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Guidance

2026 key stage 2 tests: special consideration guidance

Updated 9 March 2026

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Overview

Special consideration allows schools to highlight where pupils' key stage 2 (KS2) test results may have been affected by extremely distressing circumstances at the time of the tests.

It is intended to cover a narrow range of circumstances and is only for exceptional cases.

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

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

Applications for special consideration will be rejected where a pupil has taken the tests but was not in a fit physical and mental state, was not working at the standard of the tests or has not completed the full KS2 programme of study.

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

To reduce the risk of the application being rejected, schools should only make applications for pupils who match an [application reason](#) and where the headteacher determines they were in a fit physical and mental state to take the tests.

Where the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) approves an application for special consideration, the Department for Education (DfE) will make an adjustment to the school's performance measures. However, the pupil's test result is not amended on their individual records. As such, applications for special consideration do not benefit the pupil.

Whole cohort applications

Schools should only make applications for whole cohorts in exceptional circumstances. If the reason for the application is due to 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 that STA rejects a whole cohort application.

If you are considering making a whole cohort application, you can discuss the suitability of this with us before making the application, using the 'Message us – access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the [National Curriculum Assessments Portal \(NCA Portal\)](#). We recommend doing this before the special consideration application window opens.

Schools that submit a whole cohort application should not make any further applications, including applications for individual pupils.

Whole cohort applications must be submitted by Thursday 21 May. STA will not approve any whole cohort applications submitted after this date.

Schools that need to make whole cohort applications should submit them as early as possible during the application window. If a school submits a whole cohort application, STA will review this and contact the school within one school day of submission to advise on their application.

Evidence

On the application form, schools should state what documentary evidence they have in support of 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 within the application form. However, STA may reject an application if the school cannot confirm what documentary evidence it has to support it.

Local authorities may ask schools to provide the evidence during a monitoring visit.

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 pupil or 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

Circumstances not eligible for special consideration

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

Special consideration does not apply when the pupil:

- is working at the standard of the tests, but experienced absence which meant they were not taught the full KS2 national curriculum programme of study or reduced their preparation for the tests
- is working below the standard of the tests (including due to absence) – schools should assess them against the [pre-key stage 2 standards](#) or [engagement model](#) – in this case, the 'B' code (working below the standard) on the test attendance registers will apply
- is not in a fit physical or mental state to take the tests – in this case, the 'U' code (unable to access) on the test attendance registers will apply
- 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) on the test attendance registers will apply
- has just arrived in school and you cannot establish their performance – in this case, the 'J' code (just arrived) on the test attendance registers will apply
- has previously been electively home educated or spent time excluded from school – in this case, the 'U' code (unable to access) on the test attendance registers will apply
- 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 a minor injury, the effects of which could be supported by [KS2 access arrangements](#)
- has been involved in criminal activity, unless the pupil is a victim and one or more

of the [application reasons](#) apply

- has ongoing issues with another pupil you are managing 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

Further information on test attendance register codes is available in the [KS2 returning test scripts guidance](#).

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:

- was diagnosed with a terminal illness more than 6 months before the tests, unless they are now receiving end of life care
- has a close 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 close 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 or a significant change to their circumstances more than 2 weeks before the tests.

Special consideration does not apply for [reason 4](#) when the pupil:

- suffered an injury or underwent surgery that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life in the 6 months before the tests
- has a family member who suffered an injury or underwent surgery that did not result in a significant change to the pupil's normal way of life in the 6 months before the tests
- suffered a life changing injury or underwent life changing surgery more than 6 months before the tests
- has a family member who suffered a life changing injury or underwent life changing surgery more than 6 months before the tests
- knows someone who is not a close family member who has suffered a life changing injury or undergone life changing surgery

Special consideration does not apply for [reason 5](#) when the pupil:

- was affected by a traumatic incident in the 6 months before the tests, but there has been no related incident or change in circumstances within 2 weeks of the tests
- was affected by a traumatic incident more than 6 months before the tests

Other circumstances where special consideration does not apply

Schools should prepare for the tests using the [KS2 test administration guidance \(TAG\)](#). 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, including reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) related issues, or periods of home learning
- 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

Special consideration will not be awarded because a pupil was ill when taking a test. If the test has already started, it must be completed on the same day. If a pupil is still not well enough to complete the test later in the day, their test script must be sent for marking. If you know a pupil is ill and cannot take a test on the scheduled day, schools can make an application for a [timetable variation](#) when the pupil is back in school and in a fit physical and mental state to take any missed tests.

Special consideration will not be awarded for a test which the pupil has not taken.

Making an application

Schools can submit applications using the 'Special consideration' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the [NCA Portal](#) from Thursday 14 May.

Whole cohort applications must be submitted by Thursday 21 May.

Applications for individual pupils must be submitted by Friday 22 May.

STA will not accept any applications submitted after these deadlines.

You should allow enough time to complete the form and ensure you have the following information available:

- the pupil's name
- the administered tests for which you are requesting special consideration
- 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

Once submitted, applications for special consideration cannot be amended or deleted.

If you have already submitted an application that contains a mistake, you should contact us using the 'Message us – access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the [NCA Portal](#), providing the reference number of the application and details of the error made. STA will then reject the application on your behalf.

If the application window is still open, you can then submit a new application. If you reapply, you will need to explain why there are multiple applications if you receive a monitoring visit.

To ensure any potential mistakes are identified before the application deadline, we suggest that schools check each application form following submission. Any applications where mistakes have been made cannot be resubmitted after the deadline and an application outcome decision cannot be changed.

We suggest schools have more than one delegated member of school staff registered as an [NCA Portal](#) user. This will ensure that applications and notifications are not the sole responsibility of one individual, reducing the impact of staff absence or shortages.

Receiving the outcome of your application

STA will not be able to provide updates on the progress of applications after you submit them.

We will make a decision based on the information you provided in the application and we cannot accept additional information following the outcome.

The decision made on your application is final, and you cannot appeal the

outcome.

You will receive the outcome of your completed applications by Wednesday 24 June.

We will email you when we make our final decision, and you can then sign in to view the outcome of your application in the 'Test administration' section on the [NCA Portal](#).

You can download, save and print this outcome letter for your records.

Security of sensitive information

Only authorised staff will have access to the information provided in the application. STA will respond to all applications on the [NCA Portal](#), which is a secure website. Local authorities and other bodies, such as Ofsted, do not have access to these applications.

Pupils' results

Schools will receive their pupils' KS2 test results on the [NCA Portal](#) on Tuesday 7 July. Results include the total raw score achieved for each pupil, in each subject, and the corresponding scaled score, if all test papers for a subject were completed.

STA will not adjust the pupil's scaled score where special consideration is awarded, but there will be a '+' sign on the 'Key stage 2 test results and outcomes' page from the dashboard on the [NCA Portal](#) to show that we have granted special consideration. Special consideration does not benefit the individual pupil.

The 'Key stage 2 test results and outcomes' page from the dashboard on the [NCA Portal](#) 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 we applied special consideration.

School accountability

While STA does not change a pupil's scaled score, DfE will take into account that STA has granted special consideration when calculating primary school performance measures.

DfE will add 3 points to a pupil's scaled score for each subject where we have granted special consideration. The adjusted scaled scores are used to calculate the school's performance measures. This will apply to both KS2 attainment and progress measures. You can find more information about how DfE reports results in the performance tables within the [primary school accountability technical guide](#) or by contacting [DfE's performance tables team](#).

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 DfE will use a scaled score of 120, the maximum scaled score on the tests, for calculations in the performance tables.

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

Reporting to parents

STA will report pupils' scaled scores to schools. The scores do not reflect any adjustments for special consideration, and you must report the unadjusted scores to parents in the headteacher's annual report about the 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.

Help and support

If you have any questions about special consideration, you can contact the national curriculum assessments helpline:

National curriculum assessments helpline

Call: 0300 303 3013

Email: assessments@education.gov.uk

Online: [NCA Portal](#) 'Support'

For further advice on special consideration, schools can also contact STA directly, using the 'Message us – access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the [NCA Portal](#).

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