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Guidance

2026 optional key stage 1 modified test administration guidance: administering to pupils with a hearing impairment

Updated 9 March 2026

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This guidance will help you prepare to administer the optional key stage 1 (KS1) tests to pupils with a hearing impairment. We recommend you follow it to ensure these pupils can access the tests properly and are not at a disadvantage.

The information expands on the 'Test administration' section of the [2026 optional](#)

[KS1 tests guidance](#).

You should use this guidance together with the:

- [optional KS1 test administration guidance \(TAG\)](#)
- test administration instructions, available to download from the 'Activities' tab on the [National Curriculum Assessments Portal \(NCA Portal\)](#)

The test administration instructions include information about what you need to do before, during and after each test.

Schools may also want to use [past test materials](#) to help pupils prepare for the tests.

1. Planning for the tests

1.1 Access arrangements

If administering under test conditions, you should follow the [optional KS1 tests: access arrangements guidance](#) and the specific guidance below when administering the tests to pupils with a hearing impairment.

Making adaptations to the tests

If schools need to make adaptations to modified test papers to meet a pupil's needs, or if signers need access to the papers to prepare for the administration of the tests, we ask that you do not open modified test materials before Friday 1 May.

If schools need to make adaptations to standard test papers, you can use the downloadable versions available from the 'Download KS1 test materials' from within the 'Activities' tab on the [NCA Portal](#) from Friday 1 May.

We suggest you consider administering the tests to pupils who need specific access arrangements after the initial test administration has taken place.

Use of communicators and sign language

You may support pupils who use British Sign Language, or other sign-supported communication, in the tests if this is normal classroom practice. You will find specific guidance for each test in ['Administering the test under test conditions'](#).

1.2 Compensatory marks for spelling

Compensatory marks are available for the spelling paper of the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

They may be awarded to pupils who have a profound hearing impairment and who do not lipread or use a signing system, or can only use fingerspelling signing.

The compensatory marks for the 2026 spelling test will be available within the 'Test administration' tab under 'Access Arrangements' on the [NCA Portal](#) from Friday 1 May. Schools need to add the compensatory mark for 'Paper 1: spelling' to the raw score from 'Paper 2: questions', before converting the overall raw score to a scaled score.

2. Administering the tests under test conditions

Schools may choose to administer the optional KS1 tests under test conditions.

2.1 When to open test materials

The front of each test pack includes instructions detailing when the test materials can be opened to prepare for their administration.

2.2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test

You may only use sign language and give additional explanation as needed:

- to convey the general instructions
- where the test administration instructions advise you to read the questions to the pupil

- to read, or sign back to the pupil, any part of their response

Paper 1: spelling

You may use a communicator or sign language interpreter. If you present the spelling paper through sign language, you should not use fingerspelling.

Paper 2: questions

We suggest you use the [notes for readers in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests](#) to help you understand how to communicate particular types of questions.

2.3 English reading

You can use sign language to convey and explain the general instructions, including the information on the front cover of the test papers and any directions that are not part of the actual questions or texts. You may also sign the practice page and practice questions.

2.4 Mathematics

You can download test administration instructions for pupils with hearing impairments from the 'Activities' tab on the [NCA Portal](#) from Friday 1 May.

You may use sign language to communicate the test questions but be careful when signing numbers and mathematical symbols. This ensures pupils are not given an advantage by having the function inadvertently explained to them.

You can find guidance on using sign language for specific questions, where appropriate, in the [optional KS1 TAG](#).

Paper 2: reasoning

The test administration instructions include an optional script. This is for pupils who need extra visual support to access the 5 aural questions.

We suggest pupils use the script alongside their test booklet while you read out the questions. Pupils using the optional pupil aural script may need support so they can manage the script and test paper while you are reading aloud.

You should only use the optional script where you are confident that its use will not confuse pupils.

3. Marking

Mark schemes will be available to download from the 'Download KS1 test materials' form within the 'Activities' tab on the [NCA Portal](#) from Friday 1 May.

For general information about marking the tests, please refer to the [optional KS1 TAG](#).

You will need to use the standard mark schemes to mark test scripts completed by pupils with a hearing impairment. There are no amendments to mark schemes for pupils with a hearing impairment.

4. Help and support

General enquiries

For general enquiries about test administration at KS1, 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 queries relating to access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can use the 'Message us - access arrangements' form available within the 'Test administration' tab on the [NCA Portal](#).

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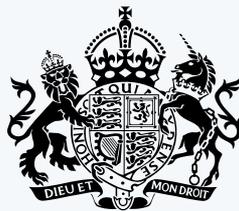
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