

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 April 2020, TBGS has worked 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.

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 flourish extending to the right.

Mark Sturgeon

Chair, The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools

chairman.tbgs@gmail.com