

**Kent County Council
Equality Analysis/ Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

Directorate/ Service:

Education and Young Peoples Services

Name of decision, policy, procedure, project or service:

Adjustments to the Kent Test and Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions scheme as a result of COVID-19 restrictions

Responsible Owner/ Senior Officer:

Craig Chapman – Interim Head of Fair Access

Version	Author	Date	Comment
1	Craig Chapman	25/06/2020	

Author:

Craig Chapman – Interim Head of Fair Access

Pathway of Equality Analysis:

CYPE DMT/ Education Cabinet Committee/ Final sign off by Cabinet Member

Summary and recommendations of equality analysis/impact assessment.

- **Context**

The Kent Test is an essential element of KCC's co-ordinated admissions process, assessing children's eligibility to apply for any of Kent's Grammar schools. It is defined within all Kent Grammar school admission arrangements as the method for identifying eligible candidates, even where grammar schools also offer their own selection test. KCC therefore has a legal responsibility to provide an assessment method:

- for the Kent Grammar schools for which it is the Admissions Authority (*Dover Grammar School for Girls, Simon Langton Girls' Grammar School and Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys*), and
- for Kent's "own admission authority" grammar schools who also make use of the Kent Test.

The Kent Test is currently timetabled for 10 September 2020. The latest announcement by the Secretary of State for Education is that Government is no longer expecting all Primary aged pupils to have some time in school before the close of the current academic year. The wider reopening of schools in England is now being planned for the beginning of September. There remains the potential for the reintroduction of Covid-19 related restrictions which could further impact on the return to school of pupils and our ability to operate the Kent Test. KCC must also consider what impact an extended interruption to classroom teaching

will have on those learners, ensuring that the assessment process remains as fair as possible within current limitations.

Current Year 5 pupils will have received differing levels of education during lockdown as a result of many factors. It cannot be assumed that all children with a particular set of demographic characteristics will have received the same level of education during this time. The Kent Test process has always sought to identify children for whom a Grammar education is the most appropriate and this aim will remain unchanged this year.

The Kent Test procedure uses a threshold model where test scores are not the sole determining factor in identifying the selective cohort. The threshold model enables appropriate consideration to be given to cases where the test scores of a child are not considered to be representative of their aptitude, for example because of their SEND needs. This provides KCC an opportunity to accommodate the reduction in availability of standard education for most pupils. A proportion of students are assessed as eligible for Grammar school through a Head Teacher based assessment process, which will allow a further opportunity for individual variations in learning opportunities to be considered. KCC sets the proportion of cases identified via their assessment score once testing has been completed.

The Kent Test assessment process remains unchanged and so any consideration of equality implications are limited to those that directly result from a potential change in delivery date. KCC has always worked to make the process as accessible and fair as possible, taking into account any reasonable adjustments that can be made.

- **Aims and Objectives**

The proposed delay will allow KCC to take appropriate steps to ensure that the Kent Test can be delivered in the safest way possible, with sufficient social distancing controls in place, but also accounting for the unexpected educational environment that Year 5 pupils will have experienced in the lead up to taking part in the Kent Test.

The proposed delay will also provide an opportunity for all students to take part in school-based learning before undertaking the Kent Test, while still ensuring that the wider co-ordinated admissions timeline can be implemented to ensure that school offers are made on 1 March 2021.

To account for the fact that, on this occasion, parents would not have their child's test result by the National Closing Date for admission applications, the proposed increase to the number of permitted school preferences will enable parents who are uncertain of their child's eligibility for a grammar school to name up to two without reducing the number of non-selective schools on their application. There will be no limit on the number of grammar schools that can be named on the application, however, parents will be advised to consider potential scenarios where their child does not receive a selective assessment and select school preferences

accordingly. Parents who are not considering a grammar school for their child will also have six preferences to ensure fairness across the co-ordinated process.

- **Summary of equality impact**

Delaying the Kent Test by one month has an overall positive impact for learners with protected characteristics, with a small level of negative effects. These are identified and proposed mitigations are detailed below.

Adverse Equality Impact Rating Low

Attestation

I have read and paid due regard to the Equality Analysis/Impact Assessment concerning the adjustments to the Kent Test and Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions scheme as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. I agree with risk rating and the actions to mitigate any adverse impacts that have been identified.

Head of Service

Signed:

Name: Craig Chapman

Job Title: Interim Head of Fair Access

Date:

DMT Member

Signed:

Name: David Adams

Job Title: Interim Director of Education

Date:

Part 1 Screening

Could this policy, procedure, project or service, or any proposed changes to it, affect any Protected Group (listed below) less favourably (negatively) than others in Kent?

Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group?

Protected Group	Please provide a <u>brief</u> commentary on your findings. Fuller analysis should be undertaken in Part 2.			
	High negative impact EqIA	Medium negative impact Screen	Low negative impact Evidence	High/Medium/Low Positive Impact Evidence
Age	N/A	N/A		While age is not a protected characteristic for children, Test scores are always age-standardised to account for the impact of a child's age on their level of development. A local standardisation will reflect Kent norms, which could be beneficial. Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.
Disability	N/A	N/A	Adjustments to preference selection process may be harder for some young people in this group to understand. This will be offset by careful explanation	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning. Increased opportunity for students with a need type that requires consistent routine to reacclimatise to

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				school timetables.
Sex	N/A	N/A	N/A	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.
Gender identity/ Transgender	N/A	N/A	N/A	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.
Race	N/A	N/A	Adjustments to preference selection process may result in comprehension difficulties	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.
Religion and Belief	N/A	N/A	N/A	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.
Sexual Orientation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A.
Pregnancy and Maternity	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnerships	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carer's Responsibilities	N/A	N/A	May conflict with caring responsibilities that are already scheduled to take place at the new time of the test.	Increase the opportunity for classroom-based learning.

Part 2

Equality Analysis /Impact Assessment

Protected groups

Low to Medium Positive Impact: All

Low Negative Impact – Age, Disability, Race

Information and Data used to carry out your assessment

Due to the ongoing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is little reliable statistical evidence on the impact of reduced education on protected groups.

The impact analysis is simplified by the fact that assessment is limited to the proposed change only, that of delaying the test by roughly one month and increasing the number of available school preferences. The Kent Test process includes a number of features that are designed to limit inequity for pupils with protected characteristics and while they are not the focus of this assessment, will be included briefly below for completeness.

Proposals have been developed in conjunction with a working group of representative Kent schools and via consultation questionnaires will all Kent schools.

While a detailed summary of consultation responses can be found in Appendix B, 90% of Kent Primary and Junior schools supported the proposals to delay testing.

JUDGEMENT

Positive Impact:

The Kent Test process includes the following features to positively support pupils with protected characteristics and others that require additional support to evidence selective suitability:

Current special arrangement procedures ensure that Special Educational Need or wider disabilities do not limit an individual from taking part in the assessment process in as fair and equitable a way as can reasonably be arranged.

The Head Teacher Assessment (HTA) process remains a key mechanism to support those learners who are less able to evidence academic aptitude via a formalised test or those who underperformed on the day. All Kent schools have been advised to ensure that children that receive pupil premium and/ or are eligible for free school meals are fairly represented in HTA process.

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All Kent Grammar schools have been historically contacted to request that children who are eligible for pupil premium or free school meals are prioritised with their oversubscription criteria and 26 out of 32 schools have included this criterion. The remaining schools are their own admissions authority and are legally entitled to set whichever arrangements they wish, however, the majority have indicated alternative methods of support for these pupils.

Familiarisation material is made available to all pupils on KCC's website, with directions where further materials can be sourced from test providers, free of charge, enabling students and their families better to understand the style of test involved.

The threshold model enables appropriate consideration to be given to cases where the test scores of a child are not considered to be representative of their aptitude, for example because of their SEND needs. This provides KCC an opportunity to accommodate the reduction in availability of standard education for most pupils.

In addition to these pre-existing safeguards, the following additional positive adjustments will be available as a result of proposals:

All students will benefit from the additional time to settle back into normal school life. In particular, those learners who have had limited access to education options during the lockdown will benefit from the additional acclimatisation to regular school schedules. This would constitute a positive equality impact and would likely provide the most support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who may have had limited access to online learning or private learning spaces during the lockdown and pupils with additional educational needs and/or disabilities.

The HTA referral process will be adjusted to ensure that panels are aware when each child returned to school and guidance will be provided to referring schools to ensure that there is a consistent expectation of what supporting evidence will be accepted. These factors will provide an opportunity to account for the varying educational experience children will have received during lockdown.

Action Plan

The EqIA has highlighted areas where further mitigations are required:

Parents and schools will need to understand clearly how an increase in preference options from four to six, combined with the "Equal Preference" system, will serve to offset disadvantage. Additional guidance will be provided through schools and direct to parents to explain how these changes should be considered when submitting a school admissions application, and Officers will remain available throughout the application process to provide direct support.

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The delay will increase the time that students are required to wait to take part in testing, which may increase their overall anxiety. The proposed extension will take part at the beginning of the new school year, so guidance will be provided to schools to ensure that any potential anxiety is addressed and suitable safeguards can be applied.

The shift from a national to a local standardisation this year was not a Council decision, but the inevitable consequence of school closures during March and April, which prevented GL Assessment from recruiting a national standardisation sample. KCC has shared historic data with the test providers so that it can be taken into account when the score from this year's cohort are standardised, allowing a smoother transition

Equality Impact Analysis/Assessment Action Plan

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Cost implications
Disability/ Race	Adjustments to preference selection process may result in comprehension difficulties	Improved/ simplified parental guidance to be made available. School training so that additional support can be provided	Improved understanding of changes	Craig Chapman	By 1 September 2020	
All	Increased anxiety for students who await testing Impact of Covid 19 on general well being	Guidance to schools on support and safeguarding strategies Child focussed communication to explain the reasons for change and what's being done to support them	Support and reduce anxiety in students	Craig Chapman	By 1 September 2020	
Age	Uncertain impact	Raise concerns	Further clarity	Craig Chapman	By 1	

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	of transition from national to local standardisation	with test provider and request mitigations to be applied	about impact of change in standardisation method		September 2020	
Carer's Responsibilities	May conflict with caring responsibilities that are already scheduled to take place at the new time of the test.	Communicate the change of dates as soon as possible so that people have time to make alternative arrangements and or look for support	Increased opportunity to take part in the test	Craig Chapman	By 1 August 2020	