



ALLEYN COURT PREPARATORY SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER: HANNAH SANDERS BSc, PGCE, MA

11 Plus and Selective Independent Secondary School Examinations

Choosing the best school for your child is an exciting, but sometimes daunting task. There are certainly many aspects to consider when building a complete picture as to what makes a particular school appropriate for your child and your family.

One aspect that is very important in choosing a primary education in this corner of the world, is how well individual schools support children through the examination process. This is because the area in and around Southend-on-Sea boasts a wide selection of selective secondary schools; Grammar Schools, Independent Secondary Schools and selective admissions streams within some Comprehensive Academies. I am often asked by parents to rate Alley Court's 11+ success and I hope that the information shared here is helpful in explaining this.

Below is a chart of 11+ results for the school over the past few years. In that time, we have achieved the highest results across the independent and state sectors combined. However, I would make it clear from the start that as is the case with such data even when measured against other schools, this aspect is only one consideration in making the final decision as to which school would suit your child and your family the best.

The CSSE released figures based on the figures obtained from the percentage pass rate of those who sat the exam, rather than of the whole cohort...as cohorts will vary considerably in academic potential, particularly in schools with smaller year-groups. We use the same model to describe the results at Alley Court as we believe we should be as open and transparent as possible. Some other schools base their figures on the number of children who pass, out of those the school thought would pass – rather than the out of the number of children who took the exam.

A school with this approach to reporting results could experience very high 11+ % scores – for example if only 10 children out of 150 in a cohort sat the test and they all passed...the school would state that 100% of children who sat the test had passed. In a school like ours, where highly aspirational parents may enter children who are on the school's SEND register for the 11+ test, you could expect lower percentage scores. Despite this, using these figures we score higher than other schools locally. This is partly because of the regular reporting we provide parents, but mainly stems from the supportive relationships we build with our children and the detailed knowledge we have of them, allowing for superb teaching and learning. The 11+ is not an add-on, but built into our school curriculum, and led by experienced and expert staff in the school who have been preparing children for the 11+, very successfully, for decades.

There are very few schools in the area who select by academic ability at our age group and although our results might suggest it, we are not a selective entry school. Within Southend-on-Sea, as well as across Essex, the 11+ is seen by many from the mirror perspective to its actual intention. It is a test that is designed to find children who, at the age of 10 (very few are 11 in the second week of Year 6), are academically and developmentally prepared for a rigorous, and competitive curriculum as found in our local Grammar Schools.

We do not encourage cramming children, but certainly do make sure that our children are well-prepared, ensuring that those who have the potential to be happy and engaged in such an academically competitive environment are successful. We design our entire curriculum with all such entrance tests in mind, (many of our children sit entrance tests in Year 6 for independent day and boarding schools as well as the 11+). We assess and report results to parents termly from the spring term in Reception, through to the end of Year 6. These assessments support teachers and parents in understanding the child's progression and development and are supportive of secondary school admissions. We know how important these decisions are and go to great lengths to ensure our dialogue is effective and developmental.



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We ensure that children cover the whole KS2 National Curriculum for English and Maths, by the end of Year 5. In both Year 4 and 5 these subjects are taught using experienced specialists, familiar with the demands the 11+ and Independent School exam papers. We run Practice 11+ Tests and share data with parents. We have not had a child fail who we thought, and whom our data showed, should be a feasible candidate.

However, the 11+ is certainly not the whole picture. Being educated is far more than the sum of knowledge encompassed in English and Maths. We teach an extremely broad range of subjects in a very deep and meaningful way. This diversity and depth often supports children to achieve higher in Maths and English than they would otherwise have done. Without the additional and welcome stimulation of subject specialist teaching in Art, Sport, Science, Music, Drama, French, History, Music etc., many children may underachieve in the vital, but not always quite as engaging (to some children's young minds), core subjects.

A good education is a lifelong goal, not one that can be achieved by the age of 11. However, it is always subject to the strength of an individual's academic, social, emotional and physical foundation. The experiences children have before the age of 11 define them throughout their lives; their ability to learn independently, to react positively to challenging demands; their understanding of teamwork, negotiation and compromise; and the ability to exercise an opinion clearly and confidently are all, in the final analysis, tools that many schools fail to provide by focussing too narrowly. We believe it is imperative that given the extremely diverse secondary education available in the local area, we do not limit those possible options. We ensure children are prepared to thrive by expanding their individual educational horizon through an education second to none.

11+ Pass Rate Data

Year	Number of Pupils Taking Test	Number of Pupils Passing	Percentage Pass Rate
2018	28	20	71%
2019	26	17	65%
2020	24	18	75%
2021	27	14	52%
2022	18	16	89%
2023	17	11	65%
Overall	141	96	69%

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