

# London 11+ Consortium 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 11+ application system can place on young children and the damage to learning which relentless 'teaching to the test' produces. We therefore seek to run a simple process with just one test, which provides a good tool of assessment to elicit information which can match candidates to schools best fitting their profile.

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 70 minutes, incorporating mathematics, verbal and non-verbal questions. The questions will be mainly multiple choice;
2. **A common reference form** requiring, amongst wider contextual information on attitudes and character, detailed commentary on the candidate's academic performance. Although not compulsory, it is hoped that this form will be widely used;
3. **An imaginative interview experience** (individual to each senior school) which explores the skills, aptitudes and intellectual acuity of the candidates. Please note, from 2021, Francis Holland, Regent's Park, Godolphin and Latymer and South Hampstead High School will select for interview from the assessment.

## Who are we?

There are 13 schools in the Consortium, listed below with the names of their heads:

[Channing School](#) – Mrs Lindsey Hughes

[Francis Holland School, Regent's Park](#) – Mr Charles Fillingham

[Francis Holland School, Sloane Square](#) – Mrs Lucy Elphinstone (Chairman)

[More House School](#) - Mrs Amanda Leach

[Northwood College for Girls](#) – Mrs Zara Hubble

[Notting Hill and Ealing High School](#) – Mr Matthew Shoults

[Queen's College London](#) – Mr Richard Tillett

[Queen's Gate School](#) – Mrs Rosalynd Kamaryc

[South Hampstead High School](#) – Mrs Victoria Bingham

[St Helen's School London](#) – Mrs Alice Lucas

[St. James Senior Girls' School](#) – Mrs Sarah Labram

[St Margaret's School](#) – Mr Mark Webster

[The Godolphin and Latymer School](#) – Dr Frances Ramsey

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

The test agency, an experienced provider of assessment material globally, devises the test each year specifically to meet the intellectual profile of our candidates in London schools. It has been provided with our historic examination data and baseline information, so 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.

## **Is the test adaptive?**

No. Each child attempts the same questions, which contain some which only the most able will feel confident with. The reason for a non-adaptive test is that we wish to be able to compare results year on year.

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

No, it will make no difference whatsoever.

## **Will there be any comprehension questions?**

There will be a passage of reading and some multiple choice questions.

## **Why is there no creative writing?**

The tutoring of children in creative writing has led to formulaic writing often lacking real individuality. The marking of creative writing is problematic, with a certain subjective element. We prefer children of this age to experiment with writing creatively without the pressure of assessment.

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

Yes, there will be a short break of about 30 minutes in the middle.

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## **What provision will be made for children with specific learning needs?**

We make all necessary provision for children with specific learning needs. An educational psychologist's report must be submitted to the senior school by the required date in order to qualify for arrangements such as extra time or the use of a scribe, and all provision will be based on JCQ rulings.

## **How is the test administered?**

The candidates are supplied with a question booklet and an answer booklet. They are required to make a pencil mark in the answer booklet indicating their chosen answer. A recording guides the candidates through each section with a clear practice session at the start of each. Candidates may not race ahead to the next section. The advantage is that all candidates move through the assessment together. Fewer mistakes are made through rushing, therefore, and no one feels left behind.

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

We seek to know the potential of each child, her relative strengths, 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. The non-verbal test, in particular, provides an insight into some of these abilities which the assessments of many schools ignore.

## **How can children be prepared for this 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,

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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 marginally 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. That said, there are instances where tutoring is, of course, sensible. Children with a specific learning need or for whom English is an additional language may well benefit from extra support.

## **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. 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.

## **Why aren't all schools holding interviews for all candidates since you say it is an integral part of the application process?**

Some schools use the examination to select candidates for interview, but most choose to interview all applicants. Each school has its own unique method of interviewing and selection.

## **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.

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## What do you hope to achieve?

The Consortium heads hope that these processes will help to minimise the stress of 11+ assessment and will 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 hope to see more creativity in the curriculum. We expect an improvement in genuinely imaginative writing, and in confident mathematical problem-solving. We would love to see growing enthusiasm for reading. We look forward to more time for music, art, drama, sport and discovery in learning. We anticipate other schools will join us in due course, thus alleviating further the pressure on young children and their families.