

# IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL

CEM SELECT - A FAIR TEST  
FOR SELECTIVE SCHOOLS

AGE 11+



# A fair test for selective schools

## CEM Select

Ensuring a fair school admissions process and making sure your school is right for each pupil can be a challenge.

The visits, the tours, the open days and the interviews can all help to get an idea of how well pupils might thrive at your school. But it is notoriously difficult to be certain the entrance test gives you a true picture of pupil potential.

Where is the value in an assessment that shows nothing more than the ability of a pupil to follow the instructions of his or her tutor?

## Case study: Sam's choice

Sam's parents had never seriously considered sending him to an independent school until they were encouraged to look into it by his primary school teachers. While they were keen that he got into the right school, they had concerns about him needing to be tutored in order to get through any entrance test he might sit.

'We wanted Sam to be able to get in on the strength of his own abilities,' they explained. 'Once we had decided where to apply, we spoke to the school about the admissions process, and they explained that the test is not a test of knowledge recall, instead it is designed to allow pupils to apply their understanding, and the non-verbal section of the test is not curriculum-based. Which makes it as fair a test as it is possible to have. Everyone has the same chance in that sense.'

## Ability-based content

Sam's parents explained that 'the school told us that the assessment wasn't anything for Sam to worry about and he didn't need to prepare for it in any particular way. They said doing all his homework and reading a wide range of books would be good enough preparation! That put him at ease. He did it when we went for the interview, and it only took about an hour. He said it was actually quite fun and it wasn't scary at all!'

## Resistance to tuition

At CEM, we are well aware that the practice of intensive tuition for selection is an issue. At certain times of the year, the news is filled with stories of concerns that some pupils may be at a disadvantage, compared with pupils with the resources to pay for tuition.

Our selection assessments focus on content which evaluates the reasoning abilities of pupils, including verbal, numerical and non-verbal ability, helping schools to assess academic potential.

While we acknowledge that no assessment can be truly tutor-proof, we are confident that the content within our assessments minimises the potential for tutors to prepare pupils with specific knowledge that might give them an unfair advantage.

## A FAIR TEST FOR SELECTIVE SCHOOLS

- **CEM SELECT CHALLENGE**

is computer-based and provides raw scores, sub-section scores and total scores, to enable you to rank your pupils.

- **CEM SELECT EVALUATE**

provides schools with the same feedback that CEM Select Challenge offers as well as providing age-standardised scores, year-on-year comparability and national norms for comparison.

- **MID-YEAR TRANSFER**

provides grammar schools with year-on-year comparability and optional standardised age norms specific to each school based on a suitable benchmarking group.

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a white school shirt and a dark tie with yellow and blue stripes, is sitting at a desk. He is resting his chin on his hands, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. A laptop is open in front of him, and the background is a blurred classroom setting.

## Producing the right results

Sam's new school explained 'Our admissions process is pretty simple and designed to give assurance to families that it is fair, and they have made the right choice. It's important that each pupil is a good fit for the school... most importantly, the assessments seem to produce the right results: a cohort both eager and able to take on the challenge of high academic expectations. We have noticed a real difference in attitude and approach with students selected using CEM assessments.'

### Find out more about CEM Select:

Visit: [cem.org/entrance-assessments](https://cem.org/entrance-assessments)

Email: [cem.select@cem.org](mailto:cem.select@cem.org)

Find out more about CEM Select at [www.cem.org/entrance-assessments](https://www.cem.org/entrance-assessments)

**www.cem.org**

Working to promote evidence-based practice  
through tracking curriculum learning, feedback,  
diagnosis, and provision of next steps advice.

---

For more information, telephone: **0191 334 4255** or email: [cem.select@cem.org](mailto:cem.select@cem.org)

---

Copyright © 2019 CEM. All rights reserved.

This case study is for illustrative purposes only and was accurate at the time of writing. All charts are based on anonymised pupil data.