



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Key stage 2 access arrangements guidance

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1 Introduction

This guidance details the access arrangements available for pupils participating in the key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests.

Pupils with specific needs may require additional arrangements so they can take part in the KS2 tests. Access arrangements are adjustments that can be put in place to support those pupils. Headteachers and teachers must decide whether any of their pupils will need access arrangements before they administer the tests.

1.1 Overview of access arrangements

Access arrangements must never advantage or disadvantage the pupil. Any support should be based primarily on normal classroom practice. Support must not change the test questions and the pupil's answers must be their own.

It may be helpful to use KS2 [practice materials](#)¹ with pupils before administering the tests. This will enable schools to identify whether pupils need additional support or adaptations, either to the test materials or to their administration.

Access arrangements might be used to support pupils who have:

- difficulty reading
- difficulty writing
- difficulty concentrating
- processing difficulties
- a hearing impairment
- a visual impairment
- English as an additional language

Due to the diversity of pupils' needs, this guidance does not list every circumstance where it may be appropriate to use access arrangements. Some pupils may not be able to access the tests, despite the provision of additional arrangements. Schools can contact the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) using 'Message us' on the [Primary Assessment Gateway](#)² if further advice is required.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-practice-materials

² www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk

1.2 Evidence

During a [monitoring visit](#)³, local authorities (LAs) may ask to see evidence that any support given to pupils in the tests is regularly provided as part of normal classroom practice.

Schools must make sure they have documentation to show that a pupil is eligible for access arrangements. Evidence will vary according to the type of support and may include:

- notes recorded in teaching plans
- individual pupil support plans
- a pupil's classwork

Schools should not include evidence of access arrangements with their test scripts as this will slow down the marking process.

1.3 Maladministration

Schools could be subject to a [maladministration investigation](#)⁴ if they fail to use access arrangements appropriately.

This includes:

- early opening of test materials without permission from STA
- doing anything that could be interpreted as over-aiding pupils
- not having evidence that access arrangements used in the tests reflect normal classroom practice
- allowing access arrangements to be administered by another pupil, or a relative, carer or guardian of the pupil

A maladministration investigation may lead to the pupil's result being amended or annulled.

³ www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-and-phonics-screening-check-monitoring-visits

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stages-1-and-2-investigating-allegations-of-maladministration

2 Changes for 2020/21

In 2021, to reduce the administrative burden on schools, decisions about KS2 access arrangements (except early opening) are delegated to headteachers. This means applications or notifications to STA are not required.

Applications for early opening, to adapt or modify test materials, must still be submitted on the Primary Assessment Gateway (see section 3).

2.1 Additional time applications

The requirement to submit applications for additional time has been suspended. Schools do not need to make applications to STA but should use the guidance in section 4.1 to determine whether pupils are eligible.

2.2 Aid notifications

Schools do not need to notify STA if a pupil used a scribe or word processor or other technical or electronic aid in the tests, or if a transcript was made of their test script but should keep a note of these details for their own records (see sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

2.3 Compensatory marks for spelling

The English grammar, punctuation and spelling test has been suspended for 2021. Therefore, there is no process for schools to apply for compensatory marks for pupils unable to access the spelling paper due to a hearing impairment.

3 Applications for early opening

Schools must apply to STA in advance to request permission to open test packs before the scheduled test day. Early opening can be granted if schools need to adapt or modify test materials to meet the specific needs of pupils. It must not be used to administer the tests earlier than the dates specified in the test timetable.

Before making the decision to modify test materials, schools should consider whether modified tests provided by STA would meet the needs of the pupil. Modified tests are primarily designed for pupils with visual impairments, although they may be suitable for pupils with other needs.

Schools may open test papers up to one hour before a test is due to start, to make adaptations or preparations, without seeking permission from STA. This flexibility is designed to help schools that need to:

- photocopy test papers onto coloured paper
- enhance diagrams
- enlarge text
- prepare a translator or signer
- prepare equipment

If you need to open test papers (including modified test papers) more than one hour early to make more complex adaptations, you must have an approved application for early opening. If you are planning to make the same adaptations for more than one pupil, and you require the same amount of time, you can include multiple pupils on the same application form.

STA will only allow schools to open standard test materials more than one day before the scheduled test date, or modified materials more than 2 days before the scheduled test date, in exceptional circumstances.

Schools do not need to make applications for early opening for subject-specific guidance and models, which are provided with the modified large print (MLP) and braille tests.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that any adaptations to the tests are done correctly. STA will not compensate, or give special consideration, where test papers have been incorrectly modified.

How to apply

Where modifications cannot be made in the hour before the start of a test, the school should make an application for early opening.

Appropriate reasons for an application include:

- preparing for MLP or braille versions of the tests, such as setting up visual scanning equipment or preparing tactile diagrams
- enlarging or adapting a test paper for pupils with a visual impairment or other special educational needs or disabilities
- planning how communicators or sign language interpreters will present a test to pupils with a hearing impairment
- preparing a written or oral translation of the mathematics test

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring the security and confidentiality of test materials. Only the headteacher, or the person making adaptations, should have access to test papers that have been opened early.

Schools can make an application on the Primary Assessment Gateway from Monday 15 February to Friday 12 March. STA will only consider applications after the deadline in exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, where a pupil's needs have significantly changed, or a pupil joins the school after the application deadline. In such cases, schools should contact STA using 'Message us' on the Primary Assessment Gateway to discuss the pupil's requirements.

Outcomes of applications will be available on the Primary Assessment Gateway by Monday 12 April.

4 School-delegated arrangements

Headteachers can agree the following access arrangements without prior approval, or the need to notify STA, providing they reflect normal classroom practice. Schools must have evidence to show that the pupil routinely receives this support in case of a monitoring visit.

Schools should note for their own records where an access arrangement was provided in the tests and, if appropriate, the name of the scribe, reader, prompter or translator used by each pupil.

4.1 Additional time

Pupils automatically qualify for:

- up to 25% additional time if they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- up to 100% additional time if they use the MLP or braille versions of the tests

These pupils may also use other access arrangements if this is normal classroom practice.

Pupils who do not have an EHC plan and who use standard versions of the tests may also be eligible for additional time to compensate for difficulties reading, writing, or processing. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) may need additional time for the mathematics test.

Schools should consider whether supervised rest breaks during the tests would be more beneficial to pupils than additional time (see section 4.6).

To help reduce the administrative burden on schools, the requirement to submit applications for additional time in the KS2 tests has been suspended for 2021.

To understand whether a pupil is eligible for up to 25% additional time, teachers with a good knowledge of the pupil's needs should consider the following questions:

- Is the pupil unable to read age-appropriate texts aloud and fluently, at a speed of 90 words per minute, without making errors, or with very few errors (this means less than 5 errors per 20 words)?
- Is the pupil prevented from being able to write independently at a speed of more than 10 words per minute by a physical, motor skill or learning disability?
- Does the pupil have difficulty processing information, which prevents them from being able to answer questions on practice KS2 tests, even when they refer back to the questions?
- Does the pupil have EAL and will they work independently in the mathematics test without a translation?

If you answered 'yes' to one of these questions, the pupil is eligible for up to 25% additional time, provided they will work independently in the tests. A pupil with EAL may only be given additional time for mathematics (not English reading) unless the pupil also qualifies because of difficulties reading, writing or processing.

Additional time is not cumulative. If a pupil qualifies for more than one reason, they are only allowed 25% additional time but may also be allowed the use of an aid as well as additional time. For example:

- a pupil who has difficulty reading and writing could use a scribe for writing and still qualify for 25% additional time if they are reading independently
- a pupil who has difficulty reading, writing and has processing difficulties could be provided with a reader (for mathematics only), a scribe and 25% additional time

4.2 Scribes

A scribe is a writing assistant who writes out answers dictated by the pupil during the test. Schools can provide a scribe if other options to enable the pupil to work independently are not appropriate, and the use of a scribe is normal classroom practice.

A scribe can be used when a pupil is:

- unable to use a word processor
- unable to write or has difficulty writing
- known to experience fatigue

The scribe must:

- work at the pupil's pace and not hurry them if they need time for reflection, rest or reading
- have a working knowledge of the subject
- follow the pupil's instructions precisely to draw or add to diagrams, charts, and graphs in the mathematics tests
- only make a correction on a test script if asked to do so by the pupil
- not pause for the pupil to dictate spellings of words unless the pupil usually works in this way.

If a pupil is eligible for up to 25% additional time solely because they have difficulty writing, they may be given either additional time or a scribe, but not both.

Schools may consider testing pupils who are supported with a scribe in a separate room to avoid disturbing other pupils.

4.3 Transcripts

If it may be difficult for a marker to read the pupil's writing, a transcript may be made by an adult at the end of the test before the pupil leaves the test room. Schools can transcribe all or part of a pupil's test script. If the marker can read the pupil's writing, they will mark the original work.

When transcribing a pupil's work, schools must:

- keep the pupil under test conditions and separate from the rest of the cohort until the transcript is complete
- use a different coloured pen from the pupil, but not red
- transcribe alongside the pupil's answers
- make extensive or full transcripts on a new test paper
- return the pupil's original test script with the transcript attached
- avoid changing the pupil's original answers, including the positioning of commas and decimal places in the mathematics tests

Braille test scripts should not be transcribed, as STA will make appropriate marking arrangements.

4.4 Word processors or other technical or electronic aids

Pupils must use equipment independently, preferably in a separate room, to avoid disturbing the rest of the cohort.

Schools must test the functionality of the equipment by using the KS2 practice materials. If equipment has functionality that would provide the pupil with an unfair advantage and this cannot be turned off, the pupil must not use the equipment in the test. Schools may arrange for the test to be read to the pupil or for a scribe to record the pupil's answers instead.

For the English reading test, the equipment can only be used to record pupils' answers. It must not be used to provide reading support, other than to read the general instructions on page 3 of the reading answer booklet.

The equipment must not read mathematical symbols in the mathematics test.

Schools should ensure that pupils regularly save their work. Pupils cannot restart a test, and STA will not compensate, or give special consideration, if work is lost. Any partially completed test scripts must be sent for marking.

After the test, the pupil's work should be printed and attached to their test script and returned in the bag for modified scripts. Schools should ensure that any test content is removed from the equipment.

4.5 Readers

Pupils who have difficulty reading may be supported in the mathematics test. In most cases, these pupils will have a reading age that is considerably lower than their actual age. Readers must not be used by pupils who can read the test materials themselves.

Readers must be used on a one-to-one basis. Schools may consider testing pupils who are supported with a reader in a separate room to avoid disturbing other pupils. If a pupil requests it, the reader may also read back any part of a pupil's written response to a question.

If a mathematics question is read to a pupil, the reader may read words and numbers, but not mathematical symbols. This is so that the function of a mathematical symbol is not inadvertently explained by reading its name.

Readers:

- do not need to be specialists in mathematics
- must understand the test format
- must know what may or may not be read to a pupil
- may also act as a scribe if the pupil is not writing for themselves (see section 4.2)

If a pupil is eligible for up to 25% additional time solely because they have difficulty reading, they may be given either additional time or a reader, but not both.

English reading

As the English reading test is designed to allow pupils to demonstrate reading skills and comprehension, readers may only help pupils to read the general instructions. This includes information on the front cover of the test paper and any directions that are not part of the actual questions. For example, readers may say 'Questions 1 to 15 are about The Panda Bear (pages 4 to 5)'. Readers must not read the texts, questions or any part of a pupil's response back to the pupil. Specific instructions are included in the test pack.

4.6 Rest breaks

Most pupils should be able to complete the tests without a break. However, supervised rest breaks may be appropriate for pupils who find it difficult to concentrate or experience fatigue. Rest breaks may also be beneficial to pupils using additional time or modified versions of the tests.

Schools must supervise pupils and keep them under test conditions during the rest break. There must be no contact with pupils who have taken the test and no discussion of test content.

Pupils using rest breaks should be given the same overall time as the rest of the cohort. Schools may want to split a test into sections for pupils who are known to need a rest break. If a school decides to split a test, they should:

- divide the test into sections, or plan when the pupil will have a break, during the hour before it is due to start
- keep the questions in the same order
- give the pupil an opportunity to attempt all parts of a paper, so that the outcome of the test properly reflects their knowledge and understanding

For the English reading test, schools might want to consider stopping the test for a rest break once the pupil has completed each passage of text and answered the questions related to that text.

The test must be completed on the same day that it was started. Any partially completed tests must be sent for marking.

4.7 Prompters

A pupil who is unable to focus independently, or who loses concentration easily, may be supported by a prompter. The role of the prompter is to keep the pupil's attention on the test paper but not to help them answer any questions. The prompter may tap on the desk or say the pupil's name, depending on what is normal classroom practice, to remind the pupil to focus on the question they are working on.

Prompters should:

- agree the best way to prompt the pupil before the test begins
- be known to the pupil
- be used on a one-to-one basis
- only be used to draw the pupil's attention back to the task

Prompters must not:

- do anything that could be interpreted as over-aiding the pupil
- advise the pupil which questions to answer or when to move on to the next question
- advise or guide the pupil about the order in which they should attempt the questions

If a pupil finds it difficult to focus on individual questions, schools could use adhesive notes or stickers to cover other questions on the page. In these circumstances, the whole question the pupil is working on should remain uncovered until the pupil indicates when they want to move on.

4.8 Written or oral translations of the mathematics test

STA does not provide translations of the tests, but schools can prepare written or oral translations of the mathematics test to meet individual pupil's needs. Translators should take care to ensure that any translation does not provide additional support or explanation of mathematical terms.

Pupils may write their responses in English or in their own language. If a pupil's answers are not in English, the translator should make a transcript of the pupil's answers into English after the test before the pupil leaves the test room. The pupil's original test script must be sent for marking along with the translated test script. Alternatively, pupils may answer orally, and the translator can scribe the answers in English.

Schools can prepare written translations of the mathematics test during the hour before the test is due to start. If it will take longer, schools must make an application for early opening.

Oral translations may be given by a translator at the time of the tests. Translators must work with pupils on a one-to-one basis. If several pupils require a translator but only one is available, the school should administer the test in multiple sittings or apply for a timetable variation to administer the test on a different day. Translators may want to review the test papers before the test is administered to check for any unfamiliar vocabulary.

English reading

Translations can only be made to directions or instructions that are not part of the test questions. No help may be given with reading or understanding the questions or passages of text.

4.9 Accessibility objects in the mathematics test

If a pupil is known to have difficulty accessing 2-dimensional diagrams, schools may show them real objects that look like those illustrated in the mathematics test, so they understand the context of the question. Test administrators may indicate on the test papers where real objects are available for pupils to look at. Shapes should be identical to those drawn and relative sizes should be the same.

Number apparatus, counters or number squares must not be used.

4.10 Highlighter pens

Pupils may highlight passages of text, in any of the tests, provided this is normal classroom practice. Pupils must not write their answers with a highlighter pen.

Test administrators should not:

- highlight text, unless instructed by the pupil
- draw the pupil's attention to the correct response

5 Illness or injury at the time of the tests

Schools should not administer a test to a pupil who is ill. If a pupil is in school but not fit to take the test, the school should consider applying for a [timetable variation](#)⁵ for permission to administer the test on another day. Pupils who were ill while taking a test do not qualify for special consideration.

If a pupil becomes ill during a test, the school should stop the test and make a note of the time. The pupil may be given a supervised rest break in school and can continue the test with the remaining amount of time when they are feeling better. If the pupil is not able to continue, or is sent home, the partially completed test script must be sent for marking. If the pupil leaves the school premises, they will have left test conditions and must not be allowed to continue or restart the test when they return to school.

If the pupil sustains an injury to their hand or wrist, that impacts their ability to take the tests, they may use a scribe. If the injury occurred within one week of the tests, the school may also allow up to 25% additional time because the pupil is unfamiliar working with a scribe. If the pupil is already familiar working with a scribe, additional time must not be given. The scribe must follow the guidance in section 4.2.

⁵ www.gov.uk/guidance/key-stage-2-tests-varying-the-test-timetable

6 Further information

6.1 Modified tests

Full details about which modified tests are available are included in the [KS2 ARA](#)⁶.

6.2 Help and support

For general enquiries about access arrangements, contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

For queries relating to access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can 'Message us' on the [Primary Assessment Gateway](#)⁷.

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-tests

⁷ www.primaryassessmentgateway.education.gov.uk



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