

Admissions tests for 2021 entry to SW Herts Consortium Schools - FAQs

Introduction and Context

For admission for 2021 to Year 7, the South West Herts Testing Consortium (Watford Grammar School for Boys, Parmiter's School, Watford Grammar School for Girls, Rickmansworth School, Queen's School, Croxley Danes School (music aptitude test only) and St Clement Danes School) will conduct the ability tests on two days on 17th and 18th October, rather than the single date scheduled previously on 5th September. The tests for music aptitude will take place on 19th and 20th October. The second round of music tests will take place in the week beginning 9th November. This will enable the provision of test results for parents and students before 29th November which is after the date by which preferences will be submitted in Hertfordshire. However, Hertfordshire County Council have confirmed that they will allow parents to adjust preferences up until 4th December to cater for later test results. Other Local Authorities have suggested that they will operate in a similar manner, but you should confirm this with your Local Authority if you live outside Hertfordshire. These changes have been made in response to government guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-assessment-processes-for-selective-school-admissions>) and have been approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

The tests will be conducted with full regard to the guidance issued by the Department for Education to ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place. The guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series/centre-responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series-guidance>

Each test centre operates in a slightly different context, determined by its geography and its infrastructure, so the arrangements in each venue will differ slightly as a consequence. Each testing centre will write to the parents of allocated candidates to confirm the specific measures in place on their site. However, there are some common aspects to the measures in use at all centres which are summarised below in response to Frequently Asked Questions

Bubbles

Will my child be tested in his/her existing primary school bubble?

The use of consistent groups (bubbles) in primary schools is required because there is a recognition that social distancing is difficult to achieve in a primary context. However, where social distancing is possible, it is a preferable alternative. Given the nature of the testing processes and the space available on the testing sites, it will be perfectly possible to achieve social distancing. However, as an added precaution, we have allocated all members of each primary school to the same testing venue.

Social distancing

What measures have you put in place to assist social distancing on the day?

We have reduced the number of candidates being tested in each session by spreading the tests across multiple days, which should reduce any congestion. Some of the test centres will run two separate sessions on each day – one in the morning and another in the afternoon, once again to increase the scope for effective social distancing. Each test centre will contact you separately with the time slot for testing, which may differ from the original allocation sent to you via the centralised portal. We will insist that each child is accompanied by only one other adult from their household for registration and collection to minimise congestion. Queuing systems will be in place at each centre which will support social distancing and some centres will use multiple entrances to limit the size of any one queue. The students will be taking the test in rooms with 2m distance between each child.

Cleaning and ventilation

What measures will be in place to ensure that the environment is suitably hygienic?

Windows and doors will be open in all venues to ensure an adequate flow of air. Candidates will be advised to bring coats and other warm clothes in case the weather is cold on the day and they will be able to wear these in the test if they choose to do so.

The areas of each test venue dedicated to testing will be fully cleaned with recommended disinfectant products before use by each cohort of children.

Face Coverings

Will my child be allowed to wear a face covering?

These are not recommended for younger children and they are certainly not a mandatory requirement. We will also be able to operate social distancing in the test venue. Therefore face coverings are not required. However, you may choose to allow your child to wear a face covering and this will be permissible, although we ask them to temporarily remove their face covering for the purposes of identification or if communication is difficult.

Requirements for Self-isolation

What if my child is unable to take the test on the allocated day because they have been advised by Public health and/or their school to self-isolate as a consequence of either symptoms they have developed or they have been identified as a contact of a confirmed case?

Anyone who has one of the three common symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend the test venue on the allocated day – these symptoms are a) a high temperature of at least 37.8°C b) a new, continuous cough c) loss or change to sense of taste and/or smell. Additionally, anyone who is a member of a household with someone who has one of these symptoms should not attend the test venue on the allocated day if they are still within the designated period of self-isolation. Similarly anyone who has been identified as a contact of a confirmed Covid case should not attend on the allocated day if they are still within the designated period of self-isolation. If a child cannot take the test for any of these reasons, there will be an opportunity to sit the test at a later date.

The papers will be stored securely in line with exam regulations to ensure that the test content is not compromised between multiple sittings – this is no different to previous years when we have run tests on reserve days. If your child is in this position and you know in advance of the day that they will not be able to take the test, you should contact the Consortium Administrator to explain your circumstances. If a candidate is self-isolating, we will ask them to provide confirmation from the primary school (via email will be sufficient) that the child has not been in school and has been confirmed as not attending from the Monday after the test if they are still within the designated period of isolation.

Will temperature screening be used on the day?

Government guidance is clear that this is not a reliable way to establish symptomatic Covid cases and therefore this will not be used at our centres. Instead, each parent will be required to confirm that their child and/or other household members do not have any of the symptoms before entry to the test centre.

What if my child becomes unwell during the test?

In this case we will follow the same procedures used in our schools currently, which will involve taking the child to a place on the site which is isolated from all other children and then we will call parents to collect their child from the centre. We will have designated first aiders on the day and appropriate PPE to provide support for unwell children if they require close personal care.