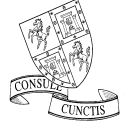




Gravesend Grammar School – Appeals FAQs for Parents



How many people get a place through appeals each year?

Last year, there were no successful appeals, despite almost seventy appellants presenting their cases. The year group was full and the panel determined that the addition of students beyond current numbers would prejudice the education of existing students. Where the evidence presented to the panel demonstrated convincingly that a child was of “grammar ability”, they directed us to place the child on our waiting list. The waiting list is ranked according to our oversubscription criteria with priority afforded to students with siblings at the school and those who live locally. In the months following appeals, a small number of places were given to students from the top of the waiting list. We anticipate a similar situation for this year’s appeals.

Do panels have the authority to offer places even when the School has reached its PAN?

Yes, the panel can do this. They must consider the effect of additional places on existing students, ensuring the provision of effective resources is not prejudiced.

Do all available places get offered at appeals?

The panel must determine that students offered places at appeal are of the required academic standard and will thrive in a grammar environment. If there are insufficient students of the required standard the School will run below its Planned Admission Number.

How do I evidence that my child meets the academic requirement?

As a minimum, the panel will expect to see assessment data from the primary school that shows the child to be working at a level akin to those students who were offered places automatically. Primary schools are very astute in judging students’ capacity to cope at a selective school, and written evidence from the Head Teacher/Class Teacher which categorically identifies the child as a grammar student will carry some weight at appeal. Conversely, the absence of support from the primary school may leave a large gap in the required evidence. Too frequently, appellants arrive at appeal with insufficient data to support their case. The Clerk to the Panel provides information prior to appeal about the sort of evidence needed, and it is important that parents seek to provide this.

Shall I bring my child’s work along?

No. The panel will not wish to see individual work.

Does my child attend the appeal?

No, the child should not attend.

What other evidence will be helpful?

The panel will look to evidence that shows that the child has a good work ethic, and that they have the independent learning skills to thrive in a fast-paced and challenging grammar curriculum. The child should be an avid reader and display literacy and numeracy ability commensurate with a child in the highest 25% of his cohort. They should be

working in the top sets in their year group for both English and Maths. The panel will additionally look for evidence that shows the child to enjoy wider interests that fit with the ethos of the school.

Do my child's scores in the Kent Test influence the judgement?

Very much so. Whilst there are occasionally instances where strong mitigating circumstances explain a significant underperformance in the test, in most cases appellants will attempt to show that a single score in the test is uncharacteristic of their child's true ability. Successful appellants in the past would normally have in their favour two other scores that demonstrate particular strengths academically, and were able to provide compelling evidence in favour of the one weaker result. **Appellants must note that the current pass mark of 106 represents the 34th percentile of the cohort tested. At Gravesend we would expect students to be part of the top 25%. Students with scores around the 106 threshold are likely to struggle.**

What if specific circumstances hampered my child's performance in the test?

This is the main reason we have appeals. There will always be children whose ability to perform to their usual level in the tests is affected by other influences such as emotional or medical issues. Panels are very experienced in determining the extent to which a child's medical or emotional concern affected their performance in the test. Some appellants have genuine traumatic circumstances that have clearly had an impact on their child's performance, but the panel will still need to see evidence that shows their performance in school typically is in keeping with the standard required of a grammar student. Where relevant, medical evidence from a recognised professional will need to be shown to the panel.

Will the panel consider my child's Special Educational Needs?

Yes, the panel will consider these. In some appeals in the past, panels have been swayed by appellants who were able to show rapid progress due to intervention following a recent diagnosis. Additionally, the appellants were able to show that the child was working at the required level. The key is to be able to show that the child, given the intervention needed, functions at a level in keeping with other students at the point they enter the school. The panel would not consider a child's capacity to cope in a grammar school in the future. They would expect that the child is suited to the pace and challenge of a high level curriculum from the outset.

How do children who have been given a place through appeal cope in comparison to those automatically selected?

There is no significant trend in the data to show that appeal students are less likely to succeed. We would not normally expect these students to be the highest achieving. However, many appeal students are determined to show they acquired a place on merit and this can mean they bring with them very healthy learning behaviour. Panels are adept at making informed judgements and they are quick to recognise when children would not be suited to a grammar curriculum. Through both the appeal system and the automatic process we do on rare occasions receive students who are not suited to grammar school. This is very demoralising for the child who quickly realises that it is not the place for them. Parents should appeal for their child only when they are sure that it is the right school. **The appeal process is there to safeguard against injustices in the automatic process and not a means to pursue a place to its ultimate conclusion.**

Can I appeal to GGS if I live out of area?

Yes, that is your entitlement. Parents should consider, however, the constraints of placing their child in a school outside their locality. Out-of-area students frequently find the transition to secondary school less manageable and issues with completion of homework are proving a barrier to effective learning for many of our 'distant' boys. In

many cases, access to out-of-school events and clubs is significantly hampered, as is the capacity to forge friendships that spill into children's non-school time.

Does where I live influence a decision?

Where there are places available in the school, and when a panel deems a child to be of grammar standard, a place will be offered, regardless of where the appellant lives. However, it is often the case that there are more students who fit this criteria than there are places available, and in this event the panel is generally sympathetic to the school's admissions arrangements, which afford priority to local boys. As a school serving the local community, our admission arrangements are designed to maximise local intake at the expense of students with no vested interest in the Gravesham Community.

Who sits on the panel?

The panel consists of a chairperson and two further panellists. Each has completed statutory training, and collectively has a range of expertise and experience that allows them to make informed judgements based on the evidence presented. The panel is independent and must not contain members who have any current or historic connection with the School. Additionally, there is a clerk to the panel, who is not involved in decision-making. The clerk ensures that legal protocols are adhered to and provides guidance to parents and the panel before and during the process.

What happens at appeal?

Appeals last 30 minutes during which the School will present its case explaining why the student was not offered a place. The school representative will then be questioned by the panel. Parents then present their case and are themselves questioned by the panel to elaborate on the evidence presented. Both sides will have their chance to summarise before the appeal is brought to an end.

Do parents find out there and then about a place?

No, the clerk to the panel will contact the parents in writing following the completion of all other appeals.

When do appeals take place?

Year 7 Appeals following March Offer Day will be held in May and June. In-year appeals are heard as soon as is possible after the appeal is lodged.

Can I bring family or friends to the appeal to support me?

Yes, this is fine. A parent appealing on their own may wish to have at their side a family member or friend to provide support. There is no requirement for the accompanying adult to speak or to give evidence.