

# Information bulletin for primary schools

## Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in **2021**

### Important dates

| Date                        | Process   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Early June 2020             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application information is sent to schools</li> <li>• Application information is updated on the Department's website</li> </ul>  |
| Tuesday 9 June 2020         | Application website opens and parents* apply online   |
| From 9 June 2020            | Advertisements announcing availability of application information in metropolitan, rural and regional newspapers. Advertisements also on Facebook and Twitter   |
| Friday 26 June 2020         | Application website closes. Late applications cannot be accepted.   |
| Tuesday 30 June 2020        | Principals' application processing site opens (government schools only)   |
| Friday 3 July 2020          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals' application processing site closes (government schools only)</li> <li>• Non-government principals complete 'Principal's page' and return it to the High Performing Student Team<sup>^</sup></li> </ul> |
| Wednesday 2 September 2020  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are sent a 'Test authority' letter from the Team</li> <li>• Test centre advice is sent to public schools</li> </ul>  |
| Wednesday 16 September 2020 | Opportunity Class Placement Test  |
| November 2020               | Selection process occurs  |
| Overnight 1 December 2020   | Parents and schools advised of placement outcome information  |
| Late January 2021           | 'Authority to attend an opportunity class' letters sent to parents of successful students   |

**Note:**

Parent\* is defined under the 'Education Act 1990' as 'a guardian or other person having custody or care of a child'.

<sup>^</sup> In this document, the High Performing Students Team will be referred to as the Team.

## Overview of the opportunity class application process for 2021 entry

| DATE                         | PROCESS   | PRIMARY SCHOOL ACTION  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Before 9 June 2020           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletters</li> <li>'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' letter</li> <li>School website home page</li> <li>School signboard</li> </ul>   | <p>Please use as many opportunities as possible to inform parents of Year 4 students to apply for opportunity class placement in Year 5 in 2021 such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advising parents in at least two newsletters or equivalent of the opening and closing dates for applications and the fact that they must apply before the due date.</li> <li>advising parents of the availability to apply for disability provisions if needed.</li> <li>advising the above on the school's website home page and signboard, if applicable, during the application period.</li> <li>sending 'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' letters home to all Year 4 parents.</li> <li>keeping a record of all responses to the 'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' letter.</li> </ul> |
| 9 June 2020                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application website opens on: <a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5">https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5</a></li> <li>Application information emailed to schools.</li> </ul>  | <p>Advise all parents wishing to apply of the availability of application information online.</p> <p>Refer parents without internet access to public libraries, or you may assist parents to apply online.</p> <p>Advise parents not to submit duplicate applications and that they should email the Team to correct any errors they notice after submitting the application.</p>  |
| 26 June 2020                 | Application website closes.   | <p>Print a warning in the school newsletter or other communication about the imminent closure of the application portal a few days before applications close</p> <p>Check that all those intending to apply have done so before the closing date as late applications are accepted only in very limited circumstances.</p>   |
| 30 June 2020                 | The Team sends an email to the school's email account advising the principal of the applications received (government schools only).  | Alert your office staff to make sure this email is passed on to you.   |
| By 3 July 2020               | <p>Government principals' application processing site closes.</p> <p>Non-government principals return the 'Principal's page' provided by applicants.</p>  | <p><u>Government school principals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>verify information entered by parents.</li> <li>make comments in the special comments field if applicable.</li> <li>save and print the emailed list of all completed applications for the school's records.</li> </ul> <p><u>Non-government school principals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>add comments about the student to the 'Principal's page' and return to the Team.</li> </ul>   |
| 2 September 2020             | <p>Parents are sent 'Test authority' letters. Government principals are sent test centre advice.</p> <p>List of all schools and their test centres will be published on the internet at <a href="https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5/the-test">https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5/the-test</a></p> <p>Parents and principals advised of disability provisions granted.</p> | <p>Check that all applicants know where their test centre is.</p> <p>Advise parents to email the Team if they haven't received the 'Test authority' letter by 7 September 2020. Remind them that parents are responsible for transporting their children to and from the test centre.</p>  |
| 16 September 2020            | Opportunity Class Placement Test.   | <b>Please do not schedule other school activities on this day.</b>   |
| 25 September 2020            | Last day for parents to submit change of school choices in writing.   |  |
| November 2020                | Selection process occurs.   |  |
| Overnight on 1 December 2020 | <p>Parents are sent placement outcome information.</p> <p>Government principals receive report of placement outcome information.</p>  |  |
| Late January 2021            | 'Authority to attend an opportunity class' letters sent to parents of students who have accepted an offer.  |  |
| Late January 2021            | Successful candidates enrol in Year 5 at a school with an opportunity class.  |  |

# Placement procedures for Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in 2021

## Significant changes to the OC process this year due to the delay caused by COVID-19

A modified timeline is being implemented to ensure minimal disruption to schools and families. The timeline includes changes to the process to ensure students can commence on Day 1, Term 1 in 2021. The changes include:

1. A new date for online applications. Parents must apply between **9 June 2020** and **26 June 2020**. Late applications cannot be accepted.
2. A new test date - **Wednesday 16 September 2020**.
3. Students may be allocated to government high schools or primary schools to sit the test.
4. Principals will **not** be required to add school assessment scores to the online processing site however principals are requested to verify the information entered by parents.
5. Placement in an opportunity class will be based solely on the results of the test.
6. The illness/misadventure or appeals processes will not be available.
7. The Team will prepare placement decisions for the principal to consider and ratify or change.
8. Offers will be made to the parents of successful students overnight on **1 December 2020**.
9. Successfully placed students commence school on Day 1, Term 1, 2021.

## Actions required by principals

Principals must:

1. Advise parents of Year 4 students of the opportunity to apply online before the closing date (i.e. 26 June 2020). Principals are requested to use the 'Intention to apply for opportunity class placement' letter to keep track of interested applicants.
2. Advertise the opportunity class online application website (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>) on the school's website and in at least two newsletters or equivalent.
3. Publish in a newsletter or equivalent a warning that the application site is closing.
4. Ensure that important events such as school camps or athletic carnivals are not scheduled on the day of the test (i.e. Wednesday 16 September 2020).
5. Assist parents who do not have access to the internet to apply online.

6. Verify information entered on student applications by applications on the principals' processing site from Tuesday 30 June to Friday 3 July 2020. Non-government principals are to return the 'Principal's page' to the Team by 3 July 2020.
7. Liaise with the Team about preparations to accommodate disability provisions, if applicable.
8. Ensure the Team is informed about students who have the potential to disrupt the test centre they will be allocated to.
9. Advise parents about the test centre the candidates have been allocated to in case their individual test centre advice goes astray.

## What are opportunity classes?

Opportunity classes cater for high potential and academically gifted Year 5 and Year 6 students. Opportunity classes are offered at 76 government primary schools in NSW.

These classes help high potential and gifted students to learn by grouping them with other students of similar ability, using specialised teaching methods and materials.

Students who are placed attend the opportunity class full time in Years 5 and 6.

## Application criteria

Selection criteria, general procedures and an outline of the application process for the placement of students in Year 5 in opportunity classes are on the [Department's website](#) and contained in the application information booklet and are not repeated in this document.

## Providing advice to parents

- Each year, a growing number of schools receive complaints from concerned parents that they were not advised by the school about applying for opportunity class placement. To avoid these situations it is vital that principals actively advise all parents of Year 4 students that they can apply for Year 5 opportunity class placement in 2021.

Parents apply online at the following link: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>

- Applications are open between **Tuesday 9 June** and **Friday 26 June 2020**.

**It is more vital than ever that principals should make sure all parents are aware of the opening and closing dates for applications as the shorter timeline this year means that no late applications will be considered under any circumstances.**

# Placement procedures for Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in 2021

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- Ensure that the opening and closing dates for applications and the Department's website are advertised at least twice in school newsletters or equivalent and on the school's website home page. A note on the school's signboard would also be helpful. A warning close to the closing date is also appreciated. Suggested wording to be used is shown below:

Applications for Year 5 entry to opportunity classes in 2021 must be made online from **Tuesday 9 June 2020 to Friday 26 June 2020** at:  
<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>  
Applications must be made before the closing date. Late applications cannot be accepted.

- Principals can advise parents using the 'Intention to apply for opportunity class placement' letter which is included on page 7 of this document. An electronic template is available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/general-information> under the heading 'Resources for schools'. Ensure parents know that the 'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' letter is not an application.
- Advertisements will be placed in metropolitan, rural and regional newspapers and other social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to publicise opportunity classes and the closing date for applications.
- Translated information about the opportunity class placement test is published at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/translated-documents>

## Suitability

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Encourage parents to ask you about the suitability of opportunity class placement for their children, but be cautious about making predictions about a student's chances of selection.

## Acceleration

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No parent of a Year 3 student should be encouraged to apply unless the school has identified the child as a suitable candidate for accelerated progression into Year 5.

## Repetition

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Parents of students who are in Year 5 in 2020 should be discouraged from applying unless there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. student is very young.

Opportunity class principals and executive officers have discretion not to place students who are currently in Year 5 and whose parents wish them to repeat Year 5 in an opportunity class in 2021.

## Reapplying

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During the selection process, opportunity class principals and executive officers consider carefully whether students who took the Opportunity Class Placement Test in the previous year have gained undue benefit from their experience with the test.

## New virtual class for rural and remote applicants

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After the successful completion of a two year pilot project, the NSW Department of Education is converting the pilot of Stage 3 virtual opportunity classes, based on the Aurora College model, to become a new Year 5 opportunity class in rural and remote NSW for 2021 entry. The new class will allow students in these communities to access a program for high potential and gifted students, removing the need to relocate to larger regional or metropolitan centres. The new virtual opportunity class was officially announced by Minister Mitchell on 28 February 2020.

Students connect with their teachers and classmates in timetabled lessons through a virtual learning environment, which comprises web conferencing software, a learning management system, and a range of cutting-edge online communication and collaboration tools. Aurora College will provide each student with a laptop, headset and web-camera.

The virtual opportunity class curriculum will have a STEM-focus, delivered through an inquiry based learning approach. Students will study the content of the Mathematics and Science and Technology syllabuses. Aurora College will have responsibility for teaching, assessing and reporting in these areas of the curriculum. The home school will deliver the balance of the curriculum.

A yearly residential school will give students the opportunity to meet and work with their peers and teachers. The college provides supervised bus transport to and from the residential school.

Principals of rural and remote schools (excluding existing opportunity classes and their surrounding schools) will be required to accommodate any successful students. The operational model of Aurora College is based on face-to-face, real time lessons. This model requires each partner school to build part of their timetable from the common timetable template. Following the release of outcome placement information to parents on 1 December 2020, Aurora staff will liaise directly with the principal of each host school to plan for and support the curriculum of shared students.

Non-government school applicants who are successfully placed will need to enrol their child in an eligible government primary school to participate in the virtual opportunity class.

# Placement procedures for Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in 2021

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The new virtual opportunity class is not available to students who will be enrolled in a rural or remote primary school which offers an opportunity class or any of their surrounding schools. It is also not available to metropolitan and regional students. View the list of eligible host schools at:

[https://www.aurora.nsw.edu.au/files/2020/02/Authorised\\_hosts.pdf](https://www.aurora.nsw.edu.au/files/2020/02/Authorised_hosts.pdf)

A detailed fact sheet is available at:

<http://www.aurora.nsw.edu.au/partner-school-information-primary/>

Find out more about Aurora College at:

<http://www.aurora.nsw.edu.au/>

## Application processing by government school principals

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Principals will be emailed on **Tuesday 30 June 2020** with detailed instructions for for all applicants through the principals' processing site. **Principals will not be required to prepare or enter school assessment scores** for this year's opportunity class process but will be required to verify information entered by parents. The email will be sent to the school email account.

## Application processing by non-government school principals

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Non-government principals do not have access to the principals' processing site.

Principals of non-government schools are asked to make comments about the student on the 'Principal's page' provided by the parents. The school should forward the form to the Team by email or to the address shown on the form by **Friday 3 July 2020**.

## Reports

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Government schools will be emailed updates about which of their students have applied, even where there were no applications from parents of students at their school. Principals or their delegates should reconcile these names against the names on any 'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' forms they received. Where parents have returned an 'Intention to apply for an opportunity class' form but have not applied, it would be appreciated if schools reminded them to apply by the closing date. NB: Despite warnings to the contrary, some parents still expect the school to apply on their behalf.

Please check the report to ensure that all applicants from your school have been listed and that all details are correct. Let the Team know about any listed students not enrolled in your school and any duplicate applications for the same student.

## Testing of students

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All candidates are required to take the Opportunity Class Placement Test on **Wednesday 16 September 2020**.

Candidates are identified by answer booklet number and not by name to ensure impartiality in the marking process.

This year, the Opportunity Class Placement Test will be conducted in test centres in government primary and high schools. Presiding officers and supervisors will administer the test.

All applicants will be sent 'Test authority' letters on **Wednesday 2 September 2020** advising which test centre they have been allocated to. Please ensure that applicants from your school are advised about the test centre their students have been allocated to in case their individual letter goes astray.

Please use your newsletter or other communication method to let parents know where candidates from your school are being tested. The Team supplies suggested wording in the email it sends to schools advising them about the test centre.

Test centres will also be listed and mapped on the [Department's website](#).

**Parents of students sitting the test are responsible for making travel arrangements to and from the test centre.** Students are expected to return to school after the test and should not be marked absent for the first half of the day unless the school has been advised that the student did not sit the test.

The following timetable is approximate and will vary according to the size and location of the test centre.

| Activity  | Time                |
|---|---------------------|
| Parents transport candidates to test centre       | by 9.00 am          |
| Administration and test practice                  | 9.00 am – 9.50 am   |
| Part 1 of test (30 minutes)                       | 9.50 am – 10.20 am  |
| Break (candidates remain in test centre)          | 10.20 am – 10.30 am |
| Part 2 of test (30 minutes)                       | 10.30 am – 11.00 am |
| Test papers collected                             | 11.00 am – 11.10 am |
| Candidates dismissed and parents collect students | 11.10 am – 11.15 am |

## Disability provisions

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The Team considers requests for disability provisions and informs the parent/s and school principal of the provision/s that have been approved.

Where a student has a disability including a medical condition or behavioural disorder requiring separate supervision during the test, the student's primary school

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is requested to send an aide or other staff member to ensure that the student can always be supervised by two staff members.

Principals have an obligation to identify students who may pose a risk to other students or staff at a test centre. Principals do this by making a comment in the special comments section of the principal's processing site.

### Preparing students for the test

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The Opportunity Class Placement Test is a secure test and papers are unavailable for scrutiny before, during or after the test session.

The Department does not endorse coaching for the Opportunity Class Placement Test as it is designed as a measure of academic ability or potential.

Parents or staff members who wish to familiarise students with the test could use the sample test papers located on the website at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5/the-test>

The practice sample tests can assist students by providing them with experience in:

- answering the questions on a separate answer sheet
- time management
- checking the number of the question against the number of the answer to avoid misalignment of their answers.

**Note:** The page numbers on the sample answer booklet do not match the page numbers of the sample question items but the page numbers will match in the actual test.

Practice with any other kind of multiple-choice questions could also help students become familiar with test techniques useful for this kind of test.

### Selection process

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Due to COVID-19, approval has been given to change the placement process for this year. The executive officer from the Team will prepare placement decisions based on the order of merit and analysis of individual considerations using departmental guidelines.

The principal of the primary school with an opportunity class will consider and approve final placement decisions instead of having a committee to do so.

### Placement outcome information and reports

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The Team will email or post individual placement outcome information to parents overnight on **1 December 2020**.

Government primary school principals will be sent an initial outcome report for the principal's reference only. The report will show all students who have received offers, those on reserve lists and those who have been unsuccessful. It will also show the placement scores achieved by students. This report is **strictly confidential**.

The report might indicate that some students have been placed on 'hold', pending further investigation of matters such as residency status or social and emotional maturity in the case of those seeking accelerated progression.

### Communication with schools

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Placement outcome information is encrypted and sent to the school email account.

The password is emailed to the principal's @det.nsw.edu.au email address.

**School staff should inform the Team immediately if there are relieving or acting principals so the password can be re-sent to them.**

### How are students considered for placement?

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All students are ranked and placed in order of academic merit. For opportunity class placement in 2021, academic merit is determined by the results of the Opportunity Class Placement Test scores. The score is expressed as a calculated placement score out of 300.

| Strand                                  | Test scores |
|---|-------------|
| English (including reading and writing) | 100         |
| Mathematics                             | 100         |
| General Ability                         | 100         |
| <b>Total placement score</b>            | <b>300</b>  |

# Intention to apply for Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in 2021

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Dear Parent/Carer

Opportunity classes can provide intellectual stimulation by grouping together high potential and gifted students who may otherwise be isolated from a suitable peer group. Successful students will usually have to leave their current school to enrol in a school with an opportunity class for Years 5 and 6.

## New for 2021 entry

A Year 5 virtual opportunity class has been established at Aurora College for students in rural and remote NSW. Further information is available at <http://www.aurora.nsw.edu.au/>

## Testing and assessment

This year applications for opportunity class placement are considered on the results of the Opportunity Class Placement Test. Students who wish to be considered for opportunity class placement will sit the Opportunity Class Placement Test on **Wednesday 16 September 2020**.

## How to apply

If you would like to have your child considered for Year 5 opportunity class entry in 2021, you need to apply between **Tuesday 9 June 2020** and **Friday 26 June 2020**. You will need to access the online application at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5> . You must not use the child's email address.

If you do not have internet access, you could apply at a public library. If you have a disability that prevents you from using a computer, you can contact the High Performing Students Team for assistance after **9 June 2020**. Contact details can be found on the web site shown below.

You must submit only **ONE application** for each student.

**Important – the school cannot apply on your behalf.**

Yours sincerely

Principal

**THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FOR ENTRY TO AN OPPORTUNITY CLASS**

**You will need to register and then apply through the Department's website:**

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>

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Cut along the dotted line and return the completed slip below by next Friday.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

I intend to apply for opportunity class placement in 2021.

Yes  No

### If Yes

I have internet access and will be applying online

### OR

I do not have internet access and will use the public library to complete the application

I understand that I need to register and then apply through the Department's website.

Signature of parent/carer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Placement procedures for Year 5 entry to an opportunity class in 2021

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## Further information

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Resources for schools are published on the internet at:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/general-information> under the heading 'Resources for schools'.

Information for parents is published on the internet at:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>

Contact the High Performing Students Team at:

**Email:** [ssu@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:ssu@det.nsw.edu.au)

**Telephone:** 1300 880 367 (for parents) or (02) 7814 3626 (for principals only)

**Post:** GPO Box 33, SYDNEY NSW 2001

For regular updates on the placement process log into Facebook to access this link:

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/159342048077050/>

**For information on the opportunity class placement process go to:**

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5>

**Information about score processing for opportunity class placement is provided at:**

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/year-5/selection-process>

**Detailed information about the 'Rules and procedures for Year 5 placement in an opportunity class' is provided at:**

[https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/items/89ba8c23-1b03-44a2-95c6-60239cd7e0a9/1/viewcontent/007c287a-c545-45af-a47f-2d14df82988c?\\_sl.t=true](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/items/89ba8c23-1b03-44a2-95c6-60239cd7e0a9/1/viewcontent/007c287a-c545-45af-a47f-2d14df82988c?_sl.t=true)