

Association for Quality Education

Background

AQE has been providing assessments for children in Northern Ireland since 2009. We have put the interests of the child at the heart of our practices and procedures.

We have very good schools in Northern Ireland and they use various criteria for selection. AQE wants to ensure that those schools wishing to select, using academic ability above other criteria, have the best information on which to make that judgement. The scheme of assessment which we use maximises the reliability and validity of the result your child achieves.

As professional educators with decades of teaching experience, we understand that examinations and assessments of any nature can be a daunting experience. It is also true that children, like adults, can have 'off' days.

In recognition of this and to be as fair and supportive as possible, the AQE offers three papers and will base the assessment on the two strongest papers.

To help with the preparations, we also provide past papers which means you and your child will know what type of questions will be asked.

Your child is used to doing certain types of questions in mathematics and English. AQE decided to use the same type of questions in its assessment to ensure your child is familiar with the style of questions.

AQE Limited is a not-for-profit private company that uses its income to provide the Common Entrance Assessment ('the assessment') for registered candidates, the result of which ('AQE Standardised Score') can be used by the candidates for post primary transfer application to participating schools.

Frequently Asked Questions

About Us

Q1. What is the AQE?

A AQE Ltd was set up by a group of grammar schools as a Testing Agency to provide an AQE Standardised Score for children who want to transfer to the participating schools.

Q2. What type of organisation is AQE Ltd?

A AQE Limited operates as a not-for profit private limited company, it is not under the control of any departmental or non-departmental public body.

- Q3. Does the AQE report to the Department of Education in NI?
- A No, AQE Limited is not under the control of any departmental or non-departmental public body, it operates as a not-for-profit private limited company. The AQE reports to the 34 participating grammar schools that commission the assessment.
- Q4. Who funds the AQE?
- A AQE is funded by the registration fees paid by the parents of candidates taking the assessments, and contributions from participating schools.
- Q5. Who decides if an assessment is to proceed?
- A The participating grammar schools decide if the assessment proceeds subject to prevailing conditions. They have agreed that AQE Ltd should initiate preparations for the Common Entrance Assessment for the next academic year but, cognisant of public safety, they will be guided by the latest advice from the NI Executive in relation to the lifting of restrictions and the reopening of schools.
- Q6. What role does the AQE play in the post primary transfer process in September 2022?
- A AQE's sole purpose is to provide the assessment which enables each candidate to receive an AQE Standardised Score. We have no role in deciding what criteria any secondary school uses to select pupils if it is oversubscribed. The Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA) should be able to help you with the answer to this question. Please see the links below.
- Q7. Why can't teacher-predicted scores be used for our children – much like they were used for GCSE and A Levels last year?
- A AQE's role is to provide assessments which enable AQE to issue each child with an AQE Standardised Score. We have no role in deciding what criteria any secondary school uses to select pupils if it is oversubscribed. The DE and EA should be able to help you with the answer to this question. Please see the links below.

Time and Place

- Q8. Will the 2021/22 assessment be going ahead?
- A AQE and its participating grammar schools intend to initiate preparations for proceeding with the Common Entrance Assessment for the next academic year but, cognisant of public safety, we will be guided by the latest advice from the NI Executive in relation to the lifting of restrictions and the reopening of schools.
- Q9. Why doesn't AQE run the assessment in my child's primary school?
- A As a private company, AQE Ltd has no remit or authority over primary schools, that would be a decision for the Minister for Education to direct the Primary Schools to assist in the running of the tests in terms of staffing and accommodation.

Support

Q10. My child has missed a lot of face-to-face teaching during P5 and P6. What will AQE do about this?

A. The AQE Limited is a small private company and our role is to provide assessments which provide each child with an AQE Standardised Score. The organisations which deal with the education of children in primary schools are the DE and the EA. As a private company, AQE Ltd has no remit or authority over primary schools. We have provided free past papers on the website so that children can practise doing them. Please see the link below.

<https://aqe.org.uk/practice-material-spring-2020/>

Papers

Q11. How will the AQE ensure fairness for all candidates?

A AQE's role is to provide assessments which provide each child with an AQE Standardised Score. This means that we need to set a range of questions which will make it possible to produce a rank order of AQE Standardised Scores which the participating schools can use. The option of taking a third paper should help the children as it allows them to have an off day.

AQE always has the child in mind in all our deliberations. For 21/22 assessments we are allowing an extra 10 minutes to complete each paper. We hope this will reassure children that they will have this extra time to complete each paper. We have reviewed the papers and ensured that the English passages we use are written in language which is accessible and familiar to the children. We have also ensured that the contexts of the maths questions are accessible.

The examining team has the best interests of the children at the centre of their thinking. Their main priority is to produce assessments which allow the children to show what they know, understand and can do. The team is very aware of the conditions under which this year's P6 children have been learning.

Please see the link below.

<https://aqe.org.uk/practice-material-spring-2020/>

Q12. Will AQE remove some content from the assessments?

A AQE Ltd has no remit or authority over Primary Schools, so we have no control over the order in which topics are taught. Every child is important, and every child has certain favourite topics. It would be most unfair to remove some topics as this would disadvantage some children more than others.

AQE always has the child in mind in all our deliberations. For the 21/22 assessment, we are allowing an extra 10 minutes to complete each paper. We have reviewed the papers and ensured that the English passages we use are written in language which is accessible and familiar to the children. We have also ensured that the contexts of the maths questions are accessible.

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Q13. Will AQE use verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests this year?

A We will not be using verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests.

We will be using the same type of questions that we have been using for the past 11 years. To help with the preparations, we also provide past papers which means you and your child will know what type of questions will be asked.

Q14 Why does the AQE assessment have three papers?

A Children, like adults, can have 'off' days. In recognition of this and to be as fair and supportive as possible, the AQE offers three papers and will base the assessment on the two strongest papers.

The scheme of assessment which we use maximises the reliability and validity of the result your child achieves.

Communication

Q15. How can I get to speak to someone in the AQE?

A AQE Ltd will endeavour to deal with queries as quickly as possible, however, as a small company with limited resources it may take some time to respond. We have set up this page of questions and answers in order to let you have as much information as possible on the topics which arise. Please see the links for AQE below.

Links

AQE Limited

Tel: 028 90224002

Email: info@aqe.org.uk

Website: www.aqe.org.uk

Department of Education Telephone: 028 9127 9279

Email: DE.DEWebMail@education-ni.gov.uk

Balloo Road

Rathgill

Bangor

BT19 7PR

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/>

Education Authority

Tel: 028 9056 4000

Contact Details for other EA Offices

Email: info@eani.org.uk

40 Academy Street,

Belfast,

BT1 2NQ

<https://www.eani.org.uk/>