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Information Sheet: 19

Can Special Arrangements be made for pupils taking tests in Key Stages 1, 2 & 3 ?

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) publishes important guidance to schools about assessments and reporting arrangements. The range of special arrangements set out in the guidance applies to children in all schools.

The QCA is an organisation that is responsible for curriculum and associated assessments in all maintained schools in England. It also accredits and monitors qualifications in schools, colleges and at work.

Special arrangements may be appropriate for:

- Pupils with a statement of special educational needs, or who are currently undergoing a statutory assessment (or reassessment) of their special educational needs;
- Pupils for whom provision is being made at School Action or School Action Plus, and whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects access to tests;
- Pupils who are unable to sit and work at a test for a sustained period because of a disability or emotional, social or behavioural difficulties;
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language and who have limited fluency in English.

The type of special arrangements can include:

- Rest breaks to separate the tests into sections or 'stopping the clock'.
- The use of a reader to read to the child all or any part of the test and the general instructions. The reader can also read back to the child any part of his or her responses.
- The use of amanuenses (a writing assistant or scribe who is available to write out answers as dictated by the pupil).
- A transcript where an adult would copy a child's writing when it would be difficult for an external marker to read the child's handwriting.
- The use of communicators and signers who are available to communicate or sign instructions and questions to the child.

- The use of a prompter to be used for children who have a severe attention problem. The prompter is used for the purpose of drawing a child's attention back to the task in hand.
- Modified versions of materials e.g. large print, Braille and tapes, photocopying onto coloured paper, enlargement and/or shading of diagrams.
- The use of apparatus, word processors and other aids that look like those illustrated in the tests.
- The use of dictionaries, word lists and electronic spell checkers.
- The use of a separate room may allow the school to meet the needs of a pupil who finds it hard to concentrate for long periods and who requires rest breaks and additional time.
- Administering the test off-site, either at home or in hospital for those children who are unable to attend school through illness, incapacity, or any other reason accepted by the school.
- In some of the above circumstances test packs may be opened early in order to allow school to prepare the special arrangements.

Some of these arrangements can be authorised by head teachers and some require head teachers to seek permission from external sources.

Pupils who are out of their chronological year group would usually sit the tests when they reach the end of each keystone.

So, what can parents do?

Parents should discuss any concerns they have about their child sitting tests with the headteacher or special educational needs co-ordinator.

Parents may ask a headteacher to implement any of the special arrangements. The headteacher must respond to the request within a fortnight.

If a headteacher accepts the request, they must send a copy of the direction to the parents, governing body and, if appropriate, the local multi-professional team.

If a headteacher decides not to meet the request, he or she must write to the parents giving reasons for rejecting it and also giving details of parents rights of appeal.

Copies of the QCA guidance can be obtained from:
 QCA Publications, PO Box 99, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2SN
 Tel: 01787 884444