

AQE Update 2nd September 2020

Change to Dates and Length of the AQE Common Entrance Assessment

Throughout the pandemic and the resulting closure of schools in March 2020, AQE Ltd has been very aware of the impact the disruption has had on the children who have been working towards sitting the Common Entrance Assessment (CEA) this year. From early April, it has been the view of the Board of AQE Ltd to delay the assessment for as long as possible to enable any disadvantage caused by the lockdown to be minimised. For this reason, the Board wrote to the Minister of Education in mid-April asking him to consider adjusting the Post Primary Transfer Timetable to allow for the three AQE papers to be held in January 2021. Regretfully, after discussions with the Department of Education and the Minister, it was not possible at that time to make the necessary changes to the Transfer Timetable, which resulted in the dates of the assessments, nevertheless, being deferred to 21st, 28th November and 12th December, two weeks later than the original schedule. This decision was subsequently the subject of a legal challenge by the parents of two pupils.

Following a further review by the Department of Education and the Education Authority, the Lord Chief Justice was today informed in the High Court by all parties to the legal challenge that a settlement had been reached to a re-scheduling of the assessments to January 2021. For AQE, the dates will now be **Saturday 9th, 16th and 23rd January 2021**, which provides for an additional nine weeks of preparation time for candidates. Results will be issued to parents on **Saturday, 6th March 2021**. AQE Ltd welcomes that the dates originally proposed in April have now been facilitated and thanks the Department of Education and the Education Authority for their efforts in making this possible. The registration closing date will now move further to **Friday 9th October 2020**.

Increased Length of the Common Entrance Assessment

In a previous update in June 2020, AQE Ltd informed parents and candidates that our Assessment Team had been reviewing the questions in the 2020/21 CEA, making adjustments where necessary to ensure that they are accessible to all of the pupils, enabling them to show what they know, understand and can do. The purpose of our communication in June was to reassure everyone that the three assessments are at the appropriate level and length for this year's cohort of P6 children, given the level of disruption caused by the pandemic. As this cohort of children now enters P7 at the start of the new school year, the Assessment Team has considered other ways of making the CEA more accessible and **has decided to add an additional 10 minutes (from 60 minutes to 70 minutes) to the time given to the candidates for each of the three papers**. This change will allow the children to spend longer answering each question as well as checking their answers. The additional time can be taken into account by parents and teachers in the preparation of the children for the assessment.

AQE Ltd would like to thank the teachers, parents and candidates for their hard work and commitment throughout these difficult times, and offers best wishes to them all for a successful return to school in September.