



Introduction

At Kingswood House, we will prepare all our boys in Year 6 for the skills that sitting a pre-test to Senior School will involve. Parents will have met with Mr Murphy during the course of Year 5 to discuss their son's progress at Kingswood House or beyond; it is the school's expectation that boys will usually remain at Kingswood House up until the end of Year 8 and our most popular senior schools will support this with a conditional or deferred offer after a pre-test. There are internal and external scholarships available for boys which can be applied for in both Years 7 and 9.

Tips for Home

Preparing for the 11+ process is an emotionally demanding journey and one that you want to make as effective as possible. The purpose of this document is to share successful strategies and provide information about how we are preparing the children at school in order that work at home can build on this.

The following tips offer some broad guidelines:

1. When working at home, little and often is more effective than occasional longer periods of study.
2. Try and establish a routine. Early mornings often work well as the remainder of the day is then free.
3. If you are helping your child at home, try and find a quiet time and space where you can offer your full attention.
4. If using an external tutor, they should liaise with the school about your child's strengths and weaknesses.
5. Don't overload your child with different tutors and adult inputs – it can be a case of 'Too many cooks spoil the broth.'
6. Use purposeful conversation as a form of stealth tuition! Getting your child to explain their point of view about a film that you have watched together, evaluating offers in the supermarket, reading and discussing an article on the sports page of a newspaper are all effective stealth teaching techniques.
7. Remember that it isn't necessary to get 100%. Yes, some elements will be challenging but mastery of the most demanding questions isn't always required to secure the offer of a place.
8. Investing time at looking back at your child's mistakes and slowly converting these areas of weakness to strength is the key to success.

What is involved in an entrance test?

The pre-test process varies from school to school. Work in class mirrors most of the testing experiences that the children will need to be aware of and is designed to lend itself to building confidence and consistency. The following areas are generally tested:

1. Free Writing
2. Grammar and spelling accuracy
3. Reading Comprehension
4. Mathematics
5. Verbal & Non Verbal reasoning
6. Interview

Booster Groups & Clinics

The Upper Prep offers sessions specifically designed to develop the children's understanding of the requirements of pre- tests. These are run by subject specialists over six weeks with each of the areas of the test process covered.

Free Writing

The children will often be asked to produce a short piece of free writing – about thirty minutes is usually allowed. At school we are working with the children to use and apply the mnemonic DADWAVERS to help improve the level of structure and interest in their writing.

DADWAVERS

- Description
- Action
- Dialogue
- Where
- Adverb
- Verb
- Estimation of time
- Rhetorical Questions
- Simile or Metaphors

As the children write, they should use DADWAVERS to remind themselves of the different types of sentences that should be used to help add variety and sophisticated sentence structures within their writing. Reminding the children to use DADWAVERS as they complete homework tasks and review and edit their work should help them to become more familiar with the application of this learning support.

An example of writing using DADWAVERS is overleaf:

Dead, twisted branches hung like broken limbs from the trees above the gravestones. Thunder rumbled in the sky above them and lightning clawed at the earth, illuminating the land enough to see that the old bridge had collapsed. "We shouldn't be in here!" one of them whispered. "Shh!" came the reply, "we'll be okay!" From behind a gravestone, a lonely figure emerged into the moonlight. Menacingly, an evil laugh echoed around the cemetery and ricocheted off each of the memorial stones. Moving slowly but purposefully, the figure came straight towards them. Moments passed like hours, as they stood looking into his eyes, his long-dead eyes. Was there really such a thing as ghosts? They hadn't believed in them until now. He wrapped his cloak around himself like a giant bat wing and beckoned for the girls to follow him.

Grammar and Spelling Accuracy

This usually requires the children to identify the correct word or punctuation mark from alternatives offered within the context of a passage of writing. Knowing the rules for apostrophes, speech marks, capitalisation and understanding the meaning in context of common homophones and homonyms will all help to support success in this section of the paper.

Whilst we would always advise children to attempt to use ambitious vocabulary, even if unsure of the spelling, to add interest within their free writing, the ability to spell familiar polysyllabic words will be advantageous.

Reading Comprehension

Many children are inclined to answer without searching for clues within the text and thus lose marks. Careful reference to the text is essential! Question types may require the children to:

1. Extract literal facts
2. Deduce implied facts
3. Comment on effect (What is the effect of this word?)
4. Sequence events correctly
5. Evaluate, compare and contrast events within the text.
6. Give opinion – this should be related to the text and/or connected to relevant experience.

Paying attention to the mark scheme and answering in sufficient detail is important. A commonly made mistake is to overlook the second part of a two-part question.

- Talk to your child about what they have read or watched on television, helping them to develop rounded vocabulary for evaluating and giving opinion. Making connections is vital: *e.g. I liked the book **because** it was about two brothers and reminded me of my family. It was very funny **when** the two brothers played a trick on their father. I liked **how** clearly the brothers were described – especially the little one with red hair and freckles.* (3 marks)

Mathematics

Some schools offer specimen maths papers. We use these to ensure that your child is familiar with its style as an effective preparation. Revisiting and unpicking mistakes and rehearsing similar questions using different numbers may help to develop confidence.

The 'mymaths' website offers an excellent series of lessons and activities to help master areas of identified weakness. The Level 4 Booster packs are an excellent resource for refining basic skills.

Verbal & Non Verbal Reasoning

Verbal reasoning is the element of the test that the children will look at in their English lessons. There is much evidence to suggest that practice over a four to six week period can raise children's attainment in these types of tests. Familiarity with the different styles of questions can help your child to tackle the questions confidently and also manage their time within the test wisely by concentrating first on their preferred question types. Non Verbal reasoning is an indicator of latent IQ and as a general rule, beyond familiarity of the stylistics of questions, you can either do them or you cannot. In other words, some practice is beneficial but progress will plateau quickly and it is not a skill that can be obtained other than by genetics!

Interview

In some instances, pupils will be asked to attend a short interview following a pre-test. This is a great opportunity for KHS boys to shine and show off their personality and manners. The ability to hold a conversation with an adult, and to understand social register, are important life skills and ones which we take very seriously – typically, our boys perform strongly in this element of any selection process. A checklist of advice and possible questions is contained in the 'Interview Technique' guide which you will be given as a part of this procedure. Any boy invited for an interview to a future school will be given a mock interview here at KHS, reliant upon parents advising us as soon as possible, in order to secure a practical window of opportunity to do so.

Resources

The following resources are by no means exhaustive but offer a good starting point:

- Bond Assessment Papers. Consider starting with 9-10 (or even 8-9) books to build confidence in weaker areas before moving onto 10-11. These cover English, maths, Verbal and Non Verbal Reasoning and are tried and trusted.
- CGP Series of 11+ practice books
- English Practice Exercises 11+ (Hammond) is useful for extending more-able readers.
- GL Assessment 11+ Practice Papers
- Walsh series of Verbal & Non Verbal Reasoning books (for a challenge)
- KHS Interview Technique Guide