

Reasonable Adjustments to Kent's Secondary Selection Test Process for Pupils with Vision Impairment

1. Context

Kent places the highest priority on ensuring any child who has a vision impairment (VI) has fair access to a selective school place. All children, regardless of their disability, should be able to demonstrate their ability so that they get a fair chance to find the right school place.

Of the 109 maintained secondary schools and secondary academies in Kent, 33 are grammar schools. The local authority organises the Kent Test as part of Kent's Procedure for Entrance to Secondary Education (PESE). This test is often referred to as the 11+.

The Kent Test is undertaken by pupils at the beginning of Year 6 to identify those children who are assessed as suitable for a grammar school place. In 2012, 11,433 Year 6 pupils took the Kent Test. A total of 3168 of these pupils lived in other local authorities; 4409 pupils were assessed as suitable for a grammar school place.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty upon local authorities and schools not to discriminate against disabled people or pupils in their access to education. Selection for admission for a grammar school education by way of academic testing is a "permitted form of selection" under the Equality Act 2010. Schools and local authorities have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils in operating a selection process.

2. The Kent Test

The Kent Test in 2013 consisted of four papers:

- Verbal reasoning (50 minutes)
- Non-verbal reasoning (40 minutes)
- Mathematics (60 minutes)
- Writing exercise (60 minutes)

The first three papers are standardised tests provided by GL Assessment to meet Kent County Council's requirements. The papers are multiple-choice with the answers recorded on optical mark recognition answer sheets. The writing exercise is used as additional evidence in case of an appeal.

Over the last 20 years an increasing number of children with vision impairment have been supported to attend maintained mainstream schools. With this change to an inclusive ethos it was obvious that the PESE should be available in a format that was accessible to pupils with impaired vision and that a suitable alternative should be provided for those pupils who were unable to access this format, particularly those who would be braille users.

The Special Access arrangements for PESE have developed over the last 20 years to become a clearly structured approach to ensure a fair and equitable opportunity for children with vision impairment to get into the school of their choice.

3. Special Access Arrangements

The Special Access Arrangements ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled pupils.

The process relies on the effective liaison between primary schools, the Kent County Council PESE Manager and the specialist professionals who advise on reasonable adjustments for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

For pupils with vision impairment, the preparations begin at least a year prior to the test, with the Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI) and school staff discussing the reasonable adjustments that the school normally puts in place for the pupil, together with the use of evidence from the tests undertaken in the school. The proposed new school is informed of the range of reasonable adjustments available for pupils.

All schools are able to request reasonable adjustments with a summer deadline for applications prior to the test being undertaken in the first half of September. The requests for special arrangements must be accompanied by a recent professional report. During July and August, the Special Access Panel (see

section 5) meets to consider the applications and make recommendations on the adjustments that need to be put in place. A QTVI sits on this panel and is able to provide a professional opinion on the applications, and in some cases to seek more information before a decision is made.

4. Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements

Schools are asked to confirm the child's SEN status and to provide details of their disability. Schools must provide clear, comprehensive and recent evidence from other professionals of the child's disability and the impact of that disability on access to the curriculum, and, in particular, in relation to timed multiple-choice tests as well as extended writing assignments.

If the child is not disabled under the terms of the Equality Act, the school should clarify why a non-disabled child should be considered for adjustments and to provide evidence to support this.

Schools are required to provide information on the reasonable adjustments that are regularly put in place by the school to ensure access to the curriculum and to suggest access arrangements to enable the pupil to access the Kent Test. Historically, a range of access arrangements has been agreed with GL Assessment for pupils who have been assessed as suitable to take the test. These have included the provision of accessible formats, the use of human support and extra time up to 25%. The guidelines define recommendations on administration arrangements as well as appropriate test paper modifications.

5. Special Access Panel

The Special Access Panel meets in early July and again in mid-August to consider the requests for reasonable adjustments. The panel is called by the PESE Manager and consists of Educational Psychologists and Professional Leads from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Services with expertise across the range of Special Educational Needs. There is always a minimum of at least one professional with the Mandatory Qualification for Visual Impairment on the Special Access Panel.

The Special Access Panel considers the information provided by the school. There are approximately 200 requests for special arrangements each year. Of these, there will be between 6 and 10 for children with vision impairments and an additional 15–20 for children who experience visual difficulties.

The panel records if:

- the child is disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 and what steps are reasonable to take, if any, to avoid the disabled child being placed at a substantial disadvantage in completing the Kent Test; and
- the child is not disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, and where a child has difficulties which do not constitute a disability, the panel has discretion to make suitable adjustments to the Kent Test and the agreed reasonable adjustments will be recorded.

The outcomes of the Special Access Panel are fed back to the schools. For the July panel, this will be before the end of the summer term, and for the August panel, this will be in schools at the beginning of September.

6. Head teachers' Assessment Panel

The QTVI on the Special Access Panel may also indicate, having read the professional evidence, that even with the requested reasonable adjustments a pupil will be disadvantaged in the Kent Test because of their disability.

Pupils with a vision impairment may require more than 25 per cent extra time or a larger print size than those provided and may not be able to access the diagrams in a meaningful way. If this is the case, the school, with support from the QTVI, will make a request for the pupil to be assessed by a portfolio of work instead of taking the Kent Test. The portfolio is then assessed by a head teachers' Assessment Panel.

For pupils who use braille to access the curriculum, the Special Access Panel is in agreement that a portfolio is the most appropriate method of assessment in place of written tests. The

portfolio will contain a selection of work from the previous year with information on the context in which the work was completed, for example the level of independence or the timeframe for completion. Any formal testing undertaken in that period would also be included.

Portfolios will include work undertaken in literacy, numeracy and science sessions. Any work completed in braille will include the transcription. The pupil's work will include the marking or assessment undertaken by the class teacher. The portfolio is likely to include work undertaken using a computer including examples of extended writing exercises including creative writing and topic-based work. Work completed as part of homework opportunities will also give additional information.

The head teachers' panel establishes if this work is comparable in standard to those children who have been assessed as suitable for a grammar school. Each year, there are one or two children with vision impairment who are assessed by this process. Families are notified of the outcome of this assessment at the same time as other families get the results for those who undertook the tests.

7. Summary

The reasonable adjustments that have been put in place for the Kent Test are designed to ensure that pupils with a range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, including those with vision impairment, are provided with fair access to selective school places.

The use of the portfolio assessment system for pupils who are unable to access the written test papers has provided opportunities for pupils with vision impairment to gain access to the assessment procedures. This method has proved to be a fair way of assessing the ability of young people with vision impairment and pupils have moved on to achieve further success at their secondary schools.

A series of case studies showing how the Special Access arrangements have been applied to individual pupils is included as Appendix 1. A set of the documentation that is used to support the process is included as Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Case studies

Case Study 1: Nazir

Nazir attends his local mainstream primary school and has a SSEN which identifies his visual impairment as his primary need. Nazir has a severe vision impairment due to a form of retinal dystrophy and uses size N36 font in the classroom. The content of the curriculum work is differentiated to enable Nazir to have the same learning outcomes as his peers for a reduced volume of work. Nazir receives an enhanced level of support from the peripatetic sensory service with regular visits from a QTVI. The QTVI works in liaison with the school to ensure, in particular, appropriate ICT is used and the appropriate modification of curriculum materials.

The QTVI has flagged up from the start of school that Nazir will need to have: modified large-print papers for external exams, CCTV, Magnilink provided in Year 5, dark-lined paper, sloping desk, laptop in Year 2 updated with new software for magnification and speech output in Year 5.

Nazir makes excellent progress at school and is identified as gifted and talented for numeracy and literacy. Parents indicate that they would like Nazir to attend a grammar school for his secondary education.

Year 4 – Communications take place between QTVI and the County Co-ordinator for VI about the details of the PESE reasonable adjustments and the impact for Nazir.

Year 5 – December Annual Review has a statutory duty to consider the arrangements for transition. At this point the school considered that with the Kent Test it might be difficult to make appropriate adjustments for Nazir to show his potential. Annual report from QTVI for the review meeting indicated that because of the level of modification required by Nazir, the arrangements available for modification of the PESE would disadvantage Nazir if he took the test. Discussion took place about the alternatives to sitting the PESE for Kent pupils. These reasonable adjustments were available to pupils who needed greater modification, particularly a larger print size than size 18. The agreement of the

review was to request assessment by a portfolio to the head teacher panel as a reasonable adjustment.

December Year 5 to September Year 6 – School was able to gather a portfolio of Nazir’s work including Year 5 optional SATS to evidence that he was working at a level equivalent to the level of children obtaining an aggregate score of 360 in the PESE testing with no score below 119 in any test. This portfolio of work also contained contextual information about the conditions in which the work was completed and the reasonable adjustments made.

Year 5 – June: SENCO completes the reasonable adjustment request and attaches the QTVI’s report from the annual review as evidence of the need to consider assessment by portfolio as the test would not be accessible to Nazir.

Year 5 – July: Reasonable adjustment requests are considered by a panel of professionals including the County Professional Lead for Sensory Impairment (QTVI). Assessment by portfolio of work agreed.

Year 6 – October: Nazir’s portfolio is viewed by the head teacher panel and he is assessed as suitable for a grammar school place.

Year 7 - Nazir starts at his first choice of grammar school and continues to make good progress.

Case Study 2 – Zoe

Zoe attends her local mainstream primary school and has an SEN which identifies her vision impairment as her primary need. Zoe has a moderate vision impairment due to ocular condition and uses size 20 font, bold, in the classroom. The content of the curriculum work is differentiated to enable Zoe to have the same learning outcomes but she does not have any adjustments made to the amount of work presented in class. Zoe has received support from the peripatetic sensory service with regular visits from a QTVI. The QTVI works in liaison with the school to ensure the presentation of the curriculum materials in appropriate format.

The QTVI has flagged up from the start of school that Zoe will need to have modified large-print papers for external exams: dark-lined paper, Magnilink, laptop.

Zoe makes good progress at school. Parents indicate that they would like Zoe to attend a grammar school for her secondary education and particularly wish her to undertake the test with her peers.

Year 5 – November: Annual Review has a statutory duty to consider the arrangements for transition. Annual report from QTVI for the review meeting indicates the level of modification required by Zoe. The report indicated that at size 18 Zoe lost her fluency and was not able to evidence the excellence of the work. The school considered that within the Kent Test it might be difficult for Zoe to access and would put her at a disadvantage, because the restricted format of the test papers meant it would not be possible to make the adjustment that Zoe was able to have provided in class. Discussion took place about the alternatives to sitting the PESE for Kent pupils. These reasonable adjustments were available to pupils who needed greater modification, particularly a larger print size than size 18. Parents continued with their request for their daughter to sit the test. The agreement of the review was that, as the parents would be entering their daughter for the test, the school would need to request extra time, large print papers, scribe to record answers, a separate room and rest breaks.

Year 5 – July: SENCO completes a reasonable adjustment request and attaches the VI report.

Year 5 – August: Reasonable adjustment requests are considered by a panel of professionals including the County Professional Lead for Sensory Impairment (QTVI). Concern is raised that Zoe might be disadvantaged by the PESE test. QTVI is asked to ensure that the PESE arrangements would enable access and the school is requested to monitor the practice paper provided in this format. It is also suggested that the written paper can be completed on a laptop if appropriate.

September, Year 6 – QTVI rechecks optimum print size and is concerned about the parental request for Zoe to sit the test. School provides the practice test in large print and is satisfied that this provides good access for Zoe. When results go to schools, however, Zoe has not been successful with scores in the non-verbal reasoning and maths papers, being below the level required. School refers her case to the head teacher panel for consideration as Zoe's class work is at a higher level than the work

she evidenced in the test. School references the QTVI report, which indicated that the test would disadvantage Zoe. The school's preference was the portfolio of work approach but Zoe had sat the papers at her parents' request. The written test and the verbal reasoning test evidenced a higher level of work. The tests with diagrams have caused a particular difficulty for Zoe. The panel agree that Zoe had not had good access to the PESE papers and assess her suitable for a grammar school place.

September, Year 7 – Zoe's parents choose for her to attend her local high school that has a mainstream resourced provision for visual impairment. Zoe makes good progress.

Case Study 3 – Svetlana

Sveltana attends her local mainstream primary school and has a mild vision impairment due to nystagmus and uses clear, well spaced print, size 14, in the classroom. The presentation of the curriculum work is differentiated by staff and she sometimes uses a ruler or typoscope when viewing large amounts of text. The school put in place the Kent mainstream core standards – quality first teaching for visual impairment. School staff have attended training for vision impairment. Svetlana has annual visits to the orthoptist who has provided the school with information on her distance and near vision. The peripatetic service for vision impairment works with children who have a moderate, severe or profound vision impairment. Svetlana does not meet the criteria for specialist interventions from a QTVI.

Svetlana made excellent progress at school. Parents indicated that they would like her to attend a grammar school for her secondary education.

Year 5, March – School contact PESE Manager to ask about the reasonable adjustments that are available for the PESE test.

Year 5, June – SENCO completes the reasonable adjustment request for large-print papers, scribe to record answers, a separate room and rest breaks (if required).

Year 5, July – Reasonable adjustment requests are considered by a panel of professionals including the County Professional Lead for

Sensory Impairment (QTVI). All of the reasonable adjustments are agreed.

Year 6, October – Svetlana assessed suitable for a grammar school place.

Year 6, March – Svetlana leaves the country and does not take up her place at secondary.

Case Study 4 – Darren

Darren has anophthalmia and is blind. He attends his local mainstream primary school and has a Statement of SEN. Darren uses aural and tactile means to access the curriculum and his learning medium is braille. The format of Darren's curriculum materials is differentiated to enable access and the volume of work is reduced. Darren is able to successfully complete the work to a high standard. Darren is a competent touch-typist using speech output software. He is starting to use a braille PDA for some of his work. Darren receives an enhanced level of support from the peripatetic sensory service with twice-weekly visits from a QTVI. The QTVI works in liaison with the school to ensure appropriate ICT is used and the appropriate modification of curriculum materials is made.

Darren has access to:

Perkins Braille, Embosser, Scanner, T3 laptop with speech output software and braille PDA from the start of Year 5.

The school considers Darren to be an outstanding pupil. The school and parents feel that Darren should attend a grammar school for secondary.

Year 4 – Communications take place between QTVI and the County Co-ordinator for VI about the options for assessment by portfolio for Darren.

Year 5, October – Annual Review has a statutory duty to consider the arrangements for transition. The report from QTVI reminds the school to begin to collate a portfolio of Darren's work. School completes the Request for Special Arrangements identifying

Darren's disability and level of impairment and requests assessment by portfolio at the Head Teachers' Assessment Panel.

October Year 5 to September Year 6 – School gathers a portfolio of Darren's work. This includes work he completes on the Perkins and the laptop. All work in braille is transcribed. The portfolio of work contains contextual information about the conditions in which the work is completed and the reasonable adjustments made.

June, Year 5 – SENCO completes the reasonable adjustment request and attaches the QTVI's report from the annual review as evidence of the need to consider assessment by portfolio for Darren.

July, Year 5 – Reasonable adjustment requests are considered by a panel of professionals including the County Professional Lead for Sensory Impairment (QTVI). Assessment by portfolio of work agreed.

October, Year 6 – Headteacher Panel views Darren's portfolio of work and he is assessed as suitable for a grammar school place.

Year 7 – Darren started at his local grammar school and continues to make excellent progress.

Appendix 2: Supporting documents

Appendix 2A: PESE Appendix B – SEN

Appendix 2B: Decision on Request for the Adjustment of 11+ Test Materials or Conditions 2014 Entry

Appendix 2C: PESE 2014 – Concessions