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2020 testing – Coronavirus update

- At this time we do not have final details of any necessary changes to the test processes
- The following PowerPoint explains the normal processes that we would try to keep to where possible
- We have indicated in **red** where we expect them to change due to a decision by the grammar schools to delay testing until later in the autumn term
- We hope these changes will be agreed by the DfE
- Any further changes to the process due to Covid-19 requirements will be updated regularly on the TBGS website <https://www.thebucksgrammarschools.org/>

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Included in this presentation

- The application and offer processes (Slides 4-17)
(when to apply, how to apply, things to consider when applying, how the process works, National Offer Day, waiting lists and Appeals)
- The Secondary Transfer Test (Slides 18-37)
(Timeline, test dates, what the test measures, familiarisation and practice, the testing process, how it is marked, Selection Review and Non-qualified appeals)
- More information
- How to Contact us

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The application and offer processes

Timelines, preferences and offers

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Key message!

Apply on time:
by 3pm on 31 October
– the deadline

This is not going to change!

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Applying on time is one of the most important things a parent can do for their child.

Late applications are some of the saddest cases the Admissions Team deal with as there is nothing that can be done within the rules to resolve the issue if an application is late.

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How to apply for a school place online

- If you live in Buckinghamshire, visit www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/admissions between 10 September and 31 October 2020
- If you live elsewhere apply via your own LA's website
- All you need is an email address

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Applying online is easy

- You can apply on your phone or PC
- Make a note of which email account you used and your password!
- Use an email address that you know you can access even if not in work
- You will be reminded if an application has not been submitted
- You can accept the place online
- You will see the outcome of all school preferences

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You can make the application at home or at a library or at work.

Top tip: make a point of remembering which email address you used and recording your password and your secret question information so you can re-set it if necessary. Also, use an email address you will have access to on 1 March 2021.

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Making an application

When you apply online you can:

- List up to 6 schools
- Include grammar, upper, all-ability and out of county schools
- Put the schools in the order you prefer them

Consider:

- The order of your preferences carefully
- Including local (catchment) school(s) that you have a good chance of being offered

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This year, because the transfer test has been delayed you will not know the outcome of the Secondary Transfer Test before submitting your preferences by the deadline of 3pm on 31 October.

If your child has sat the test then you will want to include both upper and grammar schools so that all possibilities are covered. You have the option to list up to 6 schools.

If your child has not taken the test or you do not expect them to be qualified for entry to a grammar school then you do not need to include grammar school preferences.

No new preferences can be added for the second round so make sure you include all the schools you want your child to be considered for in the first two rounds when you make your application.

Make your application by the deadline!

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Expressing preferences before the test results are known

If (as we expect) the testing is delayed to November

- You will need to express your preferences by 31 October before knowing the outcome of the test
- If you would prefer a grammar school if your child qualifies then list them above your upper school or out-area school preferences
- You will be able to list up to 6 preferences if you live in Buckinghamshire
- Most people did not use all their 6 options previously so we expect 6 preferences to be enough for most people

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Put all the schools in the order you prefer them and if you would prefer a grammar school if your child qualifies then put the grammar schools above the other schools on your list. When you apply to schools and they are making their decision about the rank order of children in which they will offer the places, this will be according to the rules set out in their published admissions policy.

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Think about...

- Does your child need to sit or pass a test to be considered for a place at the school?
- Do you know where your child fits on the school's admission rules?
- Do you need to complete a supplementary form?
- Do you live in-catchment? (Check this on the Buckinghamshire Council website)

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For example - The Highcrest Academy's banding test – parents in the Wycombe area need to be aware of their rules.

All schools give priority to children who are looked after or who are now adopted but prior to being adopted were looked after. If this applies to you - check the small print and include details with your application!

Some schools give priority to pupils in receipt of Free School Meals or those entitled to Pupil Premium.

Many schools give priority if your child has an older sibling attending the school already (but some don't!).

Some schools require you to complete a supplementary form to provide extra information to help them apply their admission rules – check the school's website as well as the Council's website.

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How will your child get to school?

Transport is given to the **nearest** secondary school if:

- Over three miles away, or
- Under three miles but the route is an 'unsafe walking route'
- Check on www.buckscc.gov.uk/findaschoolplace to find your nearest school for transport purposes
- All secondary schools are treated equally (grammar/upper/comprehensive/free)
- Paid-for bus tickets can be purchased

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It is difficult to summarise this in one slide, parents should read the School Transport Policy and Guidance on the website at:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/school-transport-policies/>

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/2314/school-transport-policy-and-guidance.pdf> (pdf of transport guidance)

On the website there is a Nearest School Transport Checker which will give routed home to school distances :

www.buckscc.gov.uk/findaschoolplace

If you qualify for grammar school and attend your nearest grammar school you will only be assisted with transport if there is no nearer upper school.

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The offer process – Step 1

- Local authorities share offer information with each other
- Each school preference is treated separately
- Schools are not told where they are placed on the preference list by the parent
- All admission authorities apply their admission rules to the children with a preference for their school and sort the children into 'ranked order'
- The schools tell the ranked order to their council

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The offer process – Step 2

- Grammar school preferences will only be offered to qualified pupils (by scoring 121 or due to successful Selection Review)
- Where a child can be offered more than one school place - the higher ranked preference school is offered
- The lower preference school is declined
- The vacant place created is offered to another child
- Children who cannot be offered any of their preferences are then offered a place at the nearest school with vacant places remaining

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Each year some children are not offered any of their preferred schools and are offered a school place that was not on their list.

This happens because parents:

- do not include their nearest or most local school or their catchment school amongst their preferences – these are the schools they have most chance of getting so leaving the nearest and/or catchment school out raises the risk of not being offered a local school
- only give one preference, even if you live really close to a school or have a sibling already there, still include other local schools that will be acceptable to you as lower preferences, this reduces the risk of not being offered a local school.

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Offer Day – 1 March 2021

Online applicants

- Offer emails sent 1 March
- Can log on and accept the school place online

Postal applicants

- Offer letters emailed or posted 1 March

All applicants

- Automatically added to waiting list for higher preferences that could not be offered but for which the child is qualified
- Can register an appeal
- You will have 14 days to accept the offer.

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All children are automatically added to the waiting lists for those higher preference schools where a place could not be offered that they are qualified to attend.

The National Offer Day school offers are the first of a number of 'rounds' of allocations and we manage the rest of the allocation by grouping offers together in rounds.

No new preferences can be added for the second round so make sure you include all the schools you want your child to be considered for in the first two rounds when you make your application.

New preferences can be added for the third and following rounds. We hold allocation rounds until July after

which any further allocations are made as and when places become available.

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After Offer Day

- You can appeal for any school you have been refused
- This includes where your preference is a grammar school and your child has not qualified
- We will automatically add your child to the waiting list for any school on your application above the school we have offered

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You can appeal for a place at any school that you have been refused. This includes grammar schools when your child has not qualified. In all appeals, you will need to make a case for why your child should be offered a place above the school's admission number (the number of places available in Year 7).

More information follows on slides 35 and 36 about grammar school appeals for non-qualified children.

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About appeals

- Appeals are heard by a panel of three people
- Panel members are independent and unpaid volunteers who have no connection with the school or the LA
- You can put your case in person but it can also be held in your absence if you prefer
- During the pandemic all appeals in Buckinghamshire are being held in writing only in line with government advice but this arrangement is due to end at the end of the year

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The Panel is made up of three panel members plus a clerk who will record the appeal and decision. The Panel members will not be connected to the school involved in the appeal or with the decision not to offer your child a place.

You usually need to attend the appeal hearing and put your case in person, although it can be held in your absence.

During the pandemic all appeals in Buckinghamshire are being held in writing only in line with government

advice which will cease currently at the end of 2020.

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Application summary

- Apply by **3pm** on 31 October 2020
- Apply online at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk or on your home LA's website
- List schools in true preference order including grammar and upper schools if your child is sitting the test
- Consider including your catchment/local/nearest school
- Be realistic, understand the rules
- Consider transport arrangements
- Visit the schools (if you are permitted)
- Don't rely on the opinions of others

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The
Buckinghamshire
Grammar
Schools

The Secondary Transfer Test

This year these arrangements are expected to be different than previous years due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.



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The Secondary Transfer Test

- The Secondary Transfer Test is a test to determine whether or not a child is suited to a grammar school.
- The test is produced by GL Assessment
- Buckinghamshire Council undertakes the administration on behalf of the 13 grammar schools

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Planned testing timeline

What	When
• Familiarisation booklet	• By end of summer term
• Application deadline	• 31 October 2020 – 3pm
• Practice Test and Secondary Transfer Test Window	• From 27 October to 5 November inclusive
• Results published	• 30 November 2020
• School place offers	• 1 March 2021
• Start secondary school	• September 2021

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Out of county testing will take place on either Tues and Thurs or Wed and Fri of half term week at the grammar schools. There is flexibility for primary schools to test on 2 and 4 Nov and/or 3 and 5 Nov.

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Why are the dates changing?

- The delay of half a term gives children time to settle back into school
- Test arrangements will need to take account of any social distancing and hygiene measures in place at the time which will mean testing in smaller groups. Children will sit the test at different times
- The aim is for children to still sit the practice test two days before the Transfer Test
- Testing will take place on multiple dates but you will be notified of these in advance
- Out of county testing will take place in half term to reduce the numbers of pupils on site and to keep children safe

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There is more information about this in the news and FAQ section of the TBGS website.

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Do all children have to sit the Secondary Transfer Test?

- No, only if parents want their child to sit the test
- A grammar school will not suit every child so think carefully about whether sitting the test is going to be a positive experience for your child
- Your child's headteacher will ask you if you want your child to sit the test so they can make sensible arrangements for the testing sessions

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The Secondary Transfer Test is not compulsory.

Think about your child's attainment in school to date. The national expectation for a child in Year 6 is to achieve a standardised score of 100 in the National Tests. Most children starting at grammar school in 2021 will have qualified in the Secondary Transfer Test and are likely to have gained a score of at least 100 in the National Tests.

If a grammar school is not something you would expect your child to attend then you can discuss this with your child's headteacher and agree if it is not appropriate for your child to take part in the Secondary Transfer Test.

If your child has Special Educational Needs and they are to sit the test then there is more information available later about what you may do if adjustments to the test are required.

Headteachers are asked to provide a recommendation about the suitability of children for grammar school before the outcomes of the test are known.

There are three levels of recommendation:

1. Exceptionally able so very highly recommended
2. Very able so recommended without any reservation
3. Recommended with reservation (the headteacher must be prepared to say what that reservation is based on)

There is a 4th 'recommendation' - 'not recommended for grammar school'.

and three levels of attitude to work:

1. Enjoys challenge and is a highly motivated independent learner.
2. Consistently hardworking and reliable.
3. Output varies.

There is a 4th level – ‘Lacks self organisation, requires support’.

These are combined together to make the overall recommendation (e.g. 2:1 = Very able so recommended without any reservation: Enjoys challenge and is a highly motivated independent learner)

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What does the Secondary Transfer Test measure?

Verbal skills

- includes English and verbal reasoning

Mathematical skills

- includes various areas of mathematics

Non-verbal skills

- includes non-verbal and spatial reasoning

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Familiarisation booklet

- Explains what the questions, test papers and answer sheets will look like and how the answer sheets should be completed
- Includes example questions with answers

It will not be looked at in school

GL Assessment provide free familiarisation on their website: <https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/free-familiarisation>

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A copy of the Familiarisation booklet will be sent to the home address of all children attending a Buckinghamshire primary school or Partner school from 9 July. A pdf of the booklet will be available to download for out of county children.

It will not be looked at in school.

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On the test days

- Two papers with a 15 min break between
- Each paper approximately an hour including instructions (practice shorter)
- CD/MP3 gives worked examples and test instructions
- Paper A – Verbal Skills – taken first
- Paper B – Mathematical and Non-Verbal Skills – taken second
- Practice test is not marked

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The Practice Test will be sat in two sessions with a short gap in between. Each paper is approx. 35 minutes plus time for settling the children, collection and distribution of papers and the CD/downloaded instructions covering the example questions. The total session time is therefore likely to be 45 – 50 minutes for each paper.

It is provided to enable children to experience the sound of the CD/MP3 and give some understanding of the look and format of the test so when they do the Transfer Test they will know what to expect. The instructions are given on audio file. The questions included will be of a comparable nature but the real test questions will be different.

NOTE: The Practice Test must remain confidential and is the property of GL Assessment. **It will not be sent home.** The Practice Test will not be marked.

The Transfer Test will be scheduled 2 days later.

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Illness during the test period

- If a child is ill on either practice or Transfer Test day they can sit the test later
- Children should not sit the test when unwell (even if they want to!)
- Children should always sit the practice test first
- You will be advised of new date(s) for the test(s) before your child sits the test

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If your child misses the Practice Test you should liaise with the school. A delay at this point may mean the Secondary Transfer Test will be delayed. All children attending Buckinghamshire primary schools or Partner Schools (local independent schools) will be expected to sit the Practice Test before attempting the Secondary Transfer Test.

If your child is ill on the day of the transfer test they should not attempt the test. On returning to school once the child is well the parents will be advised of the new test date(s).

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What do I do if I think something has affected my child's performance in the Transfer Test?

- On the test day let your headteacher know and also collect evidence, for example a doctor's letter
- Once you have the test results, talk to your child's headteacher

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Special arrangements

- Adjusted testing for children with disabilities can be requested
- Apply via headteacher
- Discuss NOW!
- Application must be completed as soon as possible
- Decision made by a panel of experts in SEND, primary teaching and an educational psychologist

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The updated guidelines and form to request adjustments are available for schools to access or can be requested. The LA will coordinate this information and a Special Access Panel made up from appropriate professionals will make the decisions on behalf of the grammar schools.

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Coaching

- Primary schools that undertake testing on behalf of the grammar schools are asked not to tutor or coach the children in their school prior to the test over and above enabling the children to follow the national curriculum relevant for their age.
- The Secondary Transfer Test is designed to enable all children to demonstrate their academic potential without the need for excessive preparation.

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Are tutoring and coaching required?

The Secondary Transfer Test is designed to enable all children to demonstrate their academic potential without the need for coaching or excessive preparation. Primary schools that undertake testing on behalf of the grammar schools are asked not to tutor or coach children in their school prior to the test over and above enabling the children to follow the national curriculum relevant for their age.

In order to be able to prepare children appropriately for the STT, parents of children in Year 5 are provided with a familiarisation booklet in the summer term so that they can familiarise children with how the test papers will look. All children are also encouraged to prepare by taking the practice test so that they have the experience of taking a test under similar conditions to the STT. Additional free familiarisation materials are also available on GL Assessment's website should parents wish to use them.

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Marking and standardisation

- The completed answer sheets are machine marked (scanned)
- One mark is given for each correct answer
- Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers
- Each pupil will have three raw scores
 - verbal skills
 - mathematical skills
 - non-verbal skills
- Each score is age standardised and weighted to produce the Secondary Transfer Test Score (STTS)

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A raw score is the total number of marks awarded for correct answers. The marks for the verbal skills section are added together to produce a verbal skills raw score for the test. The marks for the mathematical skills section produces a numerical raw score for the test. The marks for the non-verbal skills section produces a non-verbal skills raw score for the test.

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Weighting

Each score is weighted as follows:

- Verbal – 50% of the STTS (Secondary Transfer Test Score)
- Mathematical – 25% of the STTS
- Non-verbal – 25% of the STTS
- The qualifying score is a minimum score of 121
- Scores range between 60 and 170 approximately

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What is the rationale behind the weightings in the test?

The Secondary Transfer Test assesses a range of verbal, mathematical and non-verbal skills. The verbal skills areas tested are English comprehension, English technical and verbal reasoning. Non-verbal, spatial reasoning and maths skills are assessed as well. The weightings indicate the portion of the test devoted to that skill, and also provide a balanced view of a child's developed ability.

For example, if a pupil has standardised scores of 140, 120 and 84, applying this weighting would give:

Verbal standardised score of 140 x 50% = 70

Mathematical standardised score of 120 x 25% = 30

Non-verbal standardised score of 84 x 25% = 21

STTS = 70 + 30 + 21 = 121

A detailed analysis of the score will be provided both in the results letter and to the primary headteacher, along with the decision as to whether this score qualifies the child for entry to a grammar school.

The test result is only appropriate for entry to a Buckinghamshire Grammar school and is not transferable to grammar schools in other areas.

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Results and qualification
30 November

- If your child attends a Buckinghamshire primary school we have asked the headteacher to provide us with your email so we can send the results by email direct to you.
- If your child attends a Partner school or has sat the test at a grammar school test centre then we will send the result to the email you used to register for the test
- Contents are confidential to parent and child
- Approximately 36% of children scored 121 or more in 2020 intake

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The email/letter is addressed to the parent/carer not the child

Its contents are confidential and should not be used as a comparison between children

If parents live separately then ask your child's headteacher to provide both parents' email addresses to us and we will send both parents the child's results.

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What can I do if my child does not qualify for a grammar school place?

If your child is not qualified and you think a grammar school would be appropriate you can either

- Ask for a Selection Review OR
- Just appeal

The Selection Review Panel can decide a child is qualified and once agreed this qualification is for any grammar school

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It will have been an unusual year
– will this be taken into account?

- The grammar schools recognise that there may be circumstances that have impacted on a child's performance in the test - particularly this year
- At Selection Review each child's situation is considered individually
- Particular factors that families may have encountered during the pandemic will be considered carefully as part of the Selection Review process
- The panel will look for evidence of both consistent educational ability and factors that may have affected a child's performance in the Transfer Test

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Selection Review Panel

- Panel sits end December-January
- 3 headteachers - two grammar one primary
- Decision included in 1 March allocation
- Decision applies to all grammar schools
- At the end of the process and following Selection Reviews, approximately 38% qualify for grammar school

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The advantages of going to Selection Review – you will know the decision before 1 March and if qualified will be qualified for ANY grammar school and your child will be considered for all your preference Buckinghamshire grammar schools in the first round of allocations.

If a child is qualified at appeal, the qualification is for the particular school only.

For 2020 entry, 38% were successful.

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Non qualified appeal for a grammar school place (after Selection Review)

- When a case that has been to review is considered by the independent Appeal Panel, parents will need to show that in their child's case the Selection Review Panel decision was not 'fair consistent and objective'
- Only if they are successful, can then put their full academic case to the Independent Appeal Panel
- If a child is qualified at appeal, the qualification is for the particular school only.
- The appeal will happen in the summer term

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For 2019, the grammar school appeal outcomes were as follows:

Of the children that were not qualified at Selection Review, 217 appeal cases were submitted: 8 were successful (4%) and deemed qualified and only some of them were granted a place.

When a case that has been to review is considered by the Independent Appeal Panel, parents need to firstly show that in their child's case the Selection Review Panel decision was not 'fair consistent and objective' and only if they are successful, can then

put their full academic case to the Independent Appeal Panel who will consider it.

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Non-qualified appeal for a grammar school place (without a Selection Review)

- It is possible to go straight to appeal without having asked for a selection review
- Appeals are heard after 1 March
- Most schools will already be full by then
- You would have to prove academic potential AND give reasons why you believe a place should be offered above Planned Admission Number (PAN)

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For 2019, of the children that went to grammar school appeal without a Selection Review, 59 appeal cases were submitted and 2 were successful and deemed qualified (4%) and only some of them were granted a place.

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More information

- 'Moving up to Secondary School' leaflet
- School websites
- TBGS website
<https://www.thebucksgrammarschools.org/>
- School open events dates (subject to social distancing requirements):
See School Directory in "Find My Child a School Place"
<https://services.buckscc.gov.uk/school-admissions/schools>
- By end of August - more information on the council's website
<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-index/school-admissions/>

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How to contact the Admissions Team

Web: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/

Fill in the 'Contact Us' form:

- www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/admissions

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The End

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