

## THE LONDON 11+ CONSORTIUM

### FAQs

#### **Mission Statement**

We aim to provide an application process which is fair, clear, robust and accessible to children from all schools and backgrounds. We are concerned about the pressure the 11+ application system can place on young children and the damage to learning which relentless 'teaching to the test' produces. We therefore seek to run a simple process with just one test, which provides a good tool of assessment to elicit information which can match candidates to schools best fitting their profile. We are interested not only in verbal and mathematical potential, but also in non-verbal ability, which often signifies the sort of creative and visual intelligence relating to problem-solving and design. The changing landscape of work needs all these aptitudes.

Our selection process covers three complementary assessment approaches:

1. **An age-standardised measure of ability called the ISEB Common Pre-Test**, taken when a pupil is in Year 6. It is online and adaptive. The tests include Verbal Reasoning, Non-Verbal Reasoning, English and Mathematics. It is in a multiple-choice format and takes about two-and-a-half hours to complete; the tests can be taken together or at separate times either in the candidate's own school or at the senior school for which he or she is entered.
2. **A common reference form** requiring, amongst wider contextual information on attitudes and character, detailed commentary on the candidate's academic performance. Although not compulsory, it is hoped that this form will be widely used.
3. **An imaginative interview experience** (individual to each senior school) which explores the skills, aptitudes and intellectual acuity of the candidates. Please note Francis Holland, Regent's Park, South Hampstead High School and The Godolphin and Latymer School will select for interview from the assessment.

#### **Who are we?**

There are 14 schools in the Consortium, listed below with the names of their heads:

**Channing School** – Mrs Lindsey Hughes

**Francis Holland School, Regent's Park** – Mr Charles Fillingham

**Francis Holland School, Sloane Square** – Mrs Lucy Elphinstone

**Godolphin and Latymer School** - Dr Frances Ramsey

**More House School** - Ms Faith Hagerty

**Northwood College for Girls** – Ms Rebecca Brown

**Notting Hill and Ealing High School** – Mr Matthew Shoults

**Queen's College London** – Mr Richard Tillett

**Queen's Gate School** – Mrs Rosalynd Kamaryc

**South Hampstead High School** – Mrs Vicky Bingham

**St Augustine's Priory** – Mrs Sarah Raffray

**St Helen's School London** – Mrs Alice Lucas

**St. James Senior Girls' School** – Mrs Sarah Labram

**St Margaret's School** – Mr Mark Webster

**Will it matter where the child sits the assessment?**

No, it will make no difference whatsoever.

**Will there be any comprehension questions?**

There will be a passage of reading and some multiple choice.

**Why is there no creative writing?**

The tutoring of children in creative writing has led to formulaic writing often lacking real individuality. The marking of creative writing is problematic, with a certain subjective element. We prefer children of this age to experiment with writing creatively without the pressure of assessment. Some Consortium schools are considering requesting samples of creative or discursive writing.

**What provision will be made for children with specific learning needs?**

We make all necessary provision for children with specific learning needs. An educational psychologist's report must be submitted to the senior school by the required date in order to qualify for arrangements such as extra time or the use of a scribe, and all provision will be based on JCQ rulings.

**What information is the Consortium seeking in this new process?**

We seek to know the potential of each child, her relative strengths, her level of academic attainment, and her ability to demonstrate the particular learning aptitudes which we believe are vital to a modern and effective education in a technological world.

**What particular learning aptitudes are you interested in?**

Problem-solving, critical thinking, perseverance, creativity, originality, curiosity and collaboration. The non-verbal test, in particular, provides an insight into some of these abilities which the assessments of many schools ignore.

**How can children be prepared for this new application process?**

Primary and prep schools are already preparing their children very effectively and knowledgeably for the transition to senior school. It is unfortunate that the widespread practice of tutoring for the 11+ has produced an environment in which parents feel under pressure to gain extra help for their child. This is often counter-productive as the approach can increase anxiety, detract from independent learning, reduce the child's confidence and rob her of originality in writing. Senior schools report that over-preparation also detracts from the child's interview performance.

We therefore recommend that the best support parents can give is to encourage their child to explore the world around them and to engage with them in questioning the ideas and artefacts they see. Parents should encourage a love of reading, visit art galleries, museums and exhibitions with their child, do puzzles and crosswords, follow the news together, travel, have adventures, make inventions out of junk – all things which will foster curiosity and independent thought.

**Is it possible to tutor for the cognitive ability test?**

Although tutoring agencies will insist it is, examination experts say that any improvement is negligible. Certainly, familiarisation will give confidence which may result in marginally better performance, but many prep and primary schools administer similar tests frequently (without any anxiety on the part of pupils) and children do not need any extra practice or tuition. The provision of vocabulary lists etc. can reduce the spontaneity and originality of their writing beyond the test. Endless practice of tests in class seriously detracts from the real process of learning and intellectual growth. That said, there are instances where tutoring is, of course, sensible. Children with a specific learning need or for whom English is an additional language may well benefit from extra support.

**Will sample papers be provided?**

No. There will only be some familiarisation material containing a small sample of simple questions to demonstrate the type of questions and how to record answers.

**Will information on the interviews be provided?**

Very little. The interview formats will be decided by each individual school and minimal information will be provided so that all children have equal opportunity to show their ability. The Consortium schools wish to see the candidates as they really are, so any rehearsed or coached answers are likely to impede rather than help their ability to make a good impression on the interviewer.

**Why aren't all schools holding interviews for all candidates since you say it is an integral part of the application process?**

Some schools use the examination to select candidates for interview, but most choose to interview all applicants. Each school has its own unique method of interviewing and selection.

**Which aspect of the process carries the most weight?**

Although the relative weight may vary slightly between schools, all three aspects are important and complementary, therefore over-emphasis on the test will be misguided.

**What do you hope to achieve?**

The Consortium heads hope that these processes will help to minimise the stress of 11+ assessment and will send a clear message that we do not evaluate children merely on academic performance. Our aim is to see Year 5 and 6 teachers teach English, mathematics and the rest of the curriculum with their own professional judgment and skill. We hope to see more creativity in the curriculum. We expect an improvement in genuinely imaginative writing, and in confident mathematical problem-solving. We would love to see growing enthusiasm for reading. We look forward to more time for music, art, drama, sport and discovery in learning. We anticipate other schools will join us in due course, thus alleviating further the pressure on young children and their families.