Guidelines for applying for access arrangements for children taking the Buckinghamshire Secondary Transfer Test (updated March 2026)

1. Important notes for all headteachers

- Access arrangements are adjustments designed to support children with particular needs so that they can access the Secondary Transfer Test. The adjustments requested should be part of a child's normal way of working at school. **The Special Access Panel is unlikely to agree to a request for an adjustment if it does not already form part of a child's normal way of working.**

- The Secondary Transfer Test is not compulsory. Before applying for adjustments to the test you should discuss with parents whether a grammar school would be suitable for the child and whether they should seek grammar school entry.

- If you go on to apply for adjustments for a child, the information you provide on the form is essential as it enables the Panel to build an accurate picture of the child's day-to-day needs and functioning. Without this information, the Panel will not be able to fully consider the application, and adjustments are likely to be refused.

- If a child has a disability, by law they are entitled to reasonable adjustments being made for them. Please read the Appendix at the end of this document for full details of what this entails.

- It is appropriate for adjustments to be applied for children who have a SEND status of 'Universal provision', for example where the child is visually impaired or diabetic.

- When considering making applications for additional time, please consider whether a movement or rest break would be more suitable for the child than lengthening the test time.

- Breaks are likely to be a more suitable adjustment than extra time for children who have anxiety or attention difficulties. Breaks are also likely to better address the needs of neurodivergent children, such as those with ADHD or ASD as well as children with medical conditions or mental health needs.

- Professional reports should be included where available. Where a report has not been obtained, or is historic (over 12months old), please supplement with relevant in-school test scores (such as reading and spelling age etc) if possible. Please do not delay applying whilst waiting for formal assessments as this will not be considered as a reason for late applications.

- Given that the Secondary Transfer Test is a multiple-choice assessment, not all adjustments requested linked to normal ways of working may be appropriate, e.g. extra time usually given for tests requiring written answers.

- In the interests of consistency, the panel, may offer an adjustment that is a frequent normal way of working for other children with the same needs. These suggestions are optional as the normal way of working may be more comfortable to the child. Where this is the case, please make sure parents are kept informed of the adjustments planned.

- When granted, many adjustments will require children to be tested separately from their classmates. This may also mean they need to be tested at a different time or date. Where this is likely to be the case, please make sure parents are kept informed.

- In a small number of cases, where children cannot access the test, alternative assessment arrangements can be considered (e.g. for visually impaired children) – please see section 4. When this is needed, headteachers should complete the supplementary disapplication form as well as the access arrangements application form.

2. Process and deadline

Buckinghamshire LA and Partner schools can access the link to the application form on SchoolsWeb; out of county Headteachers should request the form by contacting us if they have not already been sent it via the parent's request when completing test registration.

Please avoid uploading password-protected documents as these create difficulties when processing submissions. If this is not possible, please email the document to specialaccess@buckinghamshire.gov.uk including the child's name, date of birth and provide the password in a separate email.

The Secondary Transfer Test Registration/withdrawal deadline is 2 June 2026 for all pupils.

The deadline for applications for adjustments is 2 June 2026 for LA and Partner schools and 16 June where the child must register and attends an out-county school. We really would appreciate applications being received in advance of this deadline if possible so that we can maximise the use of the time we have available in the earlier panel meetings.

You should not delay submitting an application because a child is awaiting an assessment. This will not be accepted as grounds for a late application. The form should cover the support already in place in school.

For applications received by 2 June, outcomes will be issued by 22 July 2026 wherever possible.

Any special access requests received after the deadline will not be considered unless there are exceptional reasons. If accepted, the SAP decision will be notified as soon as possible but may mean that testing cannot be undertake on the main test dates.

To assist you with administering the test a further document entitled 'Administering Access Arrangements Guide,' is available on SchoolsWeb and will be provided when we advise schools about agreed adjustments and/or supply any set of test papers for a specific child that has agreed adjustments.

Out of county Headteachers only - If you have indicated that you will be able to test the child at your school if the child's adjustments are agreed, we will send their test papers to you in early September. You can then administer the test either on the main test dates (8 and 10 September 2026) or as soon as possible/convenient after that. Once testing is complete, you will need to return all the test materials to the Admissions Team at Buckinghamshire Council using the pre-paid and pre-addressed tamper proof postage bag provided to you (which is tracked). Being tested at their own school is preferable for all children and your support in doing this is greatly appreciated.

3. Possible adjustments available for the Secondary Transfer Test

Note: JCQ and STA regulations have been referred to when updating this guidance, however whilst the Buckinghamshire Secondary Transfer Test (STT) is aligned to national testing where appropriate, access arrangements for the STT may not always match what is available for other tests and examinations, including other 11+ tests.

Adjustment	What can be done	Appropriate for	Expected evidence	Other considerations
Extra time	Extra time may be offered for individual sections or for all of the STT, depending on need. 10% will be the usual amount of extra time granted (subject to appropriate evidence). Very exceptionally, 25% extra time may be agreed (subject to appropriate evidence). CDs and MP3 audio files for children granted extra time will be supplied for testing.	Children with significant physical, motor or vision difficulties. Children with severe dyspraxia or dyslexia. Children who require extra time to check their work.	Reading ability and speed should be provided. Any standardised test scores will be considered in conjunction with other information about the child. Scores clustered around the low average range (around 85) normally indicate 10% extra time being awarded. The panel would expect to see scores skewed towards the low/very low range, e.g. around 60-70, to consider the maximum amount of extra time of 25%. There should be clear professional advice supporting any request for extra time. Schools should consider whether rest or movement breaks would be a more appropriate adjustment than extra time to sit the test.	If agreed with other adjustments, the child is likely to need to be tested separately and may need to be tested on a date later than the main test dates. Extra time will not be allowed if a child's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being their first language

Adjustment	What can be done	Appropriate for	Expected evidence	Other considerations
Separate testing *	Child is tested separately, in a quiet environment, that reflects the child's usual way of working in tests. More than one child could be tested together if their needs align	*Children offered other adjustments that would potentially disturb the rest of the testing cohort. Also: Children with attention difficulties. Children with particularly high levels of anxiety. Children with a verbal or physical tic. Children with a formal diagnosis of misophonia	Clear evidence of need. Often offered with other specific adjustments – rest breaks, use of a prompter, scribe or reader, for example.	If agreed, the child may need to be tested on a date later than the main test dates. This may be required where extra time and breaks are agreed but two (or more) children could be tested together if their needs align. Sometimes two children with identical adjustments can be tested together if their needs align. **If this is the only adjustment, see below.**
Rest break(s) or movement breaks during the test **	Supervised rest or movement breaks during the test achieved by pausing the audio file between sections or providing verbal invigilation. Frequency to be determined by the SENDco or class teacher based on the child's normal way of working but likely to be no more than 1 or 2 per paper and no more than 5 minutes in length. Suggested rest/movement patterns that can be used are included in the Administering Access Arrangements Guide, available on SchoolsWeb will be provided when we advise schools about agreed adjustments and/or supply any set of test papers for a specific child that has agreed adjustments. All rest breaks to be pre-planned before the test takes place. During rest or movement breaks, the child must not have access to the question booklet or answer sheet. The child should be accompanied if they leave the test room.	Children with physical, motor or vision difficulties that cause fatigue. Children with conditions which impair concentration. Children with social, mental health and emotional needs. Children with Type 1 diabetes. ** Children with severe attention difficulties or who find it difficult to sit still in class and need to move.	Evidence to confirm child regularly needs breaks during class tests.	If agreed, the child would need to be tested separately and may need to be tested on a date later than the main test dates. **If this is the only adjustment, see below.** **Where the child is not tested in their primary school then rest breaks will normally follow a standard pattern and will be set out in your decision letter.**

Adjustment	What can be done	Appropriate for	Expected evidence	Other considerations
Prompter	The role of a prompter is to keep the pupil on task, e.g. they may tap on the desk (or the pupil's arm) or say the pupil's name or remind the pupil to focus on the question they are working on. Prompters **may not** read the questions or help the pupil answer them.	Children with severe attention difficulties or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, where a child may keep reviewing a question and not move on.	Evidence to confirm regular use of a prompter in the classroom.	If agreed, the child would need to be tested separately and may need to be tested on a date later than the main test dates.
Enlarged question booklet	A standard enlargement for all question types can be provided in line with RNIB recommendations. The booklets are enlarged by 122% meaning the text is slightly larger than 14pt. Cream paper versions can also be provided. Practice Test papers are also available in this format. Provision of a suitable work area (with suitable lighting) in which to take the test as the booklets will be B4. In all cases, where an enlarged version is used, the child should draw a ring around their preferred answers **in the question booklet** and then school staff should transfer the answers to the standard over-printed answer sheet	Children with a vision impairment, dyslexia, dexterity difficulties.	Support of VI teacher.	The enlarged booklet and transcribed answer sheet should both be sent for marking. If the school is unable to transcribe answers, contact the Admissions Team for alternative arrangements to be made. Answer sheets must not be enlarged. If a larger font than 14pt is generally required by a child, then a VI specialist teacher needs to evaluate and advise whether the test can be sat in whole or in part or whether the child should be disapplied from all or part of the test. (Where a child is disapplied from part of the test see Sections 4 and 5.)

Adjustment	What can be done	Appropriate for	Expected evidence	Other considerations
Scribe	A scribe is an adult (usually the child's LSA) who completes the answer sheet on the child's behalf and at their direction.	Children with severe motor or vision difficulties who are unable to complete standard answer sheets or to mark answers in the question booklet.	Evidence to confirm regular use of a scribe in the classroom.	Child would need to be tested separately and may be tested on a different date to the main test dates. Child may alternatively require enlarged test materials – see above – and/or write their answers in the question booklet.
Reader/Reading pen	A reader is an adult who can read the test instructions to a child. They can also read out test questions **except for** in the comprehension section of the English part of the test where both the text and the questions should be read by the child only. Readers must read questions to a child exactly as written; they must not amend question wording. A reading pen can be used to read out test instructions and test questions **except for** in the comprehension section of the English part of the test where both the text and the questions should be read by the child only.	Children with reading difficulties which might affect access to the test.	Evidence to confirm regular use of a reader/reading pen in the classroom.	If agreed, the child would need to be tested separately and may need to be tested on a date later than the main test dates.
Coloured overlay/filter lenses* **	Overlays and lenses used in class can be used during the test	Children with dyslexia or those with vision impairments.	Confirmation of usage in class.	Provision of a suitable work area in which to take the test. Suitable lighting. **If it is the only adjustment see below.**
Verbal invigilation	All test centres are provided with transcripts of the test instructions given in the audio files. For verbal invigilation, the invigilator reads out the instructions from the transcript to the pupil.	This may be appropriate for pupils with a hearing impairment or particular needs. It can also be requested if verbal invigilation would be preferable for a child needing multiple breaks in the test.		If verbal invigilation is agreed, the timings in the transcript must be strictly followed.

Adjustment	What can be done	Appropriate for	Expected evidence	Other considerations
Other	Requests for other reasonable adjustments will be considered in the light of the evidence provided.	Children who use reading pens in class Children who use British Sign Language	Appropriate evidence will be necessary.	

* Where the only adjustment required is for a child to be tested separately, Buckinghamshire LA and Partner schools can facilitate this without making an application for adjustments. Please note the details on the Invigilator's Record Form.

** Where a child with Type 1 diabetes attends a Buckinghamshire LA or Partner school, they can be tested separately and have breaks to rest/check levels/eat or drink etc (during which the test is paused until the child is completely ready to resume) without the need for an application for adjustments to be made. Please note the details on the Invigilator's Record Form. If the child has any additional needs that might require other adjustments, an application will need to be made.

*** Where the only adjustment required is for a child to be allowed to use an overlay then Buckinghamshire LA and Partner schools can facilitate this without making an application for adjustments. Please note the details on the Invigilator's Record Form.

4. Arrangements for children with a vision impairment

Children able to access 12pt or 14pt text

If a child with a vision impairment is able to access 12pt text (standard question booklet) or 14pt text (enlarged question booklet), they will be able to sit both test papers in full. In this case extra time will be given and they will be tested outside of the main test room. Enlarged answer sheets cannot be provided so if children use the enlarged 14pt version of the question booklets they will need to write answers in the question booklets instead and their answers will need to be transcribed on to their answer sheets for them.

If, due to their particular vision impairment, a child is unable to access the non-verbal reasoning section of the test, this will be taken into account when the child's results are standardised.

Children requiring text sizes larger than 14pt

If a child's vision impairment is such that they require an enlargement **in excess of** font size 14pt, they will be unable to access the test. Instead, the child's school placement will be considered during their Phase Transfer Review meeting in the Summer term of Y5, and an application to be 'disapplied' from the Secondary Transfer Test can be considered.

5. Disapplication

If the nature of a child's needs means that they will not be able to access the test due to the test design, then an application can be made for the child to be 'disapplied' from testing and for their suitability for grammar school to be determined by other evidence. Where a child can access the verbal and mathematics parts of the test but not the non-verbal section, disapplication from the non-verbal section only can be applied for.

In general children requiring disapplication are likely to be supported by the VI support specialist teachers. Some may also have an EHCP. If they have an EHCP then a Phase Transfer Review meeting in the summer term of Y5 will be scheduled, if not the VI support team can provide advice about the enlargements needed by the child and whether the test is available in an appropriate font size. As part of this process consideration will be given to which secondary schools should be approached. The primary school headteacher and educational professionals who know the child may wish to consider if application should be made to grammar schools as well as for upper school/comprehensive school or special school destinations.

For consideration for grammar school entry, in the absence of a Secondary Transfer Test Score other evidence of academic ability will need to be gathered and considered (e.g. teacher assessments). Specialist teachers supporting the child will normally provide a report. Other nationally standardised academic evidence may be used to support the application or, if this is not available, an Educational Psychologist may be asked to undertake some standardised testing with the child to establish some known academic benchmarks.

If a grammar school is to be included and the pupil cannot access the test, then an application to disapply the child from Secondary Transfer Testing should be made by the headteacher. To do this, the Request for Access Arrangements form and the Supplementary Form for Disapplication should both be completed and returned to the Admissions and Transport Team as soon as possible. The headteacher should complete the forms once a consensus has been reached by the professionals supporting the child. At this stage it is not necessary for a particular grammar school to be named.

Disapplication applications will be reviewed during the Autumn term. If the decision is that a grammar is appropriate for a child, then they will be deemed qualified and a grammar school can then be named as the allocated school in February. If the decision is that in principle it is not appropriate for a grammar school to be named, the child will be deemed not qualified and a parent may request a review of that decision by the Selection Review Panel.

Appendix 1: The Legal Framework, Reasonable Adjustment Duty and relevant definitions

The Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 ("the Act"), places a duty upon Local Authorities ("LA"), academies and schools not to discriminate against disabled people or pupils in their access to education. The relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010 replace the relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 that previously applied.

Discrimination may occur by:

- A person treating a disabled pupil or prospective pupil less favourably than it treats or would treat others because of that pupil's disability; or
- A person treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of the disabled person's disability where the treatment in question is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim
- A person applying to a disabled person a provision, criterion or practice which it also applies to persons who do not share that disability, but which puts the disabled person at a particular disadvantage, unless that is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim
- Failing to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils or prospective pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with their non-disabled peers. This is known as the 'reasonable adjustments' duty.

Three aspects of admissions are covered by the duty:

- In the admission arrangements and rules (and the operation of these rules);
- In the terms of any offer of a place;
- By refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for admission to a school by virtue of that person's disability.

Note that the Equality Act 2010 expressly provides that a person does NOT discriminate, so far as relating to disability, only by applying a permitted form of selection. Selection for admission for a grammar school education by way of academic testing is an example of a permitted form of selection under section 28B of the Act and is therefore in accordance with the Education Act 1996 and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

However, the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils applies to a permitted form of selection. This may include making reasonable adjustments to the assessment process.

The duty on schools (and in the matter of the Secondary Transfer Testing process only, the LA on behalf of The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools (TBGS)) is to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory.

The Reasonable Adjustment Duty

The LA and schools, including academies, are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled pupils.

There are potentially two exceptions to this requirement - the provision of auxiliary aids and services and the removal or alteration of a physical feature.

The legislation is constructed in this way because the Children and Families Act 2014 makes provision to meet the educational and health needs of disabled children, if the disability inhibits learning; and the LA and schools are required to plan over time to increase the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils, including making changes to the physical environment of schools. They are not required to make physical adaptations that would incur unreasonable costs and would affect the provision of education for other pupils.

Dyslexia definition

For the purpose of the Buckinghamshire Secondary Transfer Test the following definition of Dyslexia (taken from the Rose Review, 2009) is used:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across a range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.

Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.