

PRE-ASSESSMENT OPTIONS FOR ENTRY IN 2020 AND BEYOND

Registered applicants for places in Year 9 are pre-assessed. Pre-assessment is a 2 stage process and there are four possible pre-assessment timeline options to increase flexibility for families.

We recommend taking the **earliest** option unless there are particular reasons not to do so.

OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C	OPTION D
STAGE 1: ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST TAKEN AT CURRENT SCHOOL <hr/> Autumn* YEAR 6	STAGE 1: ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST TAKEN AT CURRENT SCHOOL <hr/> Summer* YEAR 6	STAGE 1: ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST TAKEN AT CURRENT SCHOOL <hr/> Autumn* YEAR 7	STAGE 1: ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST TAKEN AT CURRENT SCHOOL <hr/> Spring* YEAR 7
STAGE 2: HEADMASTER'S LIST DAY AT CANFORD <hr/> January / February YEAR 6	STAGE 2: HEADMASTER'S LIST DAY AT CANFORD <hr/> October YEAR 7	STAGE 2: HEADMASTER'S LIST DAY AT CANFORD <hr/> January / February YEAR 7	STAGE 2: HEADMASTER'S LIST DAY AT CANFORD <hr/> May YEAR 7
OUTCOME: <hr/> Before Easter YEAR 6	OUTCOME: <hr/> November YEAR 7	OUTCOME: <hr/> March YEAR 7	OUTCOME: <hr/> May YEAR 7

STAGE 1: Prep Schools will arrange for children to sit the ISEB Common Pre-Test at their school. For those not at a prep school arrangements will be made for them to sit the test at Canford.

STAGE 2: Those meeting the required standard in Stage 1 will be invited to attend a Stage 2 Headmasters' List Day at Canford. This consists of a mixture of activities, tests, and informal interviews.

OUTCOMES: There are three possible outcomes -

- an unconditional place for a few of the very strongest applicants
- a conditional place subject to passing Common Entrance or the Canford Entrance Test in Year 8
- a waiting list place with the chance of a conditional place emerging as time goes on

PRE-ASSESSMENT

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do you pre-assess?

We want pupils to join Canford who are the best fit, so that their senior school years offer the most positive experience possible. We are not just looking for academic aptitude. Wider ability, character, attitude and the potential to contribute and thrive here are also valued highly. Pre-assessment allows us to meet each individual pupil and the chance to see them working within a group. Equally if Canford is not the place for them, the pre-assessment process will flag this, giving families time to look for alternatives. Our schedule is in line with that of an increasing number of schools where Year 6 is rapidly becoming the normal pre-assessment time.

Is it better to register as early as possible?

We recommend registration as early as possible and certainly if one has a particular house preference, as house places are offered in date order.

Can I choose whichever Option I like? (See overleaf)

Yes. This is a decision for parents. It is recommended that you also consult with the Head at your child's current school to choose the most appropriate option of the four. While places will fill up as time goes on, we will keep some places aside for late developers and for strong late applicants, but in general those entering Option D are likely to find only Waiting List places are available.

Do you ask for a reference from the current school?

Yes. References add an important dimension to our understanding of individual pupils.

What is the difference between unconditional and conditional places?

A few very strong candidates will be offered unconditional places. They will be expected to sit tests in the Easter or Summer Term of Year 8 for setting purposes only. Others will be offered conditional places subject to also passing an entrance test in Year 8 (Common Entrance, Canford Entrance Tests or

the Academic Scholarship). In recent years, about 60% of those attending pre-assessment have subsequently been offered places. The offer of a conditional place indicates our confidence in the candidate's potential to pass the entrance test.

What happens if my child is put on the Waiting List?

Those not offered a place immediately after their Headmaster's List day will join the Waiting List. Pupils will be reconsidered as places become available and many do find places emerge in due course.

Does the fact I already have a child in the school make a difference?

Younger siblings of current pupils who attend either Option A or B will not be in competition with other applicants for places, provided they reach an acceptable standard in the pre-assessment.

What happens if I miss all four Option deadlines?

It is still worth getting in touch as late places do often come up and our door is seldom completely closed.

Can I enter for a scholarship without sitting any Pre-Tests?

Scholarships are open to all, regardless of whether one already has a place in the school or not. We reserve a number of places for those who win scholarships without having sat any previous tests. Those unsuccessful at scholarship will be able to join our Waiting List, but there can be no guarantee that a place will become available for them.

What happens next?

We will contact you in advance to invite your child to enter the first available pre-assessment option.

If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Admissions office, either by email admissions@canford.com or telephone 01202 847207.

Stage 1: The ISEB Common Pre-Test

Format

It is an online test used by many senior schools for pupils in Years 6 and 7, consisting of multiple choice questions in verbal reasoning, non verbal reasoning, English and Mathematics.

Location

It is taken by pupils at their school, or at Canford if they are not at a prep school. It is important to remember it can only be taken once per academic year in Years 6 and/or 7 but results are age-standardised so it is fair for all children.

Entry

Once your child has registered for Canford, we will be in touch in good time once we have entered your child for the ISEB Common Pre-Test.

Preparation

No preparation is required and practice tests are not made available by ISEB. For further details please see www.iseb.co.uk/Parents/What-are-the-Common-Pre-Tests

Outcome

Following the ISEB test, we invite pupils to one of our Headmaster's List days. If any children find major difficulties with the ISEB test we will explain to parents that we feel we would not be the right school for them, as we do want to ensure that those invited would be able to cope here academically.

Stage 2: The Headmaster's List Day

Those who perform satisfactorily in the ISEB Common Pre-Test are invited to Canford for a Headmaster's List Day. This day will be a mix of activities, tests and informal interviews. While some apprehension is only to be expected, we aim to make the day a positive experience and it is unusual for children not to enjoy themselves.

ADMISSIONS

Choosing a senior school can be a daunting prospect for any parent. It can seem as if you have only just chosen the first stage of your child's education before you are being asked to think about the next! The complexities of entry procedures can be confusing, and our Admissions staff are always available at the end of the phone or email to offer information and guidance and answer any questions you may have. Here our Registrar answers some frequently asked questions:

How do I get to know the school?

A good place to start is by visiting us. Open Days are held twice a year in April and October and are a good chance to gain an overview, meet pupils and staff, see houses, departments, facilities and catch the flavour of the place. We can also arrange a personal visit with an opportunity to spend more time talking to the Headmaster and to a Housemaster or Housemistress.

Do I need to register early?

We welcome enquiries and visits for children of any age, and parents are encouraged to register by the end of Year 5 if at all possible. This ensures one is involved in the admissions process from the start of Year 6 and also has the advantage of giving a greater likelihood of gaining a place in one's house of choice. Later registration is possible too even if places may be limited, but our door is seldom closed completely.

How can my child get a proper taste of life at Canford?

All pupils who are registered in time are invited to a Discovery Day in the autumn which, unlike Open Day, is an opportunity for children to 'do', rather than just see. A day of varied activities is offered, while for parents it is a chance to reconnect with the school and meet staff. A Question and Answer forum is held with the Headmaster; staff and pupils, which parents often say they find both helpful and illuminating.



Why does Canford pre-assess?

The traditional approach of taking applicants in date order used to encourage parents to book school places very early, sometimes so early that they were selecting a school many years before having a clear sense of whether it was suitable for their child. Not infrequently, the result was a mismatch, occasionally a disastrous one. We still have a few newborns registered (2030 seems a very long way off!) but whereas in times past they would have had priority because of their early registration, now pre-assessment creates a level playing field no matter when one applies.

"The fact that my son had made friends by the end of the day says it all."

Schools that are over-subscribed need some way to select and Canford has pre-assessed for many years for this reason. More recently the introduction of an online Common Pre-Test has made it simple for (even non-selective) schools to offer places sooner than they did before, and pre-assessment is fast becoming the norm for both selective and non-selective.

What kind of pupils are we looking for?

Finding an appropriate match between pupil and school is the aim. A certain level of academic ability is of course needed if pupils are to keep up with the pace of lessons and with their peers, and standards at Canford are high. However, our intake is diverse bringing with it a whole spectrum of interests, personalities and talents. We are looking for bright, curious children who are keen to learn, retain their sense of wonder and are willing to give new things 'a go'.

Co-curricular enthusiasm is important, whether in sport, the arts or elsewhere. It is mindset, as much as raw ability, that is the most vital factor and we are interested in attitude as much as aptitude.



"As a parent I found it informative and my son enjoyed it very much."

"The teaching staff were most welcoming and our daughter came home with a very positive feeling about the school."



"I left my son feeling very nervous. Picked him up happily (and very slightly naughtily) larking about with some new friends, trying to devour all the cakes before the adults ate them ... well done Canford on a great job making everyone feel relaxed and embraced."

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

How does the process work?

We will get in touch with parents of all registered children in advance of the next of the four available pre-assessment 'Options' to guide them through the process, and the attached information sheet gives details of this. The online ISEB Common Pre-Test is taken at one's current school and, all being well, leads to an invitation to a Headmaster's List Day. This combines activities, tests and informal interviews with an opportunity to see some of the school and a chance to let off steam. We also take careful note of references from the pupil's current school.

What are the benefits for parents?

From a parent's point of view, the clear benefit of being offered a place as a result of pre-assessment is in knowing at an early stage that the match of the school and the child is the right one. While those who are offered places may be expected to pass Common Entrance in due course, success at pre-assessment indicates a clear vote of confidence. Occasionally a measure of academic uncertainty may remain after pre-assessment, but we know late developers can come on enormously in the final years at junior school. If we feel confident in a candidate's wider qualities, he or she may still be offered a conditional place and we are able to review academic progress later on so that parents can reach the right decision in the end.

Do children need to do practice for the assessments?

There is little to be gained by preparation, and in many ways there is no better approach than for parents to play the whole thing down and simply encourage children to be their best, natural selves. Some parents have been very glad they gave their child almost no notice of the assessment day. We certainly do not present it to the children as a 'selection process' or a competitive event and we want it to be a friendly and welcoming experience for all. As for the online assessments, we recommend no preparation here either.

What is the day like?

We want the experience to be as stress-free and 'unscary' as possible. Children who feel comfortable will be likely to perform to their full capability, and if it is remembered as an ordeal children won't want to come back! We try to keep the number attending on any given day reasonably small so we can get to know each child properly.

What about the interviews?

'Interview' is a rather grand word for this 'get to know you' session. We hope to coax the children out of themselves and look for an unforced enthusiasm and the openness to engage with and reflect naturally on an unprepared conversation. There is no need to be extrovert. Loudness wins no credit, but co-operative skills and social intelligence do.

Should I be concerned about putting my child through the process?

The possibility of disappointment is an understandable concern for parents, but reassuring explanations in advance help. One can 'only do one's best' and if it doesn't work out there are many other good schools. Most pupils are probably more familiar with the unpredictability of competition than many of their parents - school is a competitive environment and they know this well.

What if I end up on the waiting list?

Unfortunately, with more suitable applicants than the school can accommodate, some will join the waiting list to begin with, but all is not lost and many find places emerge as time goes on. While for those in this situation waiting is of course an anxious process, it is certainly worth holding on if one can.

Over recent years more than 60% of the candidates who have sat the pre-assessment have subsequently been offered places. Further offers will be made through Year 7 and again in the spring of Year 8 when a number of late places can be expected to emerge. We will always give what guidance we can to parents on the waiting list and offer a candid, ongoing view of the likelihood of a place coming up.

"A good balance between hard work and fun."

"The assessment day was a great experience ... loved the whole feel about Canford throughout the day ... wasn't made to feel under too much pressure and hopefully was able to come across as his natural self which is important."

