

New Admission Code and Its Implications

In November this year, the government introduced a new Admission Code. A key change within this code is that parents must receive their results of selective tests before submitting their secondary schools admissions preference form at the end of October of the year when their child is in Year 6.

This change to national policy will apply to children starting in Grammar Schools in September 2013 (ie. Pupils who are currently in Year 5 at Primary School during the 2011/2012 school year).

Implications

For parents to have test results before returning the preference form with their choice of schools means that the 11+ assessment period will have to be brought forward. The Local Authority will be consulting parents on the proposed changes and it is likely that the consultation period will commence in January 2012.

The Current Arrangements

The current arrangement in Wirral is that in September of Year 6, parents who want their child to be tested, complete a test request form which has to be returned to the Local Authority, towards the end of September. Parents return their preference form with their choice of schools by 31st October and then the pupils sit the practice tests followed by the real tests in November and December.

In January a panel of grammar school and primary school headteachers (called the Independent Assessment Board) meet to consider pupils who did not meet the standard and who have been referred for consideration by their primary school Headteacher. In March, all parents are notified of the school they have been allocated.

So why are things changing?

The new Admissions Code now makes it clear that parents must have their child's test results before they complete their preference form and in many ways this makes very good sense.

The Proposal

Please note that there will be a consultation about this in the new year.

The outline proposal is as follows:

- Parents make a request for 11+ assessment to the Local Authority by the end of May. A form will be available for parents to complete and return to the Local Authority. This applies to both Wirral and 'out of area' parents.
- Familiarisation packs will be sent to primary schools around mid June.
- Practice tests would be arranged for the first full school week in September (there are two practice tests).
- The two actual 11+ tests would be arranged for the second week in September.
- Primary School Headteachers would make any referrals to the Independent Assessment Board during the first week of October.
- The Independent Assessment Board would meet during the second week of October.
- The results of the 11+ would be issued to parents by the second week of October.
- Preference forms with the parents' choice of schools, would be returned to the Local Authority by 31st October.
- The allocation of place letter will be sent out on 1st March.

Finding Out More About the Grammar Schools

Parents with children who are currently in Year 5 will probably wish to visit the school(s) they are considering before completing a test request form in May 2012. At the start of May, Grammar Schools will be arranging Information Briefings at each school. These will provide the opportunity to find out more about the school and give parents and children an opportunity to look around

Open Evenings will still take place in September. Parents of pupils who are in Year 6 will be welcome to attend. We will also be promoting our Open Evenings to parents of children in Year 5 so that in future years, they are able to familiarise themselves with the school, well ahead of choosing to have their son tested.

At Wirral Grammar School for Boys, we are planning to hold Information Evenings for parents of boys who currently in Year 5 (during the 2011/12 school year) on 8th and 9th May 2012. This will confirmed during the Spring Term.

Key Questions About The New Admission Code and Its Implications

1. What has changed?

As has been explained, the government has changed the Admissions Code and now parents must have test results back before choosing schools.

2. Is the new arrangement better?

Many parents would say it is as the test results are known whereas in previous years, parents have been choosing a Grammar School before knowing whether their child has reached the standard. Many primary headteachers also prefer the changes as it means that the tests are out of the way at the start of Year 6 and they don't cause unnecessary distraction throughout the whole of the Autumn Term, as previously.

3. Were any other arrangements possible?

Some consideration was given towards having the tests towards the end of Year 5, but this was considered to be too early.

4. What is the purpose of the two practice tests before the real ones?

The children do not get the results back from the practice tests as there isn't the time for this. The main purpose is to aid familiarisation so that they are aware of the format and style of the tests as well as the test conditions.

5. Why do we need to complete a test request form in May of the year when my child is in Year 5?

The tests take a lot of organising. The Local Authority needs time to prepare the familiarisation packs that go to each primary school and ensure that all the arrangements are in place for the September tests.

6. Will I be able to visit the Grammar Schools before I have to complete a test request form?

Yes. Each of the Grammar Schools will be holding Information Evenings around early May. These are not the same as 'Open Evenings' but there will be the opportunity to find out more about the school and have a look around. At Wirral Grammar School for Boys, we are planning to hold Information Evenings for parents of boys who currently in Year 5 (during the 2011/12 school year) on **8th and 9th May 2012**. This will be confirmed during the Spring Term

7. My child is currently in Year 4, what should I do at this stage?

It would be a good idea to go to the Open Evenings in September when your child is in Year 5, as later in that school year, you will need to complete a test request form if you want your child to do the 11+ the following September.

8. I live outside Wirral, so how do the changes affect me?

The changes affect everyone. Parents who live outside the Wirral area will need to complete the test request form to be able to take the tests in September. When it comes to filling in the school preference form you would complete the one from your Local Authority and send it back to the Local Authority Admissions Office. Parents from outside the area are encouraged to attend the Information Evening in May and also the Open Evenings in September.

9. When will the date for the May Information Evening be available?

This information will be available as soon as possible and you should check the school's website for confirmation and details. The Information Evenings will also be advertised in the local press. **Our provisional dates are 8th and 9th May 2012.**

10. How can I find out more about the school at this stage?

The school website contains a lot of information. In particular, it is worth looking at the Parent Handbook and the Prospectus. These will give you a flavor of what school life is like. On our website you will find information about the benefit of an 'all boys' education as well as a list of the top queries that parents ask us, together with our responses.

11. My child is currently in a non-selective secondary school and I would like him to be tested for the Grammar School, if this is possible?

You are welcome to have your son tested. Being able to offer a place depends on whether there are places available, as well as reaching the required standard.

12. Can I talk to someone about the admissions process?

Mrs Tanya Fry is our School Admissions Manager; you are welcome to give her a call to discuss any aspect of the admission process. Tanya can be contacted on 0151 644 0908, extension 223.