

COMMON ENTRANCE AND 11+

Girls may take Common Entrance to Independent Schools at 11+ (girls schools only) and at 13+ (coed and girls schools). The age refers to the age they will be when they reach their next school. Hence 11+ is taken during Year 6 (usually in January) and 13+ in Year 8 (usually in June).

At 11+ girls are examined in Maths, English, Science and Verbal Reasoning (IQ). At 13+ there are compulsory papers in Maths, English and Science, and optional papers in French, Geography, History, RE, Latin and other subjects (German, Greek, Spanish, IT, etc). The papers are set at the appropriate National Curriculum level, where it exists, and therefore do not require different teaching in a school already following the National Curriculum, although topic lesson timing may be adjusted to allow for exam dates. Papers are tiered in Maths, Latin and French (generally Higher and Lower tiers). Some schools expect children to sit higher tier in Maths; others prefer them to sit the tier that best matches their ability. Optional papers are designed to enhance a child's prospects – failure of an optional paper will not on its own fail a child. Most schools expect a mark of between 50 and 60% in the compulsory papers.

Not all schools use Common Entrance to establish their entry. Many use only their own test (Queen Margaret's, St Peter's, Bootham), some prefer to use their own test (Ampleforth) and some prefer Common Entrance (Uppingham, Rugby, Oundle). In all cases the tests are marked by the receiving school (but will be sent on to second choice schools on request).

In all cases the report written by the Headmaster of the prep school is more important to the receiving school than the Common Entrance exams, particularly if the Head has an established relationship with the receiving school. As a result very few children fail Common Entrance nowadays (certainly very few girls – boys can face a different regime) as long as the girl is entered for an appropriate school. No girl has failed Common Entrance from Queen Mary's School for the last 10 years.

Schools vary also in their attitude towards scholarships. Some invite candidates after seeing their CE papers, some have their own scholarship papers, and some follow the Common Scholarship route. In all cases the advice of the Headmaster is essential.

NB. The 11+ exam taken for entry to Grammar Schools (eg Ripon) is not the same as 11+ Common Entrance (which applies only to independent schools). The Grammar School 11+ exam is a test of IQ only, and as such cannot be coached. It is useful for a child to have seen a sample test beforehand, but the test is designed as a test of a child's innate ability, not of how well or how much they have been taught.