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Standards
& Testing
Agency

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Overview

If a pupil is affected by extremely distressing circumstances in test week, or the weeks immediately before, the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) may approve an application for special consideration. Longer-term incidents may also qualify for special consideration if the school can demonstrate that the incident had an impact on the pupil's performance in the test(s).

Applications are made by schools and where special consideration is awarded, an adjustment will be made to the school's performance measures. The pupil's test result is not amended.

Circumstances eligible for special consideration

Special consideration applies where there is evidence that the following situation(s) affect the pupil's performance at the time of the test(s):

- death of a family member or close friend within 12 months of the test(s)
- the pupil, or a close family member, having a diagnosed terminal illness at the time of the test(s)
- the pupil or a close family member has suffered a severe/permanent injury/illness or undergone major surgery in the 6 months before the test(s)
- a serious domestic crisis or incident occurred within 2 weeks of the start of the tests
- a longer-term major incident that occurred in the 6 months before the test(s) that is still having an impact on the pupil at time of test(s)

You must specify the reason in the application. You must also provide the dates of when the incident took place, when the circumstances began or when the latest incident occurred, as part of your application.

STA accepts whole cohort applications. However, if the reason for an application is an incident at the school, only those pupils most closely involved will usually be eligible.

Circumstances not eligible for special consideration

Special consideration does not apply when the pupil:

- is ill on a scheduled test day and not in a fit state to take the test(s). In these circumstances, schools should consider making an application for a [timetable variation](#) to administer the test(s) up to 5 school days later
- has a sudden, temporary illness. In these circumstances, the school should consider allowing the pupil a [rest break](#) (if the pupil became ill during the test) or make a notification of a [start-time variation](#) to administer the test later in the same day (if the test was not started)
- has had a minor injury, the effects of which could be dealt with by [access arrangements](#), such as allowing rest breaks and/or providing a scribe
- has a long-term illness, which prevented them from being taught the full key stage 2 (KS2) programme of study or affected their preparation for the tests
- is affected by a long-term circumstance which has prevented them from being taught the full KS2 programme of study
- is working below the standard of the tests
- has previously been educated at home or excluded from school and needs time to adjust to the national curriculum
- has recently arrived from a different education system and needs time to adjust to the national curriculum
- has a sensory or physical disability or condition which prevents them from accessing the tests, even with access arrangements or modified test materials
- has experienced the death of a close family member, or close friend, more than 12 months before the tests, unless there are ongoing proceedings such as an inquest or court case at the time of the tests
- is affected by the consequences of committing a crime

The death of a pet is not an eligible circumstance for special consideration. If a pupil is distressed about the death of a pet, schools should consider making an application for a [timetable variation](#) to administer the test(s) up to 5 school days later.

Schools should prepare for the tests using the [KS2 test administration guidance](#). Special consideration does not apply where incidents affect the preparation and administration of the test(s), for example:

- a disturbance during the test(s), such as a fire alarm going off or a pupil causing a disturbance
- the incorrect administration of a test, such as incorrect allocation of time, or errors made by the school when modifying or photocopying test papers
- failure of the school to implement previously agreed access arrangements
- failure of the school to apply for access arrangements by the relevant deadline(s)
- the school not returning test scripts on time
- difficulties during the school year that may have affected preparations for the test(s) such as disturbances caused by building work or shortages of staff

Making an application

Schools can submit applications for special consideration in the 'Access arrangements' section of [NCA tools](#) from Thursday 17 May until Friday 25 May.

This short [video](#) demonstrates how to make an application.

You must only make an application for a pupil who has taken all test papers for the subject. On the application form, you must confirm that the pupil has taken the test(s). You must select one of the following criteria and should only include details associated with the criteria under which you are applying:

- death of a close family member or close friend of the pupil
- the pupil or close family member has a diagnosed terminal illness at the time of the test(s)
- the pupil was the victim of a serious domestic crisis, trauma or incident at the time of the test(s)
- the pupil or close family member has suffered a severe/permanent illness or undergone major surgery
- the pupil was the victim of a longer-term major incident that is still impacting at the time of the test(s)

You must provide details of when any incident took place, when the circumstances began or the date of the latest incident, and how it affected the pupil. Where the reason for the application relates to a close family member, you must provide details of their relationship to the pupil. If STA asks for further information about a pupil's application, the information must be provided through the application. Do not respond by other means of correspondence.

Provision of sensitive information

Only authorised STA staff will have access to the information provided with an application. NCA tools is a secure website and STA will respond to all applications through NCA tools. Local authorities do not have access to these applications.

After submitting an application

[NCA tools](#) generates an automated email when an application is submitted, and you can check the status of an application in 'My applications' within the 'Access arrangements' section.

Some applications will be 'approved' automatically. Where an application meets all the criteria and is approved automatically, STA may still contact you to request evidence to support the information you have provided.

If your application status is 'Awaiting decision', you should regularly check the application in 'My applications' within the 'Access arrangements' section of NCA tools as STA may ask you to provide additional information. Please provide any additional information via the application form.

If STA awards special consideration, it may not apply for all subjects. You can see the outcome of your application under the 'Decisions' tab in the 'Access arrangements' section of NCA tools. STA will confirm the outcome of completed applications by Friday 29 June.

Applying special consideration to results

Schools receive their pupils' KS2 test results in [NCA tools](#) on Tuesday 10 July. Results include the total raw score achieved for each pupil, in each subject, and the corresponding scaled score.

Where special consideration is awarded, the pupil's scaled score(s) will not be adjusted, but there will be a '+' sign on the 'Pupil results' page, to show that special consideration has been granted.

The page will show what the pupil actually achieved in the test(s) and will state whether the pupil met or did not meet the expected standard. The outcome field will show 'AS' (achieved the expected standard) or 'NS' (not achieved the expected standard) based on the scaled score achieved by the pupil before special consideration has been applied.

School accountability

While applications for special consideration do not give STA sufficient information to change a pupil's scaled score itself, the Department for Education (DfE) will take into account the fact that special consideration has been granted when calculating primary school performance measures.

When calculating school performance measures, DfE will add 3 points to a pupil's scaled score for each subject where special consideration is granted. The adjusted scaled scores are used to calculate the school's performance measures. This will apply to both attainment and progress measures.

Schools can add the above points to a pupil's returned scaled score to determine the adjusted scaled score used in the performance tables. Schools should contact the DfE performance tables' team with any queries about performance tables.

STA will cap adjusted scaled scores at the maximum score available for a test. For example, if a pupil's scaled score from the test is 118, then a scaled score of 120, the maximum scaled score on the tests, will be used for calculations in the performance tables.

If a pupil does not achieve the minimum number of raw score marks needed to be awarded a scaled score, their adjusted scaled score will be set to the minimum scaled score available for the test, 80.

Reporting to parents

As STA do not report adjusted scaled scores to schools on NCA tools, schools should consider how they report test results to parents at the end of the summer term for pupils who have had special consideration applied.

Schools should consider a pupil's individual circumstances, which led to the application for special consideration, as well as how representative the test results are of the pupil's abilities. They should also use their teacher assessment judgements and any other in-school formative assessment to report the pupil's abilities and achievements to parents.

Getting help

Standards and Testing Agency

Email

assessments@education.gov.uk

National curriculum assessments helpline

0300 303 3013

For general enquiries about national curriculum tests.

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