

The examination for entrance to S1

Towards the end of the January of the year of admission, children applying for S1 come to the school to sit the entrance tests. These start shortly after 9.30 and are over by about 12.45. The morning is divided up, so that children have the opportunity to get some fresh air between the tests, and also to have a drink and a biscuit, which we will provide.

We suggest that children should come for the examination dressed as for a normal day at school. They should bring with them pencils, rubbers, rulers and so on.

The examination will be supervised by experienced teachers, who will of course be as helpful as possible. They will explain to the children that not everyone will be able to answer all the questions and that, faced with a question they find really difficult, children should put down whatever answer they can and then move on to something else. Because most children of this age are not familiar with formal tests of this sort, it may be helpful if you explain to your child that the teachers will not be able to assist them with questions they find hard. We do appreciate that this is the opposite of children's day-to-day experience in the classroom.

The examination is in three parts: there will be a Verbal Reasoning Test and tests in English and Mathematics.

The format of the examination

We do not issue examples of past entrance examination papers. Detailed information about the format and content of the tests is, however, printed below.

Verbal Reasoning

The purpose of the Verbal Reasoning Test is to obtain a reliable measure of the children's general reasoning ability. It lasts for 45 minutes, during which the children must answer as many questions as possible. It can best be described as a series of puzzles and you may find it helpful to explain to your child that it is not the sort of thing that anyone is likely to come across during their normal lessons in primary school.

English

The English paper lasts for one hour and is divided into two parts. Part One is a Close Reading exercise on which the children should spend approximately forty minutes. Part Two is a composition taking approximately twenty minutes to complete.

The requirements of both parts of the examination paper will be explained to the children before they start the examination and after forty minutes they will be reminded that they should now be moving on to the composition. They will also be reminded of the time five minutes before the end of the examination.

The **Close Reading** exercise is a passage of some 600-700 words, chosen from a work of good quality fiction readily accessible to children of this age group. They are

advised to read the passage slowly and carefully before tackling the questions which follow.

Most questions direct them to a particular paragraph which is clearly numbered; they should reread that paragraph before answering the question. Some of the answers will simply require one or two words; others will involve writing at some length. The wording of the question will make it clear which type of response is expected.

Some questions specifically ask for the answer to be expressed *in your own words*. Here the children should try to ensure that they do not simply repeat the words used in the passage. In other questions where there is no mention of using their own words, straight quotation from the passage is acceptable, although should the same idea be expressed in their own words full credit will be given.

Each question has the number of marks awarded clearly marked – between 1 and 5 marks. Children should tailor their answers to suit the number of marks. For example, a 3-mark question will require 3 points to be found from the relevant part of the passage.

The first few questions are intentionally simple to help the children relax and make them feel able to cope with the examination. All questions are of the kinds and formats children will be well used to in their own schools when tackling close reading exercises for learning and assessment purposes. They will be asked to locate the main points in a text, identify subsidiary ideas, explain the meanings of some words and comment on the simpler aspects of the writer's craft.

The following short extracts, with questions, are not intended as practice Close Reading exam papers, but as examples of the standard of passage and types of question children are likely to encounter at various ages. Please do note that these extracts are very significantly shorter than those used in the examination itself and that there will be more questions to answer than are included in these examples.

For entrance to S1:

- 1 The air struck cold, after the August heat outside. George told Andrew to follow him, and John came last, flashing his torch along the floor so that the others could see their footing.
- 2 The explosion had enlarged the short stretch of tunnel by cutting away at the floor, and Meaty could get through this time without having to strip to the skin, as he had done last year. He leaned over the mouth of the tunnel, closely pressed by the ever-eager Lightning.
- 3 'Wait now, while I look,' he said, bringing his arm up and switching on his torch, to examine the effect of the explosion in the great cave.

Reread Paragraph 1

- a) Choose **one** word to fill in each of the blanks in the following paragraph: (3)

It was the month of and the weather was but inside the tunnel it felt

- b) In what order did the boys go into the tunnel? (3)

- c) How do you know it was dark inside the tunnel? (1)

Reread Paragraph 2

- d) In your own words, explain what had happened to make the tunnel easier to walk through. (2)
- e) In your own words, give a piece of evidence that tells you that Meaty had difficulty getting into the tunnel the year before. (1)
- f) Why do you think this boy was called Meaty? (1)
- g) Underline the two words which best describe Lightning.
keen calm impatient lazy bored (2)

Reread Paragraph 3

- h) In your own words explain what Meaty wanted to check before he went any further. (2)

Composition

The intention underlying this part of the paper is to give the children the opportunity to express their own ideas and experiences in the most effective way they can.

They will be given two options, of which they should choose only one. The topics are very broadly based on some of the ideas in the Close Reading passage in the hope that they offer every opportunity for the children to find a subject they are able to write about freely. Because they are being asked to produce a piece of personal writing, children should concentrate on using appropriate words to set the scene, and to describe their feelings and thoughts, as well as to describe the events.

The following sample topics are based on the Close Reading example given above:

For entrance to S1:

Write about a time when you felt scared about where you were going.

OR

Write an account of a visit you really enjoyed. What did you do? How did you feel? What were your thoughts and feelings?

Mathematics

The Mathematics paper lasts 45 minutes. Children will be reminded of the time five minutes before the end of the examination. There are approximately 20 questions, of differing length and difficulty, and children are not allowed to use calculators in any part of the test. The number of marks available for each question will be clearly indicated.

The emphasis is on problem-solving rather than knowledge in itself: no child with a solid primary education should feel that he or she will be disadvantaged by a lack of specialised knowledge.

It is worth bearing in mind that children sometimes fail to do themselves justice because they do not write down any working: as a result, if their final answer is wrong they cannot be given any credit for their reasoning.

The topics with which children should be familiar at each stage are very much in line with national advice: the list is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive, and some sample questions follow.

Topics for all children applying for admission to the Senior School

Information handling

Graphs (bar, line), pie-charts and their interpretation.

Number, money and measurement

Whole numbers: the four rules (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division).

Decimals: the first two rules only, together with multiplication or division by a single digit.

Simple fractions: equivalence with decimals and with other fractions. Percentages. Calculations with both British and foreign currencies and (simple) conversions.

Sequences: continue and describe; recognise simple functional relationships; solve simple equations.

Measure: standard metric units for length, weight, volume, area, and their relationships.

Time: use 24 hour clock and calculate time (in any units from years to seconds) between two events.

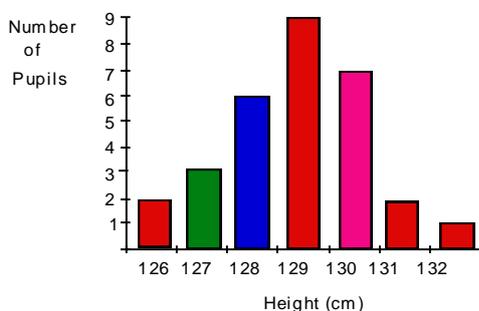
Perimeter: areas of squares and rectangles; volumes of cuboids and cubes.

Shape, position and movement

Bearings, co-ordinates, nets of simple solids, symmetry - rotational and bilateral.

Sample questions – S1

- 1 Bags of sweets cost 55p each. How many can be bought for £3 and how much change would there be?
- 2 Plot, on the diagram provided, the point (1,2) (7,2) (7,5) and (1,5). Join them up in order. What is the name of the shape obtained? What is its perimeter (in units)?
- 3 The floor of a room is 5m long by 4m broad. The volume of the room is 40 cubic metres. What is its height? What would the height have been if the volume was 44 cubic metres?
- 4 How many pupils are 130 cm or more tall? What percentage of the total number of pupils is this?



- 5 From a railway timetable (which will be printed on the test paper), identify the train taking the least time from Glasgow to Dundee, and calculate this time.
- 6 Draw, on a diagram which will be printed on the test paper:
 - (i) a figure which has an axis of symmetry but no rotational symmetry;
 - (ii) a figure which has rotational symmetry but no axis of symmetry.

7 Find the missing number:

(i) $\boxed{?} + 17 = 31$

(ii) $48 \div \boxed{?} = 16$

(iii) $5 + 3 \times \boxed{?} = 29$