

11+ (Year 7) Examinations - Guidance for Parents and Teachers

Guidance for English

What is in the examination?

- The English examination is 1hr 20m long.
- It is in two sections, Reading and Writing. The two sections carry equal marks.
- In the Reading section, candidates are required to read a short passage, normally about a page long, and answer short questions about the passage in order to demonstrate how well they have understood the passage.
- In the Writing section, girls are set two writing tasks which may be based in some way on the passage in the Reading section. One will be of a creative nature, the other requiring opinion or discussion.
- Sample questions are available on each school's website as an example of the format used.

What are we looking for?

We are looking for evidence that a candidate:

- can read with discernment and understanding, with a firm grasp of both implicit and explicit meaning
- can express her understanding clearly and accurately in writing
- both understands and can use a wide and varied vocabulary
- can express herself in writing with facility, fluency, range and imagination
- can express personal opinion in a reasoned and structured way
- has a good understanding of the effects created by language, both in others' writing and in her own.

How can candidates prepare for the examination?

While it is sensible for girls to be familiar with the format of the examination, we would emphasise strongly that in our experience a repetitive drilling of examination tasks and / or the teaching of a formulaic approach to writing are neither desirable nor effective forms of preparation, either for the examination or for our schools. **Indeed, recent papers show this intervention can be detrimental.** The best possible form of preparation is:

- to encourage girls to read as widely and ambitiously as possible
- to encourage girls to respond to what they read in an independent, fresh and personal way
- to nurture in them a genuine love of books
- to engage with them in discussion about a character's motivation, a story's ethical issues and moral dilemmas, and to develop their own independent opinions
- to give them the opportunity and encouragement to write in as wide a variety of genres, styles and contexts as possible
- to encourage them to develop their own individual and distinctive voice in their writing.

Above all, we must point out that the Writing section of the examination is designed to assess how well girls can write in an unprepared context. The insertion of pre-prepared pieces of writing which are not relevant to the task set will be severely penalised in the marking.

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