Standards & Testing Agency

Guidance

2027 optional key stage 1 tests access arrangements guidance

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End of key stage 1 (KS1) national curriculum tests are non-statutory. The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) continues to develop and supply guidance and materials for optional end of KS1 tests in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, English reading and mathematics.

This guidance provides information about the access arrangements which schools can consider if they choose to administer the optional end of KS1 tests. Pupils with specific needs may require additional arrangements so they can take part in the tests. Access arrangements are adjustments that schools can put in place to support those pupils.

The tests are developed using test frameworks, and are designed to be administered under test conditions to ensure their validity. As the end of KS1 tests are optional, schools can choose to administer them how they see fit, or not to use them at all. However, if schools choose to administer the optional tests under test conditions, we recommend that they follow this guidance to ensure pupils can access the tests as intended, without advantaging or disadvantaging any pupils.

1. Overview of access arrangements

We recommend that any support should be based primarily on normal classroom practice.

It may be helpful to use previous KS1 test materials with pupils to identify whether they need additional support or adaptations to the optional test materials or their administration.

We recommend that schools consider using access arrangements for pupils:

- with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- for whom provision is being made in school using the special educational needs support system
- whose learning difficulty or disability significantly affects their ability to access the tests
- who have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties

Access arrangements might also be useful to support pupils who have:

- difficulty reading

- difficulty writing
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty processing information
- 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 access arrangements could be useful to support pupils.

Schools do not need to make applications or notifications for access arrangements in the optional KS1 tests.

If any of the access arrangements are likely to disturb others in the cohort, we recommend that schools consider making arrangements for pupils to complete the test separately.

Schools can contact STA for further advice using the 'Message us – access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the National Curriculum Assessments Portal (NCA Portal).

2. Additional time

The optional KS1 tests are not strictly timed, so schools can use their professional judgement to give pupils the amount of time they feel is appropriate. This will enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding during the tests. Approximate timings for each test are given as a guide only, based on the outcomes of trials.

If schools are administering the tests under test conditions, we recommend that they consider each pupil's needs to decide whether they may need longer than the suggested timings – for example, pupils using the modified large print and braille versions of the tests may need more time to complete them than pupils using the standard versions. These pupils may also benefit from rest breaks to prevent fatigue (see Rest breaks).

3. Adaptations to test papers

STA produces modified versions of the optional KS1 tests. They are primarily designed for pupils with visual impairments, although they may be suitable for pupils with other needs as well.

Schools may also choose to make their own adaptations or preparations, such as:

- photocopying and printing test papers onto coloured paper
- enhancing diagrams
- enlarging text
- preparing a translator or signer
- preparing equipment

Schools should take care when enhancing diagrams involving measurements in the mathematics tests. If you are administering under test conditions, you should follow the test administration instructions for specific questions that could be affected.

4. Compensatory marks for spelling

Pupils with a profound hearing impairment and who do not lipread or use a signing system, or can only use fingerspelling signing, may not be able to access the spelling paper of the optional English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, even with the full range of access arrangements.

Raw scores from both English grammar, punctuation and spelling papers are needed to give an overall scaled score. If schools still wish to give a scaled score to pupils who are unable to access the spelling paper, they can award compensatory marks, which allows pupils to receive an overall test outcome for the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

The compensatory marks will be available on the NCA Portal from Tuesday 4 May. Schools should 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.

5. Scribes

A scribe is a writing assistant who writes out answers dictated by the pupil during the test. Schools can choose to provide a scribe if there are no other appropriate options to enable the pupil to work independently.

We recommend that a scribe is used when a pupil is:

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

If schools are using a scribe to support a pupil, we recommend that they:

- 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
- write precisely what the pupil instructs and only make a correction on a test script if asked to do so by the pupil

English grammar, punctuation and spelling
In 'Paper 1: spelling', we recommend that the scribe pauses for the pupil to dictate each spelling.

In 'Paper 2: questions', we recommend that the scribe pauses for the pupil to dictate their answers where correct spelling is required. This includes questions assessing:

- contracted forms
- verb forms
- plurals
- prefixes and suffixes

English reading and mathematics
There is no need for the scribe to pause for the pupil to dictate spellings of words in the English reading and mathematics tests unless the pupil usually works in this way.

6. Transcribes

Schools may wish to transcribe the pupil's answers if it will be difficult to read their writing when marking the test script. We recommend that schools do this:

- with the pupil present at the end of the test
- alongside the pupil's work, not on it
- using a different coloured pen from that used by the pupil

Pupils who cannot read their own writing could also use a word processor or scribe.

7. Word processors or other technical or electronic aids

We recommend that pupils use equipment, such as a screen reader, independently if they are taking the test under test conditions.

Schools may wish to use previous KS1 papers to test the functionality of the equipment. We recommend that schools consider whether the equipment has functionality that would give the pupil an advantage and cannot be turned off. If so, using the equipment may prevent the test from being administered under test conditions, and schools may wish to arrange for the test to be read to the pupil or for a scribe to record the pupil's answers instead.

English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics
We recommend that pupils use the following equipment, if this is normal classroom practice, provided that they only give word-for-word translations:

- bilingual dictionaries or electronic translators
- bilingual word lists
- monolingual English electronic spell checkers

We recommend that the equipment should not:

- read mathematical symbols in the mathematics test

- read punctuation in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test
- have any spell check, grammar check or predictive text functionality turned on

English reading
Word processors or other technical or electronic aids may be used to record pupils' answers in the English reading test. However, if schools are administering under test conditions, these aids should not be used to provide reading support – for example, a screen reader should not be used in the English reading test.

8. Written or oral translations

STA does not provide translations of the tests, but schools may wish to provide written, electronic, web-based or oral translations of the mathematics test to meet an individual pupil's needs.

English grammar, punctuation and spelling and English reading
We recommend that translations are only made to directions or instructions that are not part of the test questions. As these tests assess English, helping pupils with reading or understanding the questions or passages of text would compromise the validity of the test. Schools that still wish to use the optional English tests with translations should recognise that this means they will not be administered under test conditions.

Alternatively, schools may wish to use the optional pre-key stage standards to assess pupils with English as an additional language and not working at the standard of the test.

Mathematics
We recommend that translators take care to ensure that any translation does not provide additional support or explanation of mathematical terms.

Pupils may feel most comfortable writing their responses in English or in their own language. If a pupil's answers are not in English, the translator can make a transcript of the pupil's answers in English after the test. Alternatively, pupils may prefer to answer orally and the translator can scribe the answers in English.

Written translations of the mathematics tests can be made in advance of the pupil taking the test. If using modified versions of the tests, schools may find it easier to produce a translated version using the downloadable test papers on the NCA Portal,

available during May.

Alternatively, translators could provide oral translations at the time of the tests.

Translators may want to review the test papers before the test is administered, to check for any unfamiliar vocabulary.

9. Readers

Pupils who have difficulty reading may be supported in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics tests by having a reading assistant read the text or question to them. In most cases, these pupils will have a reading age that is considerably lower than their actual age. We would not recommend using readers for pupils who can read the test materials themselves.

Although it may be easier to use readers on a one-to-one basis, test administrators may choose to read the optional KS1 English grammar, punctuation and spelling or mathematics test questions aloud to small groups of pupils. We recommend that test administrators consider the individual needs of the pupils to ensure they are not disadvantaged by the pace at which any text is read. If a pupil requests it, it could be helpful for the reader to read back part of a pupil's written response to a question.

Readers do not need to be specialists in the subject being tested, but we recommend that they:

- understand the test format
- are familiar with the recommended guidance for each test
- understand any subject-specific issues that might occur

Schools may also wish for the reader to act as a scribe if the pupil is not writing for themselves (see Scribes).

English grammar, punctuation and spelling
The notes for readers in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests give examples of how particular types of questions may be read aloud to a pupil. We recommend following this guidance if you wish to administer the optional tests under test conditions.

English reading

As the English reading test is designed to allow pupils to demonstrate reading skills and comprehension, we recommend that readers 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 test questions. Specific instructions are included in the test pack.

Reading the full paper would invalidate the test, given that its purpose is to assess attainment in reading.

Mathematics
A reader may help a pupil to read the mathematics tests. We recommend that they:

- clarify instructions, but do not give additional information that could give the pupil an advantage
- read, but do not clarify, subject-specific vocabulary

We recommend only reading words and numbers, but not mathematical symbols. This is so the function of a mathematical symbol is not inadvertently explained by reading its name.

The ‘Test administration instructions’ provided with the test materials will include further instructions, as appropriate, if there are certain questions that involve more specific recommended guidance about what to read.

10. Rest breaks

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

11. Keeping pupils focussed (prompter)

A pupil who is unable to focus independently, or who loses concentration easily, can be supported by someone known to them who can keep them on task. We recommend that they keep the pupil’s attention on the test paper but not help them

answer any questions.

To help pupils stay focussed, we recommend that you agree the best way to focus the pupil before the test begins – this includes ways to draw the pupil's attention back to the task.

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, we recommend that the whole question the pupil is working on remains uncovered until the pupil indicates when they want to move on.

12. Accessibility objects in the mathematics tests

If a pupil is known to have difficulty accessing two-dimensional diagrams, schools may find it helpful to show them real objects that look like those illustrated in the mathematics tests, so they understand the context of the question.

The tests are designed to assess what a pupil can do without the aid of number apparatus. If schools are administering under test conditions, number apparatus, counters or number squares should not be used.

We recommend that schools do not explain any subject-specific terminology. If any context or words related to a question are unfamiliar to a pupil, you could show them related objects or pictures, or describe the context. Test administrators should indicate on the test papers where real objects are available for pupils to look at.

13. Help and support

For general questions about access arrangements, 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 enquiries relating to KS1 access arrangements to meet a pupil's specific needs, schools can use the 'Message us – access arrangements' form within the 'Test administration' tab on the NCA Portal.

You can find full details of which modified tests are available in the optional KS1 tests guidance.

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