

The Association for Quality Education Limited:

Access Arrangements for the Common Entrance Assessment (CEA) 2019 (GS 19 07)

The Association for Quality Education Limited ("AQE Limited") has provided for Access Arrangements to be made in advance of the Common Entrance Assessment ("CEA") to facilitate a candidate to undertake the CEA.

Children with a Statement of Educational Need who wish to apply for admission to Grammar School are not required to sit the AQE test. The procedure for admitting pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is governed by The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Articles 15 and 16) and the Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (Schedule 1), a position not changed by the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. Therefore, young people with Statements of Special Educational Needs will continue to be assessed by Education Authorities. However parents who wish their child to take the CEA should be aware that AQE may not necessarily award as an Access arrangement all that such a child is entitled to under his or her statement, because a balance has to be struck between making reasonable adjustments and maintaining fairness and consistency for all candidates. Reference to "CEA centres" in this document means those schools that have chosen to operate the Common Entrance Assessment offered by the Association for Quality Education Limited and in which candidates will sit the CEA.

The Role of the Parent/Guardian

It will be the responsibility of parents/guardians to apply for access arrangements and to obtain and supply the information required by the AQE Limited Access Panel (see below).

Parents making an application relating to a learning difficulty or any other physical, mental or medical impairment or on the basis that their child's first language is neither English nor Irish, and they have been in the UK/Ireland for less than three years by September 2019 should complete the form ACC/19.

Applications for Access Arrangements (form ACC/19 and accompanying evidence) should be completed and returned to the AQE Office together with the Registration Form or separately as soon as possible thereafter. In any case all applications for Access Arrangements must be returned to the office on or before Friday 6th September 2019.

Emergency Access Arrangements

In the case of Emergency Access Arrangements, e.g. where a candidate has sustained an injury after the closing date for Access Arrangements, but before the assessments have commenced, it is the responsibility of the child's parent/guardian to advise the AQE Ltd immediately and to request Form ACCE/19 (Emergency Access). In situations where it is not practical for parents to submit ACCE/19, and associated evidence, to the AQE Office by post, they are required to contact the AQE office immediately by telephone. The matter will be referred to a member of the Access Panel, or Chief Executive, to decide on appropriate arrangements, which will be communicated to the parent by telephone. In cases where ACCE/19 cannot be submitted in advance, it must be completed and returned with the appropriate evidence, after the CEA paper has been taken.

All Access Forms require applicants to indicate their consent to AQE Limited making available the outcome of their application to any post-primary school using the CEA. This information may be required by centres when providing agreed access arrangements. Emergency Access Applications are not subject to any additional cost.

The Role of the Access Panel

AQE Limited will appoint an Access Panel that will be responsible for deciding on all applications for access arrangements. The Access Panel will consider all requests for Access arrangements received by the closing date. It will decide on which reasonable adjustments can be made in the light of the evidence submitted and based on the access arrangements available under AQE regulations. **AQE reserves the right to contact the Primary School for further information, where it is deemed appropriate and necessary.**

Once a decision has been made, agreed access arrangements will be communicated to the child's parent/guardian and to the Designated Officer in the appropriate CEA centre. It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the appropriate access arrangements are provided, including those arrangements that require additional staff. It is the responsibility of the Access Panel to liaise with staff in the AQE office in relation to access requirements necessitating modified papers or specialised equipment that may not be available at all CEA centres.

Grounds for an Appeal

Whilst the decision of the Access Panel is usually final an appeal may be considered if there are sufficient grounds.

An application for appeal must be made in writing to the CEO and have attached all information to be considered. An appeal can only be brought on the grounds that the Access Panel did not:

- have sight of all relevant evidence or information to which parents did not or could not have access at the time of application;
- medical conditions arising after the closing date which have a direct impact on the child's ability to sit the test without the appropriate access arrangements.

The Composition of the Appeals Panel

The Appeals Panel is independent of the Access Panel. There will normally be a panel of three, the CEO, a member of the Access Panel who was not part of the initial decision and an AQE Director or other suitable representative of AQE. In some circumstances the panel may also include another educational professional.

The decision of the Appeals Panel will be communicated in writing and will be final.

Access Arrangements

Detailed guidance, given in GS 19 07 1 for parents/guardians of children who possess a learning difficulty or any other physical, mental or medical impairment in GS 19 07 2 for parents of children whose first language is neither English nor Irish, is sent out along with the application forms for access. AQE Limited will endeavour, where it can, to make reasonable adjustments not included in the detailed specifications, where evidence of need can be provided. An application may be submitted for more than one access arrangement for a single candidate.

While the access arrangements and circumstances outlined in GS 19 07 1 and GS 19 07 2 will cover the majority of situations for which an adjustment is possible, it is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. Where possible, the Access Panel is prepared to consider other circumstances and arrangements that may be required to ensure that a candidate is not at a disadvantage.

In considering evidence submitted by parents/guardians to support an application for Access Arrangements, the Access Panel will have regard to the extent to which the parents have supplied evidence to demonstrate that the Access Arrangement(s) for which they have applied reflect(s) a child's normal way of working.