

Passing the 11+

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What is the 11+ ?

In the UK the education system is split into two separate sections the first of these is the comprehensive system which offers places to all children. The second part is the selective system which offers places to those children who are able to pass an exam at the beginning of year 6, so that most pupils will be 10 years old when they take the exam.

The selective system has been controversial and as a result in many areas there are limited numbers of selective schools, however over 100 selective schools remain in the UK and these offer a very high quality of education.

In South London for example where there are high quality private schools competing with grammar schools as is the case with Whitgift and the grammar schools in Sutton those parents who have a choice will often select a grammar school even though do private schools have fees of £25,000 a year.

The reason why grammar schools are so effective is in part due to the focus on exam results within these schools however it is also in part due to the way that pupils in grammar schools work together. this is something that cannot really be replicated in the private sector.

Due to the effectiveness of grammar schools, where they exist, it is extremely important to access the places available if possible. the average pupil will gain one additional grade in every subject at GCSE and therefore this will save an enormous amount of tuition. This also

creates further barriers to people seeking to access a place in a grammar school at the age of 16.

It is therefore important to find a way to access Grammar School places. In order to do that we need a clear understanding of how the selective exam which provides access to these schools operate. This exam is run on a very fair basis and simply requires an understanding of the process

Passing the 11+

The key to passing the 11+ is to divide it into 3 stages. The first stage is to attain the basic skills required to learn the material. If a child cannot complete a times table in between 2 and 3 minutes they will not be able to absorb the learning required to understand the key areas within the 11 plus exam.

The second stage is to learn the course material. This material will allow them to address the questions asked directly from the material studied or, through an understanding of the principles, other questions that they have not studied.

The final stage is a rigorous testing process to find the score of the child and also deal with any gaps in knowledge that prevent a path being achieved. This is done through the use of mock exams.

Once this knowledge has been gained the pupils need to understand their current level in relation to the exam and where the gaps in their knowledge are. The pass mark for

the exam is widely understood to be around 80%, however it depends in part on the difficulty of the exam and the relation to the scores achieved by other pupils. As a result the 80% score guide is only a rule of thumb.

Testing is vital in order to maximise the chance of passing the exam. Pupils must be checked for knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They must also be checked for a knowledge of the times table. Without the requisite knowledge pupils are likely to experience frustration when addressing the course material. For this reason testing this and bringing the level to that required for the exam is the required first stage for pupils.

Within the course itself it is necessary to ensure that as many subject areas as possible are covered. It is not however possible to cover all potential questions. As a result it is more important to cover the broad areas and rely on the child's ability to relate these to specific questions asked. This may be enough to get a child over the pass level, however it is more likely that the third stage in the process will be required. This is where the child takes multiple mock exams through which they become familiar with the exact types of questions that come up in the exam.

The key subject areas in maths are as follows

1. Ordering of numbers

2. Negative numbers

This requires the ability to do subtraction where the numbers involved are negative

3. Time related problems

This involves the ability to read timetables

4. Understanding of types of measurement

5. Area and perimeter

This includes the calculation of perimeters and areas of shapes with right angles

6. Number bonds

7. Rounding numbers

8. Angles

9. Fractions

10. Ordering of fractions

This involves the ability to work out which of two fractions has the largest value.

11. Geometric shapes

12. Nets and three dimensional shapes

This involves working out which net is able to make a particular shape.

13. Number sequences

This involves be able to work out the next number in a sequence.

14. Money problems

This involves being able to work out change given when items are purchased. It also involves being able to calculate the total cost of purchasing a number of items together.

15. Percentages

This requires the ability to calculate the percentage of any number up to 1000.

16. Factors

17. Squares

18. Rounding numbers

19. Rounding decimals

20. Liquid capacity

21. Line graphs and histograms

22. Averages

This requires an understanding of mean, median and mode

23. Decimals

24. Coordinates

25. Multiplication of decimals

This requires the ability to multiply decimal numbers by numbers up to 1000.

26. Algebra

This involves being able to work out the value of x when there are two expressions containing x and two values within an equation. This is extremely important because the knowledge of algebra allows the answering of many other questions.

27. Estimation

28. Ratio

29. BIDMAS

This requires pupils to correctly work out the order of operations.

30. Calculation of volume

This requires the ability to calculate the volume of three dimensional shapes including cubes.

31. Probability

32. Dates

This requires the ability to work out the day of a date in the future up to 4 months ahead. This involves an understanding of leap years.

33. Geometry

This involves the ability to calculate the area of a triangle and other quadrilaterals.

34. Congruent and reflective shapes

There are two main areas in this subject. the first is to understand when shapes are congruent and the second is to understand when shapes are internally reflective.

35. Prime Numbers

This involves being able to work out the answer to questions related to which numbers in a sequence of prime number.

Once these Areas of study have been completed the pupil can progress to take him past papers. when they do this it is important that a track is kept of which type of questions have been successfully completed. spreadsheets can be used to isolate the type of question being asked and gain an understanding of which type of questions pupils understand.

This is a complicated process. A child who is unable to order fractions is likely to experience a reduction in their score however it is not a simple process for teacher to isolate which area each other pupils is specifically weak in. For this reason it is vital that pupils are given tests which deliberately target every single area of the course and expose weaknesses in learning.

It is difficult for parents to achieve this alone, however it is of the highest level of importance. Tuition centres that work on this basis are far more effective than those offering general learning, for example through the use of computers. all learning is however useful and it is very noticeable that those pupils that do large amount tuition seem to improve rapidly, even if the tuition is not

necessarily the highest quality. for this reason it is likely to be helpful for parents to do as much teaching as possible even if they are not specifically trained as teachers. This can, however, be frustrating and it is important for parents to try to improve their teaching skills in order to reduce the cost of tuition.

Studying English

The teaching of English is far more complicated than the teaching of Mathematics. The reason for this is that the scope of the course is not so easily defined. The most significant determiner of success is the knowledge of vocabulary, however this is not learnt quickly. The most effective way is through reading, however many of the books that children read will include vocabulary that is not relevant to the 11-plus.

There is no easy solution to this problem however using targeted reading material that works around the vocabulary required for the 11 + is the best approach. the use of cards has not been shown to be effective because the words are studied in isolation. it is better that the words are learnt through stories where the context allows for a clearer understanding.

An analysis of past eleven plus exams indicates that pupils will be tested on vocabulary up to the first 20,000 most widely used words in English. This is only the broadest rule of thumb but give some idea of the challenge

Pupils are also required to learn grammar and punctuation. One of the issues with the 11-plus is that schools do not teach the material in time for the exam. In

the case of grammar and punctuation however there is evidence that these areas are covered in some detail. As a result this is not such a big issue for pupils and the use of exercise books that teach grammar and punctuation is helpful and is likely to raise a child to a reasonable level.

A further area which can come up in the 11+ is cloze. This is where gaps are left in a passage to test the understanding of meaning. This is not, in itself, a particularly challenging issue. If, however, pupils are not familiar with it it will take them a few minutes to get to understand the process and this time simply isn't available in the exam. For this reason it is important that cloze is covered just in case it appears in the exam proper.

The final area of English is comprehension. the problem with this is that pupils do not read the questions properly. the most effective way is to force their children to read the questions by doing papers in front of the teacher and going through the questions that are incorrectly answered. This shows the child where they are losing marks.

Grammar and punctuation

At 11+ pupils are required to learn grammar and punctuation. There are many areas. The following list covers some of the areas that are required

- 1.The Apostrophe**
- 2.Fronted Adverbials**
- 3.Use of commas**
- 4.Past tense and present perfect**
- 5.Comparative and superlative adjectives**

6. Prepositions

7. Use of the colon and semi colon

8. Types of noun

9. Types of determiner

10. Phrases and clauses

This includes the ability to differentiate between a phrase and a clause. Also to differentiate between noun phrases, preposition phrases and clauses.

Summary

Passing the eleven plus is a real challenge. It is arguable that it is simultaneously both the most important exam a child will take and also the one whereby teaching strategies are most effective in raising performance. This document provides only an outline of the core strategies required to raise performance however later versions of it will provide further detail on the effective strategies required to improve performance.

Appendix

English Study Material Examples

The following material is designed to be used in conjunction with a related set of Google slides.

English 9.0: Types of Determiner

Determiner (definition): A determiner is a word that is put in front of a noun to make information about the noun clear.

Examples

Shall I buy **this** item?

I go to tuition **every** Saturday

The following are the main types of determiner

Articles: a, the, an

Ordinals: first, second, third, last, first

Numbers: one, fifty, five hundred

Demonstratives: that these, this, those

Possessive Adjectives: my, your, his, her, our, their, your

Quantifiers: any, few, many, more, every, some

English 10.0: Phrases and Clauses

Phrase (definition): a group of words that functions as a single unit in a sentence, but does not include a subject and a verb.

Clause (definition): a group of words including a subject and a verb.

Preposition phrase (definition): a phrase that gives more information using a preposition.

Noun phrase: a sentence that gives more information about a noun.

Preposition phrase example

The passengers were waiting **on the platform**

Noun phrase example

Shall we go into **the white cottage**

