

Frequently Asked Questions on Pupil Ability Banding

What is Banding?

Banding is a method for a school to achieve an admission intake that reflects the full range of abilities of all children in the local authority. Banding is used **only** when a school is oversubscribed.

Why do Schools in Tower Hamlets use banding?

Banding is very effective in Tower Hamlets where there is a greater concentration of schools serving a number of children. Banding helps to reduce segregation and enables schools to achieve comprehensive intakes with a broader ability range and a wider social mix than would otherwise be the case. Headteachers in Tower Hamlets are committed to using banding so that school admission arrangements are fair and accessible.

How is Banding used within Tower Hamlets?

Tower Hamlets uses banding at the point when children transfer from primary to secondary school. Each secondary school's intake is divided equally across four bands, designed to be representative of the range of ability of children in the local area.

Do all schools in Tower Hamlets use Banding?

No, but the majority do. The school's admissions policy will state whether or not it uses banding.

How does the Local Authority assign pupils to a Band?

All children in Tower Hamlets primary schools are tested on their numeracy and literacy in the Summer term of Year 5. The test scores are then submitted to the Local Authority. The Local Authority uses this information to determine the range of ability for children in the local area. The children whose test scores place them in the top quartile (25%) are assigned to Band D and the children whose test score places them in the lowest quartile (25%) are assigned to Band A. The second quartile of children is assigned to Band C and the third quartile assigned to Band B. Here is an example of the Banding model:

- 25% of children score between 85%-100% (Band D)
- 25% of children score between 63%-84% (Band C)
- 25% of children score between 45%-62% (Band B)
- 25% of children score between 0%-44% (Band A)

What if a child has not taken the Banding Test?

A child who has not taken the test will be assigned a Band according to a teacher assessment.

Does being assigned higher Band mean that a child will have a better chance of gaining a place at the preferred school?

No, being in higher band does not increase the likelihood of a child being offered a place at the preferred school(s). Banding is intended for the purpose of ensuring that a school achieves a balanced intake when it is oversubscribed. It is designed to be fair to all children, whatever their ability.

When do Parents know what Band their child has been assigned?

Parents are notified of the Band their child has been assigned at the beginning of the school year when their child reaches Year 6 and well before they are required to submit their application for secondary school transfer.

How is the oversubscription criteria applied within each band?

The number of children offered places from within each band is proportionate to the size of the local band, and places are allocated according to the school's published oversubscription criteria. Here is an example:

Band	D	C	B	A	Total
Number of applicants for the school in each band	90	82	80	74	326
Percentage of places allocated to each band	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%
Number of places offered using the school's oversubscription criteria	60	60	60	60	240
Number of applicants that cannot be admitted	30	22	20	14	86

The school's intake will therefore reflect the range of ability of children within the Tower Hamlets area.

What happens if one or more of the bands are undersubscribed?

If there are fewer than 60 applications in a particular band then all the pupils applying within that band will be admitted. The unfilled places in the band would then be allocated to an adjacent band to ensure that all 240 places are filled. Here is an example:

Band	D	C	B	A	Total
Number of applicants for the school in each band	55	117	54	100	326
Percentage of places allocated to each band	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%
Number of places offered using the oversubscription criteria	55	65	54	66	240
Number of applicants that cannot be admitted	0	52	0	34	86
What happened?	The 5 unfilled places in Band D were allocated to Band C	5 extra places were filled by children in Band C	The 6 unfilled places in Band B were allocated to Band A	6 extra places were filled by children in Band A	All 240 places were filled.