

15 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Further update about Secondary Selection Testing for Year 5 children moving up to secondary school in September 2021

Since my letter to parents and carers in April 2020, TBGS has continued to work with Buckinghamshire Council and GL Assessment to model possible options for Secondary Selection Testing for this Autumn. We have also consulted with our colleagues in primary schools and considered direct communications we have received from parents. These considerations have all been added to the ongoing discussions with the Department for Education.

Preferred option for testing

Our **preferred option** is to delay testing until later in the Autumn term as we believe this will be fairest to children given most Year 5 children will not be returning to school until the Autumn term. Later testing would give children a chance to settle back into school and it would also give primary school colleagues more time to adjust to the new working practices such as social distancing and enhanced cleaning regimes needed because of COVID-19. Given children may well need to be tested in smaller groups than normal, our preference is also to have a test window this year rather than two fixed dates as this will give schools more flexibility to meet local circumstances.

The preferred option assumes that as usual, the practice test will be taken first with the Secondary Transfer Test taking place two days later. We are proposing that children in Buckinghamshire primary and partner schools take the test in week commencing 2 November 2020. For out-of-county children testing will be during week commencing 26 October 2020. The different dates are due to the new working arrangements in place at the grammar school testing centres where it will not be practical or safe to test out of county children when grammar school students are also on site.

I have said this is our 'preferred option' because we cannot make any changes to Admissions Arrangements without approval from the Department for Education. Without approval any changes would be unlawful. Discussions have been taking place with the DfE since early April but a decision is still awaited. Colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council as well as TBGS have made it clear that a decision is needed as a matter of urgency because the uncertainty is causing distress and anxiety to families and we are continuing to push for a decision as early as possible.

Further information and support

In normal years your child's school would be inviting you to attend an information session about moving up to secondary school. The slides used for that are produced by the Buckinghamshire Admissions Team with input from TBGS. As schools are currently not open to most children, this year the presentation slides will be provided as a video file with sound. We are expecting the video to be available from multiple sources including from the TBGS website (<https://www.thebucksgrammarschools.org/>). It should be ready within the next two weeks and we will let you know where to find it via our website.

Each year TBGS provides Year 5 children with a Familiarisation booklet to take home and work through with parents so that children can see what the test will be like and have the opportunity to try out a few questions. This year, because most Year 5 children are not currently in school, we will be sending out these booklets direct to your home using the address provided by Buckinghamshire Council. The booklets will be despatched from 9 July 2020.

I know you will be disappointed that we are still not in a position to confirm the test dates for this year and I would like to re-assure you again that we are doing everything we can to get agreement to test when we wish.

We will update our website as soon as we possibly can.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Sturgeon', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Sturgeon

Chair, The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools

chairman.tbgs@gmail.com