

# The 2026 OC Exam: Complete Guide for Year 4 Parents

## What's Changed, What to Expect & How to Prepare Before May

A free resource from Scholarly Training

For parents of Year 4 students sitting the OC test in 2026

### **INSIDE THIS GUIDE:**

- The complete 2026 OC test format (all 3 components broken down)
- What has changed from previous years (and why it catches students off guard)
- Competitive score benchmarks by school tier
- Key dates, registration, and what to expect on test day
- The 5 areas where students lose the most marks
- Why understanding the test is not the same as being ready for it

# This Is the Year. The Test Is Months Away.

Your child is in Year 4. The OC placement test is scheduled for May 2026. This is not next year's problem. This is now. Thousands of families across NSW are in the final stretch of preparation, and the decisions you make in the coming weeks will directly affect your child's result.

The test your child will sit is not the same test that was administered in previous years. The format has changed. The question styles have changed. And many families are still preparing using outdated materials and advice. This guide gives you the complete, current picture so you can make smart decisions with the time you have left.

*"In the final months, the difference between a good result and a great result is not how hard you work. It is whether you are working on the right things."*

## Section 1

# The 2026 OC Test: Complete Format Breakdown

The OC placement test has three components, all completed on a computer. No paper-based option. Total testing time is approximately 100 minutes. Your child will sit it over a weekend (Friday to Sunday), allocated to one specific day.

Component	Duration	Questions	What It Tests
Reading	30 min	40 questions	Comprehension, inference, vocabulary in context, authorial purpose
Mathematical Reasoning	40 min	35 questions	Number, algebra, patterns, spatial reasoning, multi-step problems
Thinking Skills	30 min	30 questions	Abstract patterns, analogies, logical deduction, sequence completion

## What Each Component Looks Like

### Reading (30 minutes, 40 questions)

Multiple passages of varying length and genre. The 2026 format includes collocation-style texts where students must understand how words connect across a passage. Questions test literal comprehension, inference, vocabulary in context, and authorial purpose. That is roughly 45 seconds per question. Speed and depth both matter.

### Mathematical Reasoning (40 minutes, 35 questions)

This tests reasoning, not calculation. Questions cover number, algebra, measurement, geometry, and pattern recognition. Many are multi-step and require careful reading. The most common reason students lose marks here is misreading the question, not getting the maths wrong.

### Thinking Skills (30 minutes, 30 questions)

Abstract reasoning questions that do not rely on learned content: pattern recognition, spatial reasoning, analogies, sequence completion, logical deduction. Students who have practised this question type consistently outperform those seeing it for the first time. Prior exposure is the critical factor.

## Section 2

# What Has Changed in the 2026 Test

If your child is preparing with materials or methods from previous years, they may be practising for a test that no longer exists. Here are the key changes:

### Fully computer-based

The entire test is on screen. Students who are not comfortable reading, scrolling, and clicking answers under time pressure on a computer are at a significant disadvantage. Paper-based practice alone is not enough.

### New collocation text format in Reading

Reading passages now include collocation-style questions testing how words relate to each other within and across sentences. This goes beyond simple comprehension. It tests structural understanding of language.

### Heavier emphasis on inference

Across all three components, the test places greater weight on inference. Students are asked "why did the author choose this word" and "what can you conclude from this pattern." Literal recall is no longer enough.

### Digital stamina required

100 minutes of focused on-screen work is a significant cognitive load for a 9 to 10 year old. Students who have only practised in short bursts or on paper may struggle with fatigue and focus in the second half.

### Section 3

## Competitive Scores and Placement

There is no single pass mark. Placement depends on your child's score relative to other applicants and your school preferences. But historical data gives us a clear picture of what competitive looks like.

### Score Benchmarks (Approximate)

- **Top-tier OC schools** (Chatswood, Artarmon, Hurstville): scores typically 90+ (78%+)
- **Mid-tier OC schools:** scores typically 85-90 (74-78%)
- **Lower-demand OC schools:** scores from 75-85 depending on year

Your child does not need a perfect score. But they need to perform comfortably above average across all three components. A single weak area can pull the entire score below competitive thresholds.

### How Preferences Work

Parents nominate up to 2 preferred OC schools. The algorithm tries your first preference first. If your child's score is high enough, they are placed. If not, it tries your second. If neither works, your child may be offered a place at the nearest school with availability.

**Strategic implication:** listing two highly competitive schools with no realistic backup can leave your child without a place at a school you would have been happy with. Choose wisely.

## Section 4

# Where Students Lose the Most Marks

After years of coaching OC students, we see the same patterns. The students who miss out are not unintelligent. They are unprepared for specific, predictable challenges:

### 1. Reading: inference and vocabulary-in-context

The questions that separate top scorers from average are inference questions ("what can you conclude?") and vocabulary-in-context ("what does this word mean in this passage?"). Fluency is not the same as comprehension depth.

### 2. Maths: misreading multi-step word problems

The most common maths errors are comprehension mistakes, not calculation mistakes. Students misread the question, skip a step, or answer a different question than the one asked.

### 3. Thinking skills: freezing on unfamiliar patterns

Students who have never seen abstract reasoning questions freeze on test day. This is entirely preventable with consistent exposure. The students who score well here are the ones who have seen this question type before.

### 4. Time management: running out in the final third

Many students spend too long on difficult early questions and rush through the final third. Questions at the end are worth the same marks. Practising under timed conditions is essential.

### 5. Digital fatigue: losing focus after 60 minutes

Performance drops in the second half are extremely common among students who have only practised on paper or in short sessions. Building screen-based endurance is now a real part of preparation.

## Section 5

# Why Knowing the Format Is Not Enough

You now have the complete picture of the 2026 OC test. But here is the honest truth:

**Understanding the test does not prepare your child for it.**

Knowing the format does not improve inference skills. Knowing thinking skills matter does not build abstract reasoning ability. And knowing where students lose marks does not tell you whether YOUR child has those weaknesses.

### The Questions That Matter Right Now

- Where does my child currently sit against OC-competitive benchmarks?
- What is their single biggest weakness across reading, maths, and thinking skills?
- How much ground do they need to cover before May?
- Is there still enough time to make a meaningful difference?

These are questions a PDF cannot answer. They require someone who has assessed hundreds of students against these exact benchmarks. With the test weeks away, you cannot afford to guess.

## Your Next Step

The OC test is months away. You now understand exactly what your child will face. The question is: are they ready for it?

Not "are they smart enough" (they probably are). But are they prepared for the specific format, the specific question types, and the specific time pressure of this test? If there are gaps, the window to close them is narrowing every week.

### Free Year 4 OC Strategy Call

In a free 15-minute strategy call, we will:

- Discuss your child's current OC readiness across all 3 test areas
- Identify the #1 area that will make the biggest difference before May
- Map out a focused plan for the remaining preparation time
- Answer any questions about the test, scoring, or school preferences

This is not a sales pitch. It is a genuine conversation about your child's OC options. If Scholarly is the right fit, we will explain how. If not, we will tell you that too.

**BOOK YOUR FREE STRATEGY CALL**

*Limited spots available each week. The test is approaching. Do not leave this until the last minute.*

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