

ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION LIMITED

Chairman: Sir Kenneth Bloomfield KCB

AQE Office
3-17 Cliftonville Road
Belfast BT14 6JL
Tel: 028 90753746
Email: aqeoffice1@yahoo.co.uk
Website: www.aqe.org.uk

3rd February 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you can see, I have attached four documents with this letter: the paper which gives your son's or daughter's score in the Common Entrance Assessment, the table of Quintiles, the results of our questionnaire, and a sheet which outlines the process for marking, checking and recording the scores, in order to reassure you about the measures which we have taken to get a robust system in place.

No doubt by now you will have looked closely at the entrance criteria for each of the schools for which you intend to apply for admission for your son or daughter. The table of Quintiles will be important in the cases of some schools which use quintiles for admissions' purposes. For admissions to the other schools, the important detail will be the individual score, not the quintile in which the score lies. You will be able to find out from the schools to which you intend to apply for your son or daughter either the appropriate quintile or the minimum score that was accepted last year. It is worth pointing out that, in the 11plus, the grades were calculated against the complete Primary 7 population. Our scores are based only on those who sat the assessments, and consequently the mean score of 100 may be assessed as a very pleasing mark; **due to the quality of the candidates and the high level of performance, many candidates who achieved a score less than the mean, will still be able to gain a Grammar School place. In addition it is very important to point**

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out that the Quintiles should not be compared with, or equated to, the grades of the old 11 plus.

AQE has sought, in a number of ways, to support you and your son or daughter through the CEA cycle, with, for example, the Access arrangements. We now also provide the facility for obtaining a re-mark of the assessments. Anyone requesting this should bear in mind four issues: the robust nature of our marking, checking and recording will render the possibility of a change of score to be highly unlikely; secondly, if a score is changed, it could go down as well as up; the cost will be £20 to cover administration costs (£10 for families entitled to Free School Meals)- cheques, bankers' drafts or postal orders should be crossed and made payable to AQE Ltd; lastly, due to the tight timescale for the use of scores in the transfer procedure, the AQE Office will need to receive requests on or before 11th February 2011 (any request received after this date will not be processed).

If you wish to apply for re-marks, you should contact the AQE Office on or before Friday 11th February. An application form, PR 10, will be sent out to you and this must be returned to the Office no later than Tuesday 22th February (any form returned to the Office after 22th February will not be processed). The marking of the papers will take place on Thursday 24th February, Friday 25th February and Monday 28th February, and the notification of decisions will be sent out as soon as possible. The fee for a re-mark will be refunded if an error is found in the original marking.

As I indicated to you in my letter in November just before the first assessment, there is a facility for Special Circumstances, Special Provision or Special Cases, if you feel that the score does not reflect your son's or daughter's true ability due to circumstances beyond their control or if they were prevented from sitting all of the assessments. Form SC 10 may be obtained from the AQE Website, from an AQE associated school or from the AQE Office. This, along with the appropriate evidence (evidence of the circumstances and comparative educational evidence which may be sought from the Primary School), should be taken along to the transfer interview with

the Primary Principal, where you should ask for all the material to be attached to the Transfer Form. The Principal and Governors of the school to which you will be applying for a place for your child, will consider the evidence very carefully. We strongly advise you to consult the entrance criteria of each school in which you are interested before you go to the transfer interview with your Primary Principal, as the criteria may vary from school to school. The Primary Principal, who will know your child very well, will be able to assist you in the application process. You should note that all decisions concerning Special Circumstances, Special Provision or Special Cases are the sole responsibility of the Boards of Governors of the receiving schools, not AQE Ltd.

Please note that the AQE Office will be closed for the dates 14th-18th February.

May I thank you for your support of AQE through difficult times. We have tried very hard to provide you with good quality service; those of you who may still have children in the Primary School sector should be assured that we are at present carrying out an evaluation of the 2010/2011 cycle, are analysing carefully the comments made by parents on the "exit" questionnaires on 4th December and will be seeking to improve further our system for next year.

AQE believes strongly that Northern Ireland is blessed with excellent schools, Primary, Grammar and Secondary, and is confident that, in whatever school your son or daughter is enrolled in September 2011, he or she will have an educational experience of high quality.

Best wishes to you and all your family for 2011.

Yours faithfully,

K. P. Blunth

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Common Entrance Assessments 2010/11

Table of Quintiles

	Score Range
Top 20%	Greater than or equal to 113
Next 20%	106 – 112 (inclusive)
Next 20%	99 - 105 (inclusive)
Next 20%	88 – 98 (inclusive)
Next 20%	Less than or equal to 87

STATISTICS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

JANUARY 2011

1. How information was found out about the CEA.

*Newspapers	3%
*Radio/TV	14%
*Primary Schools	67%
*Another parent	8%
*Leaflets from DENI	4%
*Other	4%

2. Satisfaction with AQE's administrative arrangements.

*Satisfied	97%
*Not satisfied	3%

3. Those who wish three papers with the best two to count

Those who wish three papers with the best two to count	86%
Those who wish two, as in the 11 plus	14%
Those who did not respond	0%

4. Rating of the Schools' familiarisation arrangements.

*Good	94.5%
*Satisfactory	5.0%
*Poor	0.5%

5. Rating of the arrangements by the Schools on the days of the assessments.

*Good	93.5%
*Satisfactory	6.0%
*Poor	0.5%

6. Those in favour of academic selection

Those in favour of academic selection	79%
Those in favour of neighbourhood comprehensive schools	7%
Those who are undecided	14%

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THE PROCESS: MARKING AND RECORDING

There were two Marking Centres. At each Centre, there were 18 tables with three markers at each table. Each script was marked three times and the mark scheme was kept under review at each stage. At each Centre there was a Centre Manager, supported by two Assistant Managers.

There were also extra markers at each Centre, who were used in Quality Control. The Quality Control process meant that, after the marking, 20% of each package was also re-marked, and, for another 20%, all the marks were re-checked and added up again.

For Assessment 1, the scripts from the Schools were given to the markers in order A-Z; for Assessment 2, the scripts from the Schools were taken in the order Z-A; for assessment 3, the order was M-Z and then A-L.

The Quality Control process also applied to the performance of the markers; the quality of the marking from each table was kept under review by the Deputy Managers at each Marking Centre.

When the boxes were taken to the Office for entering the scores on the computer system, each script was totalled again. Then, as the staff entered the details, they worked in pairs. The person not on the computer, (A), had in front of him/her the pile of scripts from a room envelope and the room roll. He/she then called out the candidate number from the front of the first script; the computer operator, (B), checked the details on the screen and called out the name that matched the number; the first person (A) checked that the name called out by (B) matched the name on the room roll and then read off the scores for English and for Maths which are entered on the system by the operator (B); the system automatically does the sum and the operator (B) read out the final score. The second person (A) confirmed the total from the script. This procedure was repeated for each script. The output was then subject to a computerised, age-standardisation process.

In addition, we shall be carrying out a series of statistical and analytical checks in order to confirm the reliability and validity of our process.