

17 January 2021

Dear Parent/ Guardian

**Ref: Cancellation of CEA Assessment - Saturday 27 February 2021**

As you are well aware by now, this year's Common Entrance Assessment, provided by AQE, has been cancelled due to health concerns. You and your child have been on a rollercoaster ride in recent months as the tests were postponed, then cancelled, then re-instated (albeit as one test), then cancelled again.

I have also been notified by some parents that our local Post-Primary school, Foyle College, made direct contact with them on the afternoon of Thursday 14 January, before also making contact with the Principals of the Primary Schools affected later that night. I am lead to believe that a further communication has also been sent out to parents on Friday 15 January, clarifying certain points made previously.

I trust that the Governors of Foyle College, while remaining committed to the principles of academic selection in line with their Grammar School status, will seek to put in place a set of Admissions Criteria that will provide a fair and appropriate means to select pupils for September 2021 admission, in line with the ongoing expectations of parents who applied for their child to sit the AQE assessment.

I note further in the letter from Foyle College that you have been encouraged by the Principal to consult closely with myself and to listen to my advice as to whether Foyle will meet your child's needs academically. During the February 'Transfer Interviews' this is something that I would always do as a matter of course for each and every P7 pupil and parent, irrespective of which Post-Primary school they might wish to apply for, both selective and non-selective.

The difficulty that has arisen this year centres on the fact that I will not be in possession of the same amount of academic evidence and assessment data for the pupils that I would have had in previous years.

Past CEA assessment papers that are completed in schools as practice tests are non-standardised i.e. they are completed under different conditions and in different ways in each primary school. To add to this, they are publicly available to purchase from AQE and, as such, may have been completed previously by a pupil before being sat in school as a mock test - thus giving a false representation of a child's true academic ability.

Crucially, due to the first lockdown period from March to June 2020, pupils also missed their Progress Test in English (PTE) and Progress Test in Maths (PTM) assessments in Year 6, as these would normally have been completed during the summer term. This important element of assessment data would have been used in previous years to assist ourselves in supporting parents and pupils alongside their AQE score when discussing the suitability of choice for their post-primary education.

The most important thing that we as a 'Primary Partnership' (Pupil-School-Parent) must do now is to remain calm and patient and ignore the rumour and speculation that is rife surrounding the whole transfer debate.

All Post-Primary schools have now been instructed by the Department of Education to finalise their 'Contingency Admissions Criteria' for 2021/2022 which will be published by the Education Authority ([eani.org.uk](http://eani.org.uk)) on Tuesday 2 February 2021.

Once I am in receipt of this Admissions Criteria, I will know exactly what is required for admission to the individual schools and I will then be in a position to contact you to arrange a

meeting (*DE Guidance - Tele-conference or video conference must be used for all parent-teacher meetings*) to discuss what next steps will be necessary to best support you and your child.

Thanking you in anticipation of your co-operation with these important matters.

Kind regards,

T.R. McMaster  
Principal