

Banding Arrangements for Year 7 Entry in Sept 2026

Most Tower Hamlets Secondary Schools use a 'local' banding system to ensure their Year 7 intake is balanced across the pupil ability ranges. Pupils are grouped in one of four bands (A, B, C and D – D being the highest level),

Pupils are assigned their Band based on a Digital CATS4 assessment that they complete in the Autumn Term of their Year 6. This is explained as follows:

Digital CATS4 Assessment

CATS4 is a cognitive ability test that assesses a pupil's ability in four areas:

1. Verbal Reasoning – the ability to express ideas and reason through words;
2. Non-verbal Reasoning – problem-solving using pictures and diagrams;
3. Spatial Reasoning – to look at a shape and imagine what it would look like from different angle;
4. Quantitative Reasoning – the ability to use numerical skills to solve a mathematical problem.

Pupils complete a digital (online) test made up of eight sections, split across three 'parts.' Each 'part' takes approximately 45 minutes. It is taken on either an iPad, PC or laptop.

The test scores will allow the Local Authority to rank and band pupils into four equal groups (A, B, C and D).

Pupils in Year 6 in Tower Hamlets primary schools and all applicants to Tower Hamlets secondary schools, will be assessed using the same method in the following periods:

- Year 6 pupils in Tower Hamlets Schools will test during the September of their final year at primary school.
- Pupils who miss the September date will be tested in November in a Local Authority test centre. This includes, but is not exclusive to children in independent settings, home educated children and out-borough applicants. The test centres will be hosted by Tower Hamlets secondary schools.

Banding Assessment Testing Summary

Type of assessment	Digital CATS4 assessment: • Verbal Reasoning • Non-verbal Reasoning • Spatial Reasoning • Quantitative Reasoning
Assessment Provider	GL Assessment
Assessment dates	September of Year 6 or November of Year 6
Assessment venue	September 2025 - in all Tower Hamlets primary schools November 2025 – in a secondary school 'Test Centre'

Banding FAQ

How are the four banding groups decided?	The four banding groups are based on the range of ability of pupils assessed in the Autumn of Year 6
Are these results available before the application closing date (31 October)?	No
How does this apply to children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?	Children with an EHCP (complex needs) receive a nominal Band A outcome and placed in the Band A group.
What happens to children who miss the assessment?	Late Applications for exceptional reasons are placed in the Band B group. Assessment refusers receive an 'Untested' outcome and are placed in the Untested group. They may have their applications considered after the children who have taken the banding test.
Can my child retake the test?	No. This is an administrative test to support with the transfer to secondary school. Children may only take it once.
Do all Tower Hamlets Secondary Schools use banding?	No. There are three schools that do not use banding as part of their admission arrangements i.e. Bishop Challoner, Wapping High and Canary Wharf College.