



## 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 current 11+ application system places on young children and the damage to learning which relentless 'teaching to the test' produces. We therefore seek to simplify the process and reduce the number of examinations they sit, whilst providing a better tool of assessment to elicit the information which can match candidates to schools best fitting their profile.

### **Who are we?**

Channing School – Mrs Barbara Elliott

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

Francis Holland School, Sloane Square – Mrs Lucy Elphinstone

More House School - Mrs Amanda Leach

Northwood College – Mrs Jacquelyn Pain

Notting Hill and Ealing High School – Mr Matthew Shoults

Queen's College – Mr Richard Tillett

Queen's Gate School – Mrs Rosalynd Kamaryc (Chairman of the Consortium)

South Hampstead High School – Mrs Victoria Bingham

St Helen's School – Dr Mary Short

St James' Senior School – Mrs Sarah Labram

The Godolphin and Latymer School – Dr Frances Ramsey

### **What is the assessment process for the London 11+ Consortium?**

Recognising the strong correlation between cognitive ability scores and academic attainment, we have removed the requirement for candidates to sit lengthy examinations in English and mathematics, instead focusing on three complementary assessment approaches:

1. **A bespoke cognitive ability test** of 75 minutes, incorporating mathematics, verbal and non-verbal questions. The questions will be multiple choice;
2. **A common reference form** providing, amongst wider contextual information on attitudes and character, detailed commentary on the candidate's academic performance;
3. **An imaginative interview experience** (individual to each senior school) which explores the skills, aptitudes and intellectual acuity of the candidates.

### **What do you mean by bespoke?**

The test agency, a vastly experienced provider of assessment material globally, is devising a test specifically to meet the intellectual profile of our candidates in London schools. It has been provided with our historic examination data and the test will cover the full range of ability, including the most able. No other test is exactly the same, therefore no practice paper will be particularly helpful.

**Why is the test not online?**

All candidates for the Consortium schools need to sit the assessment at the same time for the security of the test. There are simply not enough computers to accommodate the large numbers. The test will be electronically marked, and the results supplied to the Consortium schools.

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

No, it will make no difference whatsoever. The Consortium schools have limited capacity and it is expected that candidates will be requested to state first, second and third choice exam centres where appropriate.

**Will there be any comprehension questions?**

There will be a very small element, a short passage of as little as three sentences, but nothing like the previous 11+ examination.

**75 minutes is quite a long assessment. Will there be a break?**

Yes, there will be a short break of about 20 minutes in the middle.

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

We seek to know the potential of each child, 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.

**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 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.

**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. All 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.

**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?**

We are initiating this change for the wellbeing of children. We hope that it will reduce the stress of the 11+ examination process and 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 expect an improvement in genuinely imaginative and mature creative writing, and in confident mathematical problem-solving. We anticipate other schools will join us in due course, thus alleviating further the pressure on young children and their families.