



THE FREE PARENT'S GUIDE

Cracking the Dorset GL 11+

Everything you need to prepare your child for grammar school
entrance — calmly, confidently, and in good time.

Specialist 11+ tutors in Dorset

Bournemouth · Poole · Parkstone

atlas11plus.co.uk

You've got this — and so has your child.

The 11+ can feel enormous. It needn't. With a clear plan and a calm home, most children can be well prepared without losing their weekends — or their love of learning.

We're Atlas 11+, a specialist team preparing Dorset children for the GL Assessment grammar school exam. The name is deliberate: in myth, Atlas carries the weight of the world so others don't have to. That's how we see our job — to shoulder the planning and the strategy, so your family can focus on the learning.

This short guide gives you the map: what the exam is, what it tests, when to start, exactly how you can help at home, and the mistakes that quietly trip families up. No jargon, no scare tactics — just what works.

What's inside

- The Dorset 11+ at a glance
- How you can help at home
- What each paper really tests
- 10 common parent mistakes
- A realistic prep timeline
- Nerves, confidence & exam day

"Calm children perform better. Our whole approach is built on that one idea."

The Dorset GL 11+ at a glance

A quick, plain-English overview of what your child is preparing for.

The schools

The area's selective grammar schools — **Poole Grammar**, **Parkstone Grammar**, **Bournemouth School** and **Bournemouth School for Girls** — select using the **GL Assessment 11+**.

The three papers

English (comprehension, spelling, punctuation, grammar & vocabulary), **Maths**, and **Verbal Reasoning**. All papers are **multiple choice**.

Key facts worth knowing

- The exam is sat near the **start of Year 6** (early in the autumn term), so the real work happens across Year 5 and the summer before.
- You usually **register the summer before** — check each school's website for exact dates and don't miss the window.
- Scores are **age-standardised**, so younger children aren't disadvantaged for being born later in the year.
- There's **no negative marking** — an educated guess is always better than a blank.

Always confirm the current details on each school's admissions page — arrangements can change year to year. Unsure which schools suit your child? That's exactly the kind of thing we help families think through.

What each paper really tests

Knowledge matters — but so does reading carefully, working at pace, and knowing the question types.

English

A reading **comprehension** plus **spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary**. The single biggest driver here is *reading widely* — it builds the vocabulary and inference the paper rewards.

Mathematics

KS2 maths applied to **problem-solving**, with a premium on **speed and accuracy**. Fluent times tables and number bonds free up thinking time for the trickier questions.

Verbal Reasoning

Logic with words and numbers — **synonyms & antonyms, letter and number series, codes, analogies and word patterns**. These question types are very learnable once a child knows the methods, which is why technique practice pays off so quickly.

What "good" looks like

Not just right answers — but a child who reads the question carefully, keeps moving, manages the clock, and never leaves a blank. Those habits are taught, not innate.

A realistic preparation timeline

Little and often, started in good time, beats a frantic final sprint every time.

YEAR 4 / EARLY YEAR 5

Build the foundations

Daily reading, growing vocabulary, secure times tables and number bonds. No pressure — just strong basics and a love of learning.

YEAR 5

Introduce the question types

Meet Verbal Reasoning formats and exam-style questions gently, alongside steady English and Maths. Short, regular sessions — consistency over intensity.

SUMMER BEFORE YEAR 6

Step it up

Full coverage of all three papers, timed practice, and a first full mock under exam conditions. This is the ideal window for an intensive push.

FINAL WEEKS

Polish & stay calm

Targeted practice on weak spots, exam technique, a couple more mocks for familiarity — then ease off, sleep well, and walk in confident.

Starting late? Don't panic. A focused final stretch — especially a structured intensive plus a mock or two — can make a real difference. The first step is simply knowing where your child stands today.

How you can help at home

You don't need to be a teacher. A few simple habits, done consistently, move the needle more than anything.

- **Read every day — and talk about it.** Twenty minutes of reading, then a chat about what happened and what tricky words meant, quietly powers English *and* Verbal Reasoning.
- **Grow vocabulary.** A "word of the day", noticing new words while reading, simple synonym/antonym games in the car.
- **Make times tables automatic.** Speed in Maths comes from not having to think about the basics.
- **Little and often.** Short, regular practice beats long, draining sessions — and protects motivation.
- **Practise the clock (later on).** Once technique is solid, timed practice builds the pace the exam demands.
- **Model calm.** Children read our stress. Keep it light, keep downtime, protect sleep and play.
- **Praise effort, not just marks.** "You worked hard at that" builds resilience; "you're so clever" can make children afraid to fail.

10 common mistakes parents make

Every one of these is easy to avoid once you know to look for it.

- 1 **Leaving it too late** — then cramming the summer before. Start gently, earlier.
- 2 **Going too hard, too soon** — burnout and exam-anxiety are real risks. Pace it.
- 3 **Drilling content but ignoring technique** — timing and question strategy win marks.
- 4 **Skipping mock exams** — most children stumble on unfamiliarity, not knowledge.
- 5 **Comparing your child to others** — it erodes confidence and tells you little.
- 6 **Over-tutoring** — too many tutors or hours can overwhelm. Quality over quantity.
- 7 **Neglecting sleep and downtime** — a rested brain learns and recalls far better.
- 8 **Only ever drilling weaknesses** — balance it with wins to keep confidence high.
- 9 **Hovering or doing the work for them** — children need to struggle a little to learn.
- 10 **Not researching school choice** — pick schools that genuinely suit your child.

Nerves, confidence & exam day

Most children don't fall short on what they know — they fall short doing it calmly, against the clock, in an unfamiliar room.





That's the part parents most often miss, and it's very fixable. Familiarity is everything:

- **Practise under real conditions.** Timed papers, quiet room, official-style answer sheets — so the real thing feels like a rehearsal they've already done.
- **Sit at least one full mock.** It turns the unknown into the familiar and shows exactly what to polish.
- **Have a simple exam-day routine.** Good sleep, a proper breakfast, arrive early, a calm word: "just do your best — that's all we want."
- **Teach a "stuck" plan.** Don't panic, make your best choice, move on, come back if there's time. Never leave a blank.

A realistic mock is one of the highest-value things you can do in the run-up — it's why we built our **Mock Exam Experience** around exactly this.

Where Atlas 11+ comes in

Whatever stage you're at, there's a calm, tailored way forward — and it starts free.

-  **Free online diagnostic**
A quick, GL-style assessment that gives you an instant, subject-by-subject snapshot of where your child stands today.
-  **Weekly tuition — 1-to-1 or small group**
A tailored plan across English, Maths and Verbal Reasoning, with honest progress updates and no long contracts.
-  **Atlas Momentum — the 5-day summer intensive**
Focused teaching across all three papers, a full timed mock, and a same-day parent & pupil debrief with a written Exam-Ready Plan.
-  **Mock Exam Experience**
A realistic, full-length GL mock under exam conditions — so the real day feels familiar.

Start with two free things, today:

① Try the free diagnostic at atlas11plus.co.uk · ② Book a free, no-obligation assessment — we'll talk you through your child's result and the best next step.

Your quick-start checklist

- Set up a daily 20-minute reading habit (and chat about it)
- Get times tables and number bonds fast and automatic
- Find out which schools you're aiming for, and their exact dates
- Take the free Atlas 11+ diagnostic to see where your child stands
- Make a simple, little-and-often plan — or let us build one for you
- Plan in at least one full mock before exam day
- Above all: keep it calm, and praise the effort

Ready when you are.

Book a free assessment or try the free diagnostic — no pressure, no obligation.

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The calm, confident path to grammar school.