

EDUCATION — NI CURRICULUM · P7

Tástáil Aistriúcháin 11+ — The Transfer Test

A Guide for P7 Teachers & Parents

What the 11+ transfer test is

1

The transfer test

An optional academic selection test taken in autumn of P7 (aged 10-11) to determine eligibility for grammar schools in Northern Ireland. Not compulsory — approximately 40% of P7 pupils sit it.

2

AQE (Association for Quality Education)

One of two providers of the transfer test. Multiple-choice format, three papers: English comprehension, maths, and verbal/non-verbal reasoning. Taken in November.

Example: Covers years 4-6 (P5-P7) curriculum content

3

GL Assessment (PPTC)

The other transfer test provider. Similar format. Taken in October. Many pupils sit both AQE and GL to maximise grammar school options.

4

Grammar schools

Academically selective state secondary schools. NI retained grammar schools when they were abolished elsewhere in the UK. There are 67 grammar schools in Northern Ireland.

5

Secondary schools (non-selective)

Non-selective secondary schools — high schools and colleges. The majority of NI pupils attend these. They offer the same qualifications (GCSE, A Level) as grammar schools.

6

Coached vs uncoached

Private tutoring for the 11+ is widespread. This creates inequity — children whose parents can afford tuition have a significant advantage. The test is controversial partly for this reason.



P7 teacher's role

What teachers do — and don't do — a

- **TEACH THE CURRICULUM:** P7 teachers teach the NI Curriculum, not the 11+ test. The test tests curriculum content — good curriculum teaching is the best preparation.
- **PASTORAL CARE:** the 11+ can be stressful for children — and for parents. P7 teachers often find themselves managing significant parent anxiety alongside curriculum delivery.
- **FAIRNESS:** all children in P7 deserve equal access to good teaching, regardless of whether they are sitting the transfer test.
- **NO RANKING:** schools do not officially rank or rank pupils by transfer test likelihood. Teachers should not label children as 'grammar school material' or otherwise.
- **RESULTS:** results come in January (AQE) and December (GL). The period between sitting the test and receiving results can be anxious. Teachers can be a calming presence.
- **BOTH PATHS:** good teachers acknowledge that grammar school and non-selective secondary both lead to good outcomes. Many pupils thrive at non-selective schools.
- **PARENTAL COMMUNICATION:** some parents pressure teachers for predictions. The appropriate response: 'I can't predict the outcome of a test, but I'm committed to ensuring [child] is as well-prepared as possible.'

