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▼ Government activity



[Home](#) > [Education, training and skills](#) > [School curriculum](#) > [Primary curriculum, key stage 2](#) > [Tests and assessments \(key stage 2\)](#)
> [Key stage 2 tests: special consideration guidance](#)



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& Testing
Agency](#)

Guidance

Key stage 2 tests: special consideration guidance

Updated 25 April 2022

Contents

[Overview](#)

[Whole cohort applications](#)

[Evidence](#)

[Maladministration](#)

[Application reasons](#)

[Circumstances ineligible for special consideration](#)

[Specific circumstances where special consideration does not apply](#)

[Other circumstances where special consideration does not apply](#)

[Making an application](#)

[Receiving the outcome of your application](#)

[Security of sensitive information](#)

[Pupils' results](#)

[School accountability](#)

Overview

Special consideration is designed to allow schools to highlight where pupils' key stage 2 (KS2) test results may be affected by traumatic circumstances at the time of the tests. It is intended to cover a narrow range of circumstances and is for exceptional cases only.

Headteachers have a responsibility to ensure that pupils only take the KS2 tests if they:

- are in a fit physical and mental state
- are working at the standard of the tests
- have completed the full KS2 programme of study

If a pupil takes the tests and the school determines that the pupil has been affected by extremely distressing circumstances in test week, or the weeks immediately before, the school can apply for special consideration in relation to the pupil.

To reduce the risk of an application being rejected, schools should only make applications for pupils who fully match an application reason and who have been determined by the headteacher to be fit to take the tests.

Where the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) approves an application for special consideration, an adjustment will be made to the school's performance measures. The pupil's test result is not amended on their individual records. Therefore, applications for special consideration are not a benefit to the pupil.

Whole cohort applications

Applications relating to whole cohorts should only be made in exceptional circumstances. It should be noted that if the reason for an application is an incident at the school, only those pupils most closely involved will usually be eligible. Inclusion of pupils less likely to be affected by the incident increases the likelihood of the whole application being rejected.

Evidence

On the application form, schools are asked to state what documentary evidence they have to support the application. Evidence could include, but is not restricted to:

- notes recorded in the pupil's file
- a letter confirming an appointment with social services or other welfare organisations
- a hospital appointment card or dates of hospital admission
- a public record of court proceedings
- a medical letter confirming that a condition has become terminal

Schools are not required to submit evidence with the application form, but an application may be rejected if the school cannot confirm they have documentary evidence to support it.

Maladministration

Schools could be subject to a maladministration investigation if they make incorrect applications or do not hold documentary evidence to support their special consideration applications.

Application reasons

Schools may apply for special consideration where there is evidence that any of the following situations affected the pupil's performance at the time of the tests:

- reason 1—bereavement involving a family member or close friend, with whom the pupil had frequent contact, within 12 months of the tests
- reason 2—the pupil, or a close family member, is diagnosed with a terminal illness in the 6 months before the tests; or the diagnosis of a terminal illness was made more than 6 months ago but the family member is approaching end of life at the time of the tests
- reason 3—a traumatic incident, or significant change in the pupil's circumstances, occurred at the time of the tests or within the previous 2 weeks

- reason 4—the pupil, or a close family member, has suffered a life-changing injury or undergone life-changing surgery in the 6 months before the tests
- reason 5—a traumatic incident occurred in the 6 months before the tests and there was a related incident at the time of the tests or within the previous 2 weeks

When making the application, schools should take note of the examples below where special consideration would not apply.

Circumstances ineligible for special consideration

Special consideration does not apply when the pupil:

- has been affected by illness or other issues related to coronavirus (COVID-19), unless one or more of reasons 1 to 5 above apply
- is working at the standard of the tests but has been affected by absence which has prevented them from being taught the full KS2 national curriculum programme of study or reduced their preparation for the tests—this includes periods of home learning in relation to COVID-19
- is not working at the standard of the tests (including due to absence), in which case they should be assessed against the [pre-key stage 2 standards](#) or [engagement model](#)
- is not in a fit physical or mental state to take the tests—in this case, schools could use the ‘U’ code (unable to access the tests) on the test attendance registers, see section 6.2 of the [KS2 assessment and reporting arrangements \(ARA\)](#)
- has a sensory or physical disability or condition that prevents them from accessing the tests, even with the use of access arrangements or modified test materials—in this case, the ‘U’ code (unable to access the tests) on the test attendance registers may apply, see section 6.2 of the KS2 ARA
- is working below the standard of the test—in this case, the ‘B’ code (working below the standard) on the test attendance registers may apply, see section 6.2 of the KS2 ARA
- has recently arrived from a different education system—in this case, the ‘J’ code (performance cannot be established because they have just arrived in school) on the test attendance registers may apply, see section 6.2 of the KS2 ARA
- is ill on a scheduled test day and not in a fit state to take the test—in these circumstances, schools should consider making an application for a [timetable variation](#)
- has a sudden, temporary illness—in these circumstances, the school could consider allowing a rest break or administering the test later the same day
- has previously been electively home educated or spent time excluded from school—in this case, the ‘U’ code (unable to access the tests) on the test attendance registers may apply, see section 6.2 of the KS2 ARA
- has a minor injury, the effects of which could be dealt with by [KS2 access arrangements](#)
- has been involved in criminal activity, unless the pupil is a victim and one or more of reasons 1 to 5 above apply
- has ongoing issues with another pupil which are being managed within the school’s behaviour policy
- has experienced an issue relating to a pet (including the death of a pet)—schools should consider making an application for a timetable variation if a pupil is affected by this at the time of the tests

Specific circumstances where special consideration does not apply

Special consideration does not apply for reason 1 when the pupil:

- has experienced the bereavement of a 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
- has experienced the bereavement of somebody who was not a family member or a close friend
- has experienced the bereavement of somebody with whom they did not have frequent contact

Special consideration does not apply for reason 2 when the pupil:

- has a family member who was diagnosed with a terminal illness more than 6 months before the tests, unless they are now receiving end of life care
- knows someone who is not a family member who has been diagnosed with a terminal illness

Special consideration does not apply for reason 3 when the pupil:

- has experienced a traumatic incident more than two weeks before the tests

Special consideration does not apply for reason 4 when the pupil:

- underwent surgery that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life
- sustained an injury that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life
- has a family member who underwent surgery that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life
- has a family member who sustained an injury that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life

Special consideration does not apply for reason 5 when the pupil:

- is affected by a long-term circumstance but there has been no related incident or change in circumstances within 2 weeks of the tests

Other circumstances where special consideration does not apply

Schools should prepare for the tests using the [KS2 test administration guidance](#). Special consideration rules do not apply where an incident affected the preparation or administration of the test, for example:

- a disturbance during a test, 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
- any failure of the school to implement previously agreed access arrangements
- any failure of the school to apply for access arrangements by the relevant deadline
- the school not returning test scripts before the deadline
- difficulties during the school year that may have affected preparations for the tests,

such as disturbances caused by building work or periods of home learning related to COVID-19

- any incident at the time of the tests that could be managed with a timetable variation, for example flooding or damage to the school building

Making an application

Schools should read this guidance in full before making a special consideration application.

Schools can submit applications for special consideration on the [Primary Assessment Gateway](#) from Thursday 12 May. Applications will not be accepted after Friday 20 May.

To access the 'Special consideration application' form, sign into the Primary Assessment Gateway, select the 'My activity' tab, then 'Available activity'.

You should allow approximately 10 minutes to complete the form and ensure you have the following information to hand:

- pupil's name
- the tests for which special consideration is being requested
- the reason for the request, including the impact on the pupil and any relevant dates
- details of the evidence you hold to support your request

Schools must ensure that the pupil has taken all test papers relating to the subject in the application. For example, if special consideration is being applied for in relation to mathematics paper 2, the pupil must also have taken mathematics papers 1 and 3.

On the application form, you must:

- select whether the application is for the whole cohort or an individual pupil, if it is for an individual pupil, select the pupil's name from the dropdown list (you can type a pupil's name to narrow down the names that are displayed)
- use the tick boxes to select the tests for which special consideration is being requested
- read and confirm each of the statements in the 'Confirmation' section by selecting 'Yes' or 'No'
- select the reason for requesting special consideration from the dropdown list
- enter the relevant date—this may be the date of bereavement, diagnosis of terminal illness or the most recent incident
- state the relationship to the pupil if the reason for the application involves someone else (if not applicable answer N/A)
- use the text box to explain what happened to the pupil on the date specified and how the circumstances affected them at the time of the tests
- use the next text box to state what documentary evidence you hold to support the application. You are not required to submit the evidence but may be asked to provide further details later
- check your application carefully, then select 'Submit'

The Primary Assessment Gateway generates an automated confirmation email, that the application has been submitted and is awaiting a decision.

Receiving the outcome of your application

STA will not be able to provide updates on the progress of any applications after they are submitted.

Decisions will be made based only on the information given in the application form. No additional information will be accepted.

STA will confirm the outcome of completed applications by Wednesday 29 June.

If STA awards special consideration, it may not apply for all subjects.

You will be notified by email when a final decision has been made. You can then view the outcome of the application in the 'Completed activity' section of the Primary Assessment Gateway.

Select the button with the 'chain link' symbol. This will open several tiles. Select 'View' on the tile with a stack of papers to see a letter with further details of the outcome of your application.

You can save and print this letter for your records.

Security of sensitive information

Only authorised staff will have access to the information provided in an application. STA will respond to all applications on the Primary Assessment Gateway, which is a secure website. Local authorities (LAs) and other bodies, for example Ofsted, do not have access to these applications.

Pupils' results

Schools will receive their pupils' KS2 test results on the Primary Assessment Gateway on Tuesday 5 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 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 achieved in the test 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 STA does not change a pupil's scaled score, the Department for Education (DfE) will take into account that special consideration has been granted when calculating primary 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.

DfE 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 80, the minimum scaled score available for the test.

DfE has announced that school-level data from the KS2 national curriculum assessments will not be published in performance tables in 2022. DfE will still produce the normal suite of KS2 accountability measures at school level and share these securely with primary schools, academy trusts, LAs and Ofsted.

Further information is set out in the [accountability technical](#) and the [accountability arrangements for 2021/22 guidance](#).

Reporting to parents

STA will report pupils' scaled scores to schools. The scores do not reflect an adjustment for special consideration and the unadjusted scores must be reported to parents in the headteacher's annual report regarding their child. Schools can provide parents with any further context as to how representative the test results are of the pupil's abilities in this report. They can also use their observations of the pupil's work and any in-school assessments over the academic year when reporting the pupil's achievements to parents.

Getting help

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

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