

Guidelines for Primary School Principals on Special Circumstances, Special Provisions or Special Cases for admissions to schools using the AQE Common Entrance Assessment (CEA).

Schools operating the CEA are committed to considering applications for what, under the previous transfer arrangements were known as Special Circumstances and Special Provisions. However, the existence of Access Arrangements and the possibility of a pupil's score being based on two out of three Common Entrance Assessment (CEA) papers should reduce the need for adjustment to a pupil's score.

The following paragraphs define these terms and provide information on the application process.

Special Circumstances

Special Circumstances are medical or other problems which may have affected a pupil's performance in the CEA. The existence of Special Circumstances must be supported by documentary evidence of a medical or other appropriate nature.

Special Provisions

Special Provisions apply to:

1. Children whose parents wish them to transfer to grammar schools from schools outside Northern Ireland.
2. Children who have received more than half their primary education outside Northern Ireland.
3. Children, entered for the CEA, who because of unforeseen and serious medical or other problems, were unable to participate in any of the assessments.

The existence of Special Provisions must be supported by documentary evidence.

Special Cases

Please note that some schools have replaced the terms Special Circumstances and Special Provision with the term Special Cases in their admissions criteria.

Advice to Parents who wish to make a claim:

Parents who wish to claim Special Circumstances, Special Provisions or Special Cases have been advised to:

1. Read carefully the requirements set out in the criteria for the grammar schools concerned. Each school considers claims and decides on the validity of each case.
2. Obtain **Form SC14** from either AQE or a school to which you are applying.
3. Gather the evidence required to validate the claim and support any increase in the CEA score. It is essential that all evidence is provided at the time. Parents should be aware that in the criteria of some schools, independent evidence may carry greater weight.
4. Complete **Form SC14** and then attach it along with the supporting evidence to the Transfer Form.

Parents are strongly advised that if they are in any doubt about the procedure or the evidence required they should contact the Principal of the grammar school for advice and guidance.

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Information for Primary School Principals.

In considering claims for Special Circumstances, Special Provisions or Special Cases, schools using the AQE CEA have endeavoured to devise procedures which are similar to that which was operated in previous years. Form SC14 has been developed to assist parents in making such an application and also to bring uniformity to the process. Below is some information which we hope you will find useful.

All decisions with regard to Special Circumstances, Special Provisions or Special Cases are the sole responsibility of the Board of Governors of the receiving school.

It is the parents' responsibility to apply on behalf of their son/daughter and to gather and present the relevant information for attachment to the Transfer Form.

In making a claim, the parents have been advised to obtain educational evidence relating to the performance of their child and in comparison with the performance of his/her peers. Primary School Principals are in the best position to assist in the provision of this information.

We would therefore ask that Primary School Principals assist parents making an application by providing and verifying, where available, the data requested in Section B. In providing the comparative data for the other pupils in the class, **no names should be given, except for that of the pupil** for whom the application is being made.

You may have noted that in the Education Minister's letter of 9 November 2009 '*Primary Schools' duties with regard to the Provision of Educational Information on their Pupils to other Parties*' it states:

'Under the Freedom of Information Act, any person, including a parent, has a right to request information on class performances/achievements, provided the disclosure of the collective data would not lead to the identification of an individual pupil.'

Our understanding is that the request for comparative data would fit within this provision and allow you to supply the information. Last year a number of schools found it more convenient to provide this information in a printout from a spreadsheet or other program rather than complete section B of the SC Form. A signature is required to authenticate the educational data only – it does not signify any support or comment on the other information provided.

We hope these guidance notes are helpful and please feel free to contact directly the Principal of any receiving school for any further information.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.