

---

7<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to parents of children registered with AQE Ltd for the 2020/21 Common Entrance Assessment (CEA) regarding recent changes to the dates and length of the assessments.

### **1. Change to Dates of the AQE Common Entrance Assessment**

Throughout the pandemic and the resulting closure of schools in March 2020, AQE Ltd has been very aware of the impact the disruption has had on the children who have been working towards sitting the CEA this academic year. From early April, it has been the view of the Board of AQE Ltd to delay the assessment for as long as possible to enable any disadvantage caused by the lockdown to be minimised. For this reason, the Board wrote to the Minister of Education in mid-April asking him to consider adjusting the Post Primary Transfer Timetable to allow for the three AQE papers to be held in January 2021. Regretfully, after discussions with the Department of Education (DE) and the Minister, it was not possible at that time to make the necessary changes to the Transfer Timetable, which resulted in the dates of the assessments, nevertheless, being deferred to 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> December, two weeks later than the original schedule.

In recent weeks the decision to move the CEA to late November and December was the subject of a legal challenge by the parents of two pupils. Following a further review by the DE and the Education Authority, the Lord Chief Justice was informed on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September in the High Court by all parties to the legal challenge, that a settlement had been reached to a re-scheduling of the assessments to January 2021. **For AQE, the dates will now be Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021**, which provides for an additional nine weeks of preparation time for candidates. Results will be issued to parents on **Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2021**. The Board of AQE acknowledges the diversity of views on the desirability of moving the dates of the assessment but is committed to work with the Minister of Education to provide the maximum possible teaching time for pupils. The registration closing date will now move further to **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020**.

### **2. Increased Length of the Common Entrance Assessment**

In a previous update in June 2020, AQE Ltd informed parents and candidates that our Assessment Team had been reviewing the questions in the 2020/21 CEA, making adjustments where necessary to ensure that they are accessible to all of the pupils, enabling them to show what they know, understand and can do. The purpose of our communication in June was to reassure everyone that the three papers are at the appropriate level and length for this year's cohort of P6 children, given the level of disruption caused by the pandemic. As this cohort of children now enters P7 at the start of the new school year, the Assessment Team has considered other ways of making the CEA more accessible and **has decided to add an additional 10 minutes (from 60 minutes to 70 minutes) to the time given to the candidates for each**

**of the three papers.** This change will allow the children to spend longer answering each question as well as checking their answers. The additional time can be taken into account by parents and teachers in the preparation of the children for the assessment.

### **3. Children who have been granted additional time through the process of Access Arrangements**

Parents of children who have been granted additional time through the process of Access Arrangements will be contacted individually in the next 2 weeks about the implications of the extra 10 minutes on the arrangements for their children.

### **4. Going forward**

**You do not have to re-register your child to sit the assessments**, all existing registrations will be carried forward and parents do not need to do anything further. You should find enclosed a sticker with the new dates and times which can be pasted onto your Admissions Card if you wish. If you have not yet received your Admissions Card you can disregard this as the office will include the new dates onto your card.

AQE Ltd would like to thank parents and candidates for their hard work and commitment throughout these difficult times, and offers best wishes to them all for a successful return to school for the new term.

Regards,



Darrin Barr (Dr)  
*Joint Chief Executive Officer*

<b>Event</b>	<b>New Date</b>
<b>Closing date for Registration &amp; Access Applications</b>	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> October 2020 (4pm)
<b>Assessment 1</b>	Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2021 (10am)
<b>Assessment 2</b>	Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> January 2021 (10am)
<b>Assessment 3</b>	Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2021 (10am)
<b>Results Issued</b>	Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (via post)