked' (read) by a computer.

## **12. WHAT DO THE TESTS MEASURE?**

The tests measure a child's ability to undertake verbal reasoning. The result is an indicator of academic potential. It is the best measure to predict a child's future performance.

## **13. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS UNWELL AND MISSES A REAL TEST?**

Children will have an opportunity in school to take tests later, but the school and the LA will want the tests to be taken as soon as possible. The Headteacher will give you notice of the new test date for your child. Children should NOT sit a test if they are unwell (even if they want to!)

## **14. WHAT HAPPENS IF I THINK MY CHILD MIGHT NOT PERFORM AS WELL AS I MIGHT HOPE IN THE TESTS?**

At the time of the tests collect evidence such as a doctor's letter etc. If your child does not score 121 in either of their tests then you can ask for a selection appeal if you think they should be qualified for a grammar school education.

## **15. HOW ARE THE TESTS MARKED?**

There is one point for each correct answer, with a maximum of 80 'raw' points for each test. Answer sheets are sent to GL Assessment direct from school to be computer marked. NFER 'standardise' the raw test scores.

## **16. WHAT IS STANDARDISATION?**

This removes the effects of the age difference by taking into account each child's age when tested. It also balances tests of unequal difficulty (although the two tests are of similar difficulty). It ensures the marking is comparable with previous years and converts the raw score to a standardised score for each test that is between 69 and 141.

## 17. WHAT IS THE VRT SCORE?

The lower standardised score is disregarded. The higher test score is then used to see whether a child has reached the standard for entry to grammar school. This is the score that is used – it is called the **Verbal Reasoning Test Score (VRTS)**.

## 18. WHEN WILL I KNOW THE RESULTS?

You will receive a letter on 20 November 2009. The letter will give the test scores and explain whether your child's VRTS is a qualifying score for entry to grammar school. The letter is addressed to you not your child! Be sensitive to the child when you receive it – it is confidential and should not be used as a comparison between children. It is up to you to decide whether to tell your child their VRTS.

## 19. HOW MANY CHILDREN QUALIFY?

For 2009 entry, the minimum qualifying VRTS was **121**. This is expected to stay the same for 2010. Approximately 30% of all children tested score 121 or more. At the end of the process after the selection appeals we expect approximately 34% of the group to be qualified for grammar school.

## 20. DOES SCORING 121 MEAN A GRAMMAR SCHOOL PLACE WILL BE OFFERED?

It depends on the order you list (rank) your grammar and other preferences when you apply for a secondary school place for your child. It also depends on the admission rules of the grammar schools you rank.

## 21. PREPARING FOR A SELECTION APPEAL

You need to discuss your child's case with their Headteacher. The Independent Appeal Panel will usually expect a report from the Headteacher. Headteachers will give their professional judgement which may be that your child would not be appropriately placed in a grammar school. If you want to go ahead with an appeal you should complete a parents' appeal request form.

## 22. PREPARING FOR A SELECTION APPEAL (2)

The Independent Appeal Panel will want to know of any reasons why your child may not have performed as well as you expected and about other academic evidence to show a grammar school would be appropriate. You should include any social, medical, or language reasons. You should think about any exceptional circumstances that may have affected your child's performance.

## **THE ALLOCATION PROCESS (Timelines, preferences and allocations)**

### 23. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE AUTUMN TERM?

The Guide for Parents' is distributed. Those children that are entered for the 11+ tests are tested and results are released on 20 November 2009. Parents and children attend open evenings at secondary schools. Parents apply for a school place, either on-line at [www.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk) or by filling in ONE common application form (CAF) – detailing their ranked preferences. Parents submit their **on-line application by 23 October 2009**, or give their Buckinghamshire primary school headteacher their child's **CAF by 9am on 21 October 2009**. Parents living in other areas should apply on-line or return the CAF to their home council (LA) by their deadline.

### 24. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SPRING TERM?

Selection appeals begin in January. The allocation process happens. Your 'home council' tells you the school your child has been allocated, letters will be posted on **Monday 1 March 2010** (each child will be offered only one place). You decide whether to accept the

place and/or ask for a transfer appeal and/or go on the waiting list for a higher preference school.

### **25. WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SUMMER TERM?**

If the LA can offer any further places they will do so. Parents can appeal for a place at their preferred school. Children attend the induction day at their new secondary school.

### **26. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES**

If you live in Buckinghamshire you can apply on-line for a school place at [www.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk) and we will send you more details about this later. We will give you a unique number to speed up the application process. Alternatively, you can complete the Buckinghamshire common application form.

### **27. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES ON-LINE (2)**

The on-line portal will open for parents to register their details from 13 July 2009. You will be able to make your preferences from 7 September 2009. The deadline for submitting the on-line application is 23 October 2009. A guide to making an on-line application will be available on the website.

### **28. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES (3)**

Buckinghamshire residents can list up to 6 preferences. If you live elsewhere you apply via your 'home council' either on-line or by filling in their form. In all cases, you rank schools in preference order putting your highest preference first.

### **29. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES (4)**

Rank up to 6 preferences. Include preferences for grammar, upper, comprehensive and out of county schools (but not independent schools). You should put them in your real order of preference because each LA will try to offer the highest preference possible in the process.

### **30. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES (5)**

Your child can only be offered a grammar school place if he or she has qualified. If two schools on your preference list can offer a place then the LA will use the order you ranked the schools to decide which school to offer, offering the highest preference possible.

### **31. EXPRESSING PREFERENCES (6)**

Buckinghamshire LA will work with all the voluntary-aided and foundation schools in the county and with neighbouring counties and boroughs. Each LA will share information about which schools are listed (but not where you have ranked them). Each admission authority will apply their admission rules to all children who have listed their schools (all preferences).

### **32. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

Each school preference will be treated as if it were a separate application. The schools do not know about your preference ranking and will not be told before allocations are made. You do not affect your chances of getting a school by where you place it on your list. **Put the schools in your real order of preference!**

### **33. ALLOCATING PLACES – 1**

The individual admission authorities will tell the LA who can be offered places. Where more than one of the schools you have listed can offer a place then the LA will check to see which you have ranked highest on your list. That offer is kept for you and the lower ranked place will be made available for someone else.

### **34. ALLOCATING PLACES – 2**

This process is repeated until no more places can be offered. If you cannot be offered any of the schools listed by this point in the process, if you live in Buckinghamshire we may be able to offer a place at either your catchment school or the nearest school with a vacancy. Parents are told about the school that can be offered.

### **35. OFFER (ALLOCATION) DAY**

National Offer Day is **Monday, 1 March 2010**. The offer letter will be sent from the home council by post on 1 March 2010. The offer will be for the highest preference that can be allocated. Each LA sends the offer letter to their residents on behalf of the LA/school that can offer the place. Normally, each child will only get one offer. Parents can appeal against the allocation. Parents who applied on-line will receive an email detailing the school place offered and will also be able to view the outcome of their application on-line on 1 March 2010.

### **36. TRANSFER APPEALS**

This is where you ask for an appeal because your child was not offered a preferred school. You cannot ask for a transfer appeal for a grammar school if your child has not qualified.

### **37. ABOUT APPEALS**

Panels consist of three independent people (not paid by the Council). Panel members have no connection to the school involved in the appeal. You should attend the appeal, although it can be held in your absence.

### **38. MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER!**

- Apply for your child's secondary school place by your 'home council's' deadline.
- Apply on-line at [www.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk) or via your 'home council's' website.
- Put your preferences in the real order!
- Be realistic about where you think your child will get into a school and consider transport arrangements.
- Visit the schools and make your own decisions rather than relying on other people's opinions.

### **39. SCHOOL CHOICE ADVICE**

School Choice Advisers provide a free service for families applying for a secondary school place. They can support parents and carers in making informed and realistic choices. They are not part of the admissions system – they are impartial. They will not make decisions for you. They cannot guarantee or offer you a place at your preferred school.

They will help families to understand the transfer system, admission rules, catchment areas and how to make a preference for a particular school. School Choice Advisers will help you to access information about uniform rules and costs, home to school transport and much more. They can also offer help in making an application.

Useful information is available on the School Choice Advice website -

[www.buckscc.gov.uk/schoolchoice](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/schoolchoice)

The School Choice Advisers can be contacted on 08453 708090. Your child's headteacher can refer you – [schoolchoiceadvisers@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolchoiceadvisers@buckscc.gov.uk).

You may wish to keep this document with the Guide for Parents', a copy of which you will receive in the autumn term.