

School Admissions

**An overview of the application process for
mainstream state schools in England**

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Content

- **Focus on ‘main round’ admissions for entry in September**
 - For primary this is usually for reception
 - For secondary this is usually year 7
- **The different ‘players’ in the system**
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Key players in the process

- **Parents**
 - System based on parental preference
 - Last year over 95 per cent of parents were offered one of their top three choice schools.
- **The school's admission authority**
 - Either the local authority or the school itself
 - Responsible for setting a schools 'admission arrangements'
- **The local authority**
 - Co-ordinate admissions (i.e. applications are sent to the LA who then liaise with the relevant admissions authorities)



The School Admissions Code

- **Issued by the Department for Education**
- **Sets out roles and responsibilities**
- **All state-funded mainstream schools must comply with the Code**
 - including academies and free schools.
- **The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all school places are allocated and offered in an open and fair way**
- **It sets clear deadlines for the admissions cycle**
- **Requires all admission authorities to publish ‘admission arrangements’ so it is clear how places are allocated.**



Admission arrangements

- **Must include:**
 - Published Admissions Number (**PAN**)
 - **Over-subscription criteria** - how applications will be prioritised if there are more applicants than places
 - It must also include a **tie-break** (often distance)
- Children with an Education, Health and Care plan or SEN statement naming a school must be admitted.
- First priority in oversubscription criteria **must** be given to looked after children and previously looked after children.
- The admission authority decides which other criteria to use
- Code sets out what cannot be taken into consideration e.g. occupation or marital status of parents



Example oversubscription criteria

- Siblings at the school
- Children eligible for the pupil premium or free school meals
- Medical or social need
- Feeder primary schools
- Catchment areas
- Faith based criteria only where a school is designated as having a religious character (membership and practice of faith).



The Office of the Schools Adjudicator

- **What if you think a school's admissions arrangements are not in line with the requirements of the Code?**
 - Any person/ body who considers a state-funded school's admission arrangements do not comply with the Code may object to the Schools Adjudicator
 - The Schools Adjudicator is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education, but is independent.
 - The Adjudicator will investigate objections and decide to uphold these if they agree the arrangements are not Code compliant.
 - Adjudicator's determination is binding and enforceable by courts. Following a determination, a school must amend their arrangements within two months/by 28 Feb



The admissions cycle

- **Determination Year (2016/17)**
 - Admission arrangements for Sept 2018 entry are proposed, (if applicable) consulted on and 'determined'
 - Objections can be made to the OSA
- **Offer Year (2017/18)**
 - Parents express their preference for schools
 - Offers are made
 - If applicable, appeals are heard
- **Entry Year (2018/19)**
 - Child is admitted to school



Determination Year

- **Admission authority propose admission arrangements**
 - Check school websites from October to Jan; if you have views on any proposed changes to arrangements express these via the consultation.
- **Admission authority determine admission arrangements**
 - Must do this by 28 February and publish by 15 March.
 - If you think these are unfair or not compliant with the Code, objections can be raised to the OSA.
- **Check your local authority's coordinated admissions scheme**
 - This sets out how the LA will coordinate admissions.
 - Will set out how, for example, how late applications will be managed



Offer Year

- **The LA publish the ‘composite prospectus’ by 12 Sept**
 - Check this for your LA and any neighbouring LAs if you are interested in applying for a school within other LAs.
- **Parents express their preferences**
 - You complete a single ‘common application form’ (CAF) for the LA in which you live. All London LAs use the online e-admissions portal
 - You can express a preference for schools in other LAs on this same form
 - You must be allowed a minimum of 3 preferences (London LAs tend to offer 6)
 - National deadlines are 31 October for secondary and 15 January for primary.



Offer Year

- **Admissions authority allocate places**
 - Must allocate a place to everyone who applies, unless the school is oversubscribed
 - Can only prioritise places based on their published oversubscription criteria
 - Cannot give higher priority based on first preference
- **Local authority make offers**
 - On 1 March for secondary and 16 April for primary
 - Any parent whose child is refused a place has right of appeal to independent panel
 - Appeals Code requires admission authorities to establish an independent panel and sets out process/ timings



Grammar school admissions

- **Follow the same process as all other schools**
- **Additional step as children sit a test to determine if they meet the academic entry requirements**
- **Tests are set at admission authority level**
 - many schools work in a consortium so children only have to sit a single test for these schools (Kent, Bucks)
 - can choose to purchase tests from specialist providers.
- **Admissions authorities must take all reasonable steps to inform parents of the outcome of the test before the national secondary application deadline (31 Oct)**
- **Schools can allocate places in ‘rank order’**



Myth-busters

- **Only expressing one preference – this is very risky!**
- **Expressing the same preference multiple times – waste of choices**
- **“If you put down a school you want and then put down all other schools that are really far from where you live, you will get the school you want”**
- **All schools operate catchment areas – many do not, check admissions arrangements.**
- **All primary schools offer sibling priority – this is not a mandatory requirement.**
- **Grammar schools are only for middle-class families – many prioritise applications from children on Free School Meals/Pupil Premium. Check arrangements!**

