

THE ISEB COMMON PRE-TESTS: SEND GUIDANCE

ISEB is committed to working with leading SEND experts to continually review its processes. We want every child to realise their potential. The ISEB Common Pre-Tests are shared, online, adaptive tests, which means that each child only has to take the test once, no matter how many schools they are applying for.

Multiple-choice tests are an accessible format for all pupils, especially those with SEND as there is no writing element. It also means the format of the questions and answer options remains consistent throughout the test, reducing the stress of anticipating the next question.

An adaptive test is one where the questions are chosen to be the most suitable for each pupil. The system assesses the pupil's ability after each response and selects the next question to have the most appropriate level of difficulty. This means that a pupil does not need to spend time answering questions that are too hard or too easy for them and the whole test can be shorter, whilst still providing an accurate score.

In an adaptive test, each pupil receives a path through the questions that is unique to them and pupils may be presented with a differing number of questions. The system does not allow them to go back and change previous answers, for example, if they think they have made a mistake. We ensure that the length of the test is optimised to provide an accurate score for every pupil and can anticipate when an answer might have been selected at random and is not characteristic of the child's general ability.

HOW DOES THE NEW TEST PLAYER SUPPORT APPLICANTS WITH SEND?

There are three features built into the online testing platform, specifically to support pupils with SEND:

- Pupils will be able to select a coloured overlay to help improve the visibility of the questions, particularly for pupils who face visual discomfort and disturbance when reading.
- The font size can be adjusted to suit visually impaired applicants.
- The timer for the test will be visible to all applicants (even those with 25% extra time) and it can be hidden from view if the countdown makes a pupil anxious.

In addition, where possible, onscreen instructions are written in plain English with icons for visual stimulus.



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HOW DO THE QUESTIONS SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SEND?

All questions have been extensively reviewed to ensure that instructions and the questions are simple and straight-forward to follow. Reading ability should not limit understanding of questions in tests.

For example, in the Grammar section of the English test, where a pupil is asked to identify a correct spelling from a sentence with a missing word, the sentence is written using easier vocabulary.

HOW ARE PUPILS WITH LOW READING SPEED OR COGNITIVE PROCESSING SUPPORTED IN THE ENGLISH TEST?

The design of the reading comprehension section of the English test has been made more accessible.

Varied content: Pupils will see several shorter passages on a range of topics in fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

Adaptive passages: After an initial passage to indicate a pupil's ability, the following passages are adaptive, so pupils are presented with passages that are most suitable for their reading ability.

New layout: The passages will be shown in their entirety on the screen. The pupil may need to scroll down but they will not need to click through paginated buttons.

Numbered paragraphs: Pupils will be directed to specific paragraphs to retrieve information in some questions.

Low working memory demands: Where a pupil needs to identify the meaning of a word or refer to a specific sentence, these will be repeated in the question, so the pupil does not have to remember or find the content in the passage.

WHAT PROVISION IS THERE FOR APPLICANTS WITH SEND?

Access arrangements allow applicants with special educational needs or disabilities to access the assessment, based on evidence of need and normal way of working.

For the ISEB Common Pre-Tests an access arrangement could be:

- 25% extra time
- A reader for the tests
- Supervised rest breaks
- A separate room.

Senior schools must approve the access arrangements before the tests are scheduled.



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HOW DO PARENTS/GUARDIANS REQUEST EXTRA TIME/REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

As part of creating the applicant record in the ISEB Guardian Portal, a parent/guardian will have to complete the SEND section.

If a parent/guardian is registering an applicant with SEND, they should first check with the senior schools (to which they are applying) what documentation is required as proof of SEND status.

In most cases it will be an Educational Psychologist's report (or other suitably qualified professional).

If a parent/guardian wants to request 25% extra time it is likely the school will request proof that the applicant's reading speed or cognitive processing is less than average (ie, a standardised score below 89).

A parent/guardian will decide if they want to request:

- 25% extra time only
- Access arrangements other than 25% extra time
- 25% extra time AND other access arrangements.

They will have to upload evidence of SEND status before they will be able to complete their requests. However, they can continue with other aspects of the registration and return to the form once they have the necessary documents.

Parents/guardians will have to approve the sharing of this documentation to the senior schools by ticking a box. Invigilation centres will be able to see that a document has been uploaded but they will not have access to the content. ISEB will also have access to the document in case of any mediation (in cases of appeal).

Parents/guardians may also want to seek support from their current school's SENCO for advice about what 'normal ways of working' the school currently provides and if they believe 25% extra time will be suitable for their child when taking this type of test.

WHAT SHOULD SENIOR SCHOOLS DO FOR APPLICANTS WITH SEND?

When the senior school uploads the ISEB Applicant IDs into their system, they will be able to filter by those records with SEND status in order to review the requests for access arrangements.

Each senior school is responsible for checking the SEND requests for applicants. The senior school will need to check both the description of the access arrangements and if extra time is required.

If the senior school agrees that 25% extra time should be added to the tests, then no further action is required. The 25% extra time will be built into the applicant record so that when they log in to the tests, it is automatically applied.

If the senior school does not agree with the request for 25% extra time (or any other access arrangement), they will need to begin an appeal process.

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THE APPEAL PROCESS FOR SENIOR SCHOOLS

In the Senior School Portal, schools will be able to inform ISEB that they are going to appeal the request for extra time.

Once this appeal has been initiated, the senior school will then need to carry out their investigation into the SEND status request. They should:

- Contact the parent/guardian to inform them and/or to request further information
- Contact the current school to request supporting documentation
- Conduct any other activities they need in order to reach a final decision.

Once the senior school has made their final decision, they will need to let the parent/guardian and ISEB know.

If the request for extra time is upheld, the applicant record will reflect a 25% extra time addition to the test. This will be applied through the system. The pupil will log on with their access code and the test will have 25% extra time automatically added.

If the request for extra time is not approved, ISEB will remove the 25% extra time status from the applicant record.

If there is a situation where more than one senior school has been applied to, and there is disagreement between the schools on the SEND status, ISEB will mediate between the schools to find the best solution for the pupil.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A SENIOR SCHOOL APPEALS THE REQUEST FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

The senior school will contact the current school to discuss the provision and normal ways of working in school for the pupil. They may request further evidence, either from the current school or parent/guardian. Parents/guardians should seek support from their current school's SENCO if they have any questions. If parents/guardians are not satisfied with the senior school's decision, this should be addressed through the school.

HOW CAN THE CURRENT SCHOOL SUPPORT APPLICANTS AND PARENTS /GUARDIANS?

As parents will upload the documentation that will be viewed by senior schools, the current school may want to ensure that the parents/guardians have the most up-to-date information and/or test scores (e.g. Reading Speed test or Working Memory standardised tests).

Schools may feel that some applications for SEND may benefit from a letter from the current school/SENCO to explain how 25% extra time is beneficial for the pupil. This could then be uploaded by the parents/guardians when they register their child for the tests.



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If the current school is also the Invigilation Centre, you will be able to see the applicant records in the Invigilation Centre Portal. You will be able to view which pupils have SEND status.

If a senior school appeals any SEND requests, they will contact the current school to discuss the pupil's needs. They may want to understand more information about the pupil and their normal ways of working. The SENCO may have to provide additional evidence and a supporting statement.

WHAT WILL THE APPLICANT RECORD SHOW FOR SEND IN THE INVIGILATION CENTRE PORTAL?

The applicant record will show if the parent/guardian has indicated that their child has SEND status.

If they have uploaded documentation and completed the access arrangements request, the invigilation centre will be able to approve the applicant.

If the parent/guardian has indicated SEND status but has not uploaded any documentation, the invigilation centre will see the applicant record as pending. It is at this stage that they will be able to assist the parent/guardian if necessary.

WHAT DOES THE INVIGILATION CENTRE NEED TO DO?

It is important that the access arrangements are viewed ahead of the test sittings to ensure that the access arrangements can be provided, for example, does the applicant need rest breaks, or a separate room?

If an applicant requires a separate room, this will need its own invigilator. Refer to the Invigilation Centre Guidance for further information about preparation ahead of the tests and setting up the test environment.

When the access codes for the tests are downloaded from the Invigilation Centre Portal, any applicants with 25% extra time will automatically have this time added to their tests. ISEB recommends that pupils with extra time sit their tests in a separate room to avoid disturbance when other pupils finish the tests.

There is no need to time these tests manually, and the timer for the test will be visible on screen. If this is a distraction for applicants, they can hide the timer by clicking on it.

AFTER THE TESTS

A centre declaration form must be completed at the end of each test for all pupils. This can be completed online in the Invigilation Centre Portal. For pupils with SEND, ISEB recommends completing the centre declaration form with information about the access arrangements that were provided during the tests, and any other information that may be relevant to the senior school.



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