



Independent Schools
Examinations Board

COMMON ENTRANCE AT 11+ & 13+ COMMON ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP AT 13+

ENGLISH

Draft Specification

For teaching from September 2021 onwards

For examinations from November 2022 onwards



ISEB CORE AIMS

Pupils who have pursued a course of study based on CE specifications and assessments will:

- Be equipped not only for the next stage of their education, but for life-long learning based on a secure foundation of subject knowledge, concepts and skills and be able to apply what they know to new situations.
- Be enthusiastic learners who are open to new ideas and experiences, curious, questioning and keen to experiment.

They will:

- Enjoy reading and be able to articulate clearly orally and in writing.
- Have the confidence to think, weigh up evidence and make up their own minds, and the resilience to learn from their mistakes.
- Have the skills to work independently and collaboratively.
- Understand how subjects connect with each other.
- Demonstrate cultural and environmental awareness and empathy, developing an understanding of their place in the world.



INTRODUCTION

N.B. The content of this specification is a revision of the specification released in 2012 for 13+. The content of this specification for 11+ is unchanged.

The ISEB English specification embraces the core aims of ISEB and has been devised in accordance with the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum for English.

AIMS

A course leading to ISEB assessment in English at 11+ and 13+ should promote:

Enjoyment of reading

- wide, adventurous and sustained reading, across a range of cultures, periods and literary forms, including prose fiction and non-fiction, poetry and drama
- reading for depth of understanding

Learning through collaboration

- opportunities to further understanding through constructive collaborative work
- articulation and explanation of thought in discussion; active listening and considered response

Mastery of Skills

- development of a confident and engaging personal voice
- appreciation of writers' craft; development of expression in pupils' own writing
- confidence and accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, so that writing is clear, accurate and coherent
- adaptation of language, form and tone, according to purpose and audience
- oral and written articulation of a well-structured, independent and critical response to literature.

11+ SUBJECT CONTENT

Comprehension

Factual or fictional passages for the examination are taken from material appropriate in language, style and content to the age/interest range. These are selected at the setters' discretion without any standard pattern, to encourage a variety of approaches to the development of comprehension skills. An introductory line of explanation precedes the extract. Certain words may be glossed.

The questions are worded as simply and unambiguously as possible. Candidates are expected to be able to:

- give information which can be obtained from a careful reading of the passage
- say how or why a writer is using language in a particular way
- demonstrate an understanding of this by continuing a piece of writing in the same or a different mode
- summarise part of the given information
- supply answers involving reasoning, personal opinion/experience or prediction
- use the text as evidence for answers
- explain vocabulary in context
- display a working knowledge of syntax, punctuation and the main parts of speech

Composition

Candidates are invited to show that they can organise their ideas effectively and convey their feelings or opinions in accurate, continuous writing. The choice of essays covers the following range:

- imaginative/story writing
- factual/personal description
- writing involving discussion/opinion/memory
- a book review
- a picture stimulus

At least one of the essay titles offers a range of content suggestions. The titles are worded as simply as possible, with the rubric using such terms as: *piece of descriptive writing, composition, diary entry, letter, story, write in any way you choose about ..., use this picture as a starting point/basis for ...,* with the intention that candidates should feel able to start writing freely without anxiety about the form.

Book review: personal reading/response

Candidates may write about any book they have read in or out of school and they should start their work by writing the title and author of the chosen book. 'Book' includes poetry and plays. The book question is a general one without a theme, to encourage schools to teach the literature they wish by the methods they wish; literary essays are most useful to receiver schools when they are as personal and as individual as possible. Candidates may be asked to summarise a book or an episode or to give a personal response to a book, author, character or episode which they find particularly striking. Within this broad question there is scope for opinions, comparisons and preferences.

Syntax

Candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate a basic competence with syntax: for example, to distinguish a phrase or clause from a grammatically complete sentence
- work with questions, commands, statements or exclamations
- write in the first person (a diary extract or letter) or the third person (a summary or account of events in sequence)

Punctuation

Candidates should be able to:

- explain the function, in context, of various punctuation marks
- use speech marks/new paragraphs for a few lines of conversation
- set out a discussion in play dialogue

Grammar

Candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate the difference between easily-confused words (such as their/there/they're; it's/its)
- select or comment on the use, in context, of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions or conjunctions
- give the correct part of a verb to accompany a noun

Technical language is avoided as far as clarity permits. The emphasis throughout is on grammar in use, of the sort which represents good practice in language work for pupils aged 9-11.

ASSESSMENTS AT 11+

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

By the time candidates sit the examination, they should be able to:

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- AO1** read a substantial passage unaided and give independent written responses to questions involving a range of comprehension skills;
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- AO2** write unaided at reasonable length on one topic selected from a choice suitable for the age range.
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SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Common Entrance at 11+

		Marks	
Paper 1	Comprehension	25	45 minutes*
Paper 2	Composition	25	45 minutes*

* includes 5 minutes reading/planning time

Paper 1: Comprehension

The paper will contain one extract, followed by one set of questions. Marks for each question will be shown in brackets to assist candidates with time allocation. Approximately 10 marks will be allotted for straightforward comprehension and 15 marks for deeper understanding and open-ended interpretation of aspects of the text. The rubric will ask candidates to use their own words, write in full sentences and take care with handwriting, spelling and punctuation.

Paper 2: Composition

The paper will contain a choice of titles and prompts from which candidates select one on which to base a piece of original work. Marks will cover content, purpose, style, organisation (so a story would have a beginning, middle and end; a debate would look at both sides of the question and draw a conclusion; the content of a letter would suit the purpose given and cover the areas requested, and so on), as well as quality and breadth of language. The planning sheet will not be sent to the senior school. Senior schools have the option of allotting a further 10 marks: up to 5 marks for the standard of spelling, and a further 5 marks for the syntax/punctuation used throughout the response. The purpose of these extra 10 marks is to ensure that the accuracy of a candidate's script is assessed separately from the content.

13+ SUBJECT CONTENT

Reading

Text choices for the examination papers will be taken from literary fiction and non-fiction, appropriate in language, style and content to the age/interest range. An introductory line of explanation may precede the text, to give necessary context. Certain words may be glossed. Texts may take the form of a prose passage, a poem or an excerpt from a play, and will be selected at the setters' discretion without any standard pattern. This is to encourage the study of a variety texts in Years 7 and 8, and different approaches to the development of reading skills.

Candidates should be able to:

- select information which can be obtained from a careful reading of the passage
- understand the literal meaning of complex sentences, facilitated by a command of sentence grammar
- display a working knowledge of syntax, punctuation, the main parts of speech and representation of voice; for example, subject, object, verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, phrase, subordinate clause, preposition, direct and reported speech, narrative voice (first/third person)
- access, understand and respond to deeper (secondary) meanings
- summarise ideas and meanings in their own words
- supply answers, giving explanation and reasoning
- provide evidence from the text for more complex points of understanding
- explain vocabulary in context: respond to meanings within their immediate context and within the context of the whole text
- say why or how language is used in a particular way, exploring the effects of language choices
- show how the form of the writing impacts on meaning
- make an evaluative response
- structure a logical argument in response to a discussion question on the text, using the PEEL model

Writing

Candidates should be able to:

- write in a full range of styles, including narrative, descriptive, informative, discursive, persuasive
- employ the appropriate form, for example: a story; a description; a news report; a report or study drawing conclusions; an information pamphlet or blog post, informing the audience of an issue and making recommendations; a speech or debate of an issue; a written argument; a letter of complaint or recommendation
- adopt a style and register appropriate to the task; use a range of appropriate expression and vocabulary
- make clear use of prompts and follow instructions
- plan their writing, so that it is clearly structured; make use of paragraphs
- show command of accurate sentence grammar, spelling and punctuation

Speaking

Although this is not formally assessed, candidates should be able to:

- explore challenging ideas and concepts in speech that is sustained, clear and confident
- work collaboratively; discuss ideas and negotiate strategies constructively

ASSESSMENTS AT 13+

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Candidates should be able to:

AO3	read substantial passages unaided and give independent written responses to questions requiring a range of comprehension skills;
AO4	show evidence of independent literary work both with an unprepared text and with texts studied during their time in junior school;
AO5	show evidence of original creative work in the form of their choice within the limitation of a timed examination.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Common Entrance at 13+

		Marks	
Paper 1	Reading skills	50	1 hour 10 minutes
Paper 2	Writing skills	50	60 minutes

Paper 1: Reading skills

The paper assesses understanding of an unseen text, which may be prose, poetry or drama.

		Marks
Section A	eight multiple choice questions, testing command of grammatical meaning, vocabulary, idiom and the selection of information	15
Section B	questions of graded difficulty, designed to test deeper understanding: inference, response to the effects of language, imagery and form, and command of meaning in context. Candidates should respond in full sentences, selecting quotation and giving explanation to support their ideas, where indicated	25
Section C	continuing directly from Section B: a 10-mark question requiring an extended written response to the whole text. This should be clearly structured and developed across three paragraphs of argument, using the PEEL* model. Each paragraph should begin with a clear topic sentence,	10

stating the point of argument, and develop with explanation and discussion of evidence; stronger candidates will include analysis of the effects of language and form.

* Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link writing model

Paper 2: Writing skills

The paper provides opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their writing skills.

Candidates choose one option from a choice of four, which may include: narrative writing; a descriptive piece or report on a journey, event or person; a persuasive speech; a letter discussing an issue and making recommendations to the reader. (*See Appendix II for mark scheme.*)

Marks

Response	Clear use of prompts	30
	Effective organisation and structuring of ideas	
	Use of features appropriate to purpose and form	
	Appropriate use of perspective, voice and register	
Language	Spelling	20
	Sentence punctuation	
	Variety of sentence structures	
	Use of expression and vocabulary: imaginative, precise, idiomatic and controlled	
	Consistent use of tense	

SCHOLARSHIP (CASE)

Scholarship papers are based on the 13+ syllabus. They are designed to challenge the most able students in close analysis and imaginative interpretation of literary texts. These may be drawn from any genre or period and will be accessible to students of this level. There are no set texts.

Common Academic Scholarship

Marks

CASE	Response to two or more passages	100	1 hour 45 minutes
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The Common Academic Scholarship Examination (1 hour 45 minutes) provides an opportunity for the most able candidates to explore two or more unseen passages, with questions on content, style and structure. While inviting in-depth discussion of the ideas and meanings of the texts and close analysis of language and form, questions will be sufficiently open-ended to encourage an imaginative and personal response. The paper will also provide an opportunity for expressive writing.

ISEB READING CERTIFICATE (optional)

The ISEB Reading Certificate is designed to encourage good habits of sustained wider reading in Years 7 and 8. It makes formal acknowledgment of commitment to reading across a range of cultures, periods and literary forms, and is designed to extend pupils' experience of different genres. Pupils are encouraged to read a text under each heading, to complement and enrich their habitual reading programme. (*see Appendix I*)

On negotiation with their teacher, pupils complete a task to show that they have read the text and to engage in a thoughtful, imaginative response. This might take the form of a written review, a letter from one character to another, a podcast or short video about the novel, a missing chapter, a map of settings labelled with quotations, or a spoken presentation to the class, for example.

The certificate provides a celebration of achievement in wider reading that can be shared with Senior Schools.

APPENDIX I

	Free choice	A fantasy or science-fiction novel	A detective novel	A text from another culture	An autobiography	A non-fiction book, discussing a contemporary or historical issue	A classic
Title and Author							
Candidate's Response (details of presentation/ written work)							
Teacher comment and signature							

APPENDIX II

PAPER 2 MARK SCHEME

Ideas, structure, form and voice		[30]
Band	Mark	Descriptors
5	26-30	Precise and imaginative use of prompts; intuitive use of appropriate features of form; the writing achieves the purpose in detail and with flair; the writing is structured masterfully to achieve appropriate effects; sustained use of an appropriate register; choice of voice and perspective to engage the reader.
4	21-25	Precise and interesting use of prompts; careful employment of appropriate features of form; the writing achieves the purpose effectively and in some detail; logical and appropriate structure (good sequencing and use of paragraphs); consistent use of appropriate register; appropriate choice of perspective and voice.
3	16-20	A little licence taken with the prompts/ or clear use of prompts, but uninspired; some use of appropriate features of form; the writing mostly achieves the purpose; an attempt to include detail; an attempt to structure the writing logically, which may not be sustained/some effective paragraphing; an attempt to use an appropriate register, to take a relevant perspective and/or voice.
2	11-15	The response strays from the prompts; there is a little evidence of appropriate features of form; the writing partly achieves the purpose; ideas may be general or vague; the structure of the writing is unclear or insufficiently sustained; little attempt to adopt an appropriate register; no evident consideration of perspective or voice.
1	6-10	The response is not relevant to the chosen task; the chosen form is not appropriate; the writing is too vague/lacking in relevance to achieve the purpose; there is no evident attempt to structure the writing; register, voice and perspective are inappropriate/not relevant to the purpose and form of writing.

SPAG and expression		[20]
Band	Mark	Descriptors
5	18-20	Spelling is nearly always accurate; a full range of sentence punctuation is employed accurately to clarify and inform meaning; a full range of sentence structures is used effectively, to enhance the writing; expression and vocabulary are imaginative, precise, idiomatic and controlled; use of an appropriate tense is sustained throughout, changing only to achieve specific effects successfully.
4	15-17	Spelling is mostly accurate; basic sentence punctuation is accurate; expression and vocabulary are used clearly, precisely and appropriately; use of an appropriate tense is consistent throughout.
3	12-14	The spelling of simple words is accurate; basic sentence punctuation is mostly accurate; an attempt to use sophisticated expression and vocabulary lacks control/ or expression and vocabulary is very straightforward; there may be a little unexplained changing of tense.
2	9-11	There is some inaccuracy in the spelling of simple words; the writing gives evidence of regular comma-splicing or other errors in basic sentence punctuation; expression is often uncontrolled, and vocabulary used inappropriately; the candidate moves between tenses without explanation.
1	6-8	Spelling is regularly inaccurate; the writing shows little command of basic sentence grammar and punctuation; the candidate struggles to articulate his or her ideas; there is very little control over use of tense.