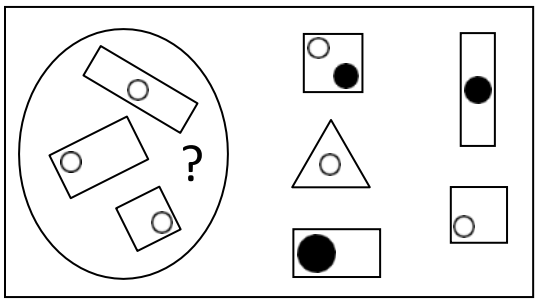
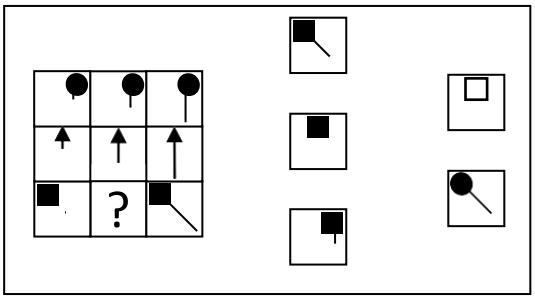
THE HIGHCREST ACADEMY
BANDING TEST

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of test is it?

It is a non-verbal reasoning (NVR) test. Children solve problems using shapes and patterns, such as deciding what makes some shapes alike and what other shapes belong with them or looking to see which shape is missing from a pattern. No equipment is needed other than a pencil and eraser (which we will provide if your child does not have one). Here are two example questions:





How long is the test?

Before the test begins, we spend some time with the children going through a few example questions so that they know what to expect and they can do some practice questions. The test itself lasts for just 25 minutes. The test process (with registration, example questions and the test itself) will take about an hour.

What is the banding test for?

It is an essential part of our admissions process for Year 7 entry. To be a truly "all ability" academy, we need to ensure that the intake is balanced and reflective of our society. As Bucks County Council uses a selective system (ie: some children go to grammar school and therefore we may not have the most able children attending the academy), we need to show that we are taking an equal number of children of all abilities. The results of the banding test are used as part of our admissions process by dividing applicants to the school into four equal sized groups. Once children have been allocated to a band (A,B,C or D), the admissions criteria are then applied to each band to ensure a broad mix of students. **There is no "pass" or "fail"** - the children's test scores simply separate them into different bands.

Does my child HAVE to take the test to be considered for a place at Highcrest?

YES – your child cannot be considered for a place at Highcrest unless they have taken the banding test. Only in very exceptional circumstances will other arrangements be made.

Does it matter if my child gets a low score?
NO – a low score does not necessarily mean that a student will not be allocated a place at Highcrest. Whilst a child scoring top marks and a child scoring bottom marks will be placed in different bands, they will still be considered for a place using the same admissions criteria. Children are divided into bands of equal size, so children in bands A, B, C and D will all have an equal chance of getting a place. Once a child has been placed in a band, their individual score becomes irrelevant.

If my child takes the test, do they HAVE to come to Highcrest?
NO – it is not an obligation to enrol.

Does taking the banding test mean my child is GUARANTEED a place at Highcrest?
NO – you must also apply to Bucks County Council on their preference form which you will receive from your child's primary school. The form must be completed and return to Bucks County Council before their deadline.

So, if my child takes the banding test and I apply to Bucks County Council, then we'll get a place at Highcrest?
NOT NECESSARILY – however, you will have done everything you can to ensure that your child is considered for a place.

What is the admission criteria?

Bucks County Council will allocate the places based on Highcrest's admissions criteria. Priority for admission is as follows:

1) A "looked after child"
2) A child with an EHCP/statement
3) A child with a sibling attending the school in Years 7 to 13 and expected to be on roll at the time of admission
4) Other children by distance from the school, with priority for admission given to children who live nearest to the school, as measured by using the distance measurement method operated by the Local Authority

The same criteria is used within each band, A,B,C or D.

My child has an EHCP/statement, do they need to sit the banding test?
NO - your child will automatically be allocated to band D. If you wish for your child to still sit a banding test and potentially be allocated to a different band you are welcome to do this.

During the banding test, will there be any special considerations made for those children with special needs?
Please be assured that test only takes 25 minutes, only contains non-verbal questions and all children should be able to access the banding test. There is no "pass" or "fail" and a low score will not disadvantage any child with regards to getting a place. Please do notify us of any concerns.

I've already got a child at Highcrest, so surely my younger child doesn't need to take the banding test to get a place?
YES THEY DO – every child who wishes to be considered for a place at Highcrest will need to take the banding test, even if they have a sibling already at the school. If your child does not sit the banding test, we are unable to consider them for a place.

I live just round the corner and I don't want my child to sit another test. Surely you have to give my child a place?
NO - unfortunately if your child does not sit the banding test, then we will be unable to offer them a place at Highcrest, regardless of how close you live to the school.

Does it matter where on the preference form I place Highcrest?
All choices for which you would like your child to be considered should be listed in preference order. Bucks County Council will aim to allocate places in order of preference (where eligible), although there is no guarantee of this. Please refer to Bucks County Council's website (https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-admissions/moving-up-to-secondary-school/) for further details of the preference procedure.

If my child takes the banding test, do they still need to take the 11+?
IT DEPENDS - if you wish your child to be considered for a grammar school place, then they will need to take the 11+. It is your decision and does not affect the Highcrest admissions process.

If my child takes the banding test but passes the 11+, do they still have to come to Highcrest?
NO – not if you have a put a grammar school as your first choice. However, your child will be well catered for educationally and socially if they choose to attend Highcrest.

If my child takes the banding test and does not pass the 11+, will they definitely get a place at Highcrest?
NOT NECESSARILY – however, you will have done everything you can to ensure that your child is considered for a place.

Why can't you use the 11+ test to band the children?
Firstly, not all primary students take the 11+. Secondly, responses from consultation say that the 11+ discriminates against children from less affluent backgrounds, children for whom English is not their first language, for some children with special education needs, such as dyslexia, and for some children who may not have completed the familiarisation tests. The banding test requires minimal language skills and is culturally neutral. Please see their website for further information: http://gl-assessment.co.uk.

Is there any advantage to tutoring my child for the test?
NO – there is no way to tutor for this test; that is one of the reasons we have chosen to use a non-verbal reasoning test.

When they start at Highcrest, are the bands used for streaming or dividing into sets for lessons?
NO – the bands are solely used for the admissions process. Once children start school they are not divided by bands. The bands become irrelevant.

Does it cost anything to take the banding test?
NO – it is free. There is no charge to parents.

Where does the banding test take place?
At the Highcrest Academy.

When is the test?
You will have a choice of days, dates and times during June, July, September, October and November in the year before your expected September admissions date **(ie in June/July when your child is in year 5 and in September/October/November when your child is in year 6**). Some will be on a Saturday morning, some will be at an after school session during the week. We will endeavour to accommodate your preferred test date. The test dates are posted on the school website's Admissions page in May.

Is there an advantage if my child takes the test as late as possible?
NO – your child's test score will be standardised by age, so it does not matter if they take the test in June or October. However, if possible, we would advise that you do not leave it until the last available date in case your child is unwell on the day.

How do I register for a test?
The Highcrest Academy Banding Test Booking Form can be downloaded from our website's Admissions page or requested by email from **bandingtests@highcrestacademy.org.uk**. All forms must be received electronically and at least **one week before** the test you wish your child to sit. Please note that the earlier you return the form, the greater the chance of getting your preferred test date.

Please note that the Booking Form is not an application form to join Highcrest – it is just a form to let you register for a test date.

What happens before the banding test?
Once we have processed your Booking Form, we will send you a confirmation email with the date and time of the session you have been allocated, together with important information on what will happen on the day.

What if I have not received a confirmation email?
If you have emailed your Booking Form, you should receive an automatic reply so you can rest assured that we have received your email. We process the forms in batches, prioritising those with the earliest preferred test dates and we do not process any forms during school holidays. As such, there may well be a time lag before you receive a confirmation email (please check your junk mail folder in case it is there). Please do not worry as you will receive a confirmation email at least a week before your preferred test date. If you have not received one by then do email us at **bandingtests@highcrestacademy.org.uk**

What happens on the day of the banding test?
A parent or responsible adult must bring the child to the test, 15 minutes before the start time. The adult must wait on site while the test process happens (approximately 45 minutes) and then collect the child.

What if we are unable to attend our confirmed test date?
Please email us at **bandingtests@highcrestacademy.org.uk** to let us know.

Will there be anyone at the test to answer my questions about the school?
NO – whilst we want to be helpful, answering your questions on the actual test day could be considered bad practice, as it could be seen as putting pressure on parents. We would, however, be more than happy to answer your questions at any other time, including our open evening (the date of which is posted on the school website).

What happens after the banding test?
We will notify you of the test standardised score, but this will not indicate if a place has been allocated. Please remember, you must still make an application to Bucks County Council using their preferences form. Offers will be made via the Bucks County Council co-ordinated process.

We hope you find this information useful but, if you have further questions, please contact the NVR Co-ordinator by email to **bandingtests@highcrestacademy.org.uk** or telephone on 01494 529866.