

Appendix 3

Proposed Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for the normal year of entry for secondary schools

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Introduction

Local Authorities (LAs) are required each year to draw up a scheme for co-ordinating the normal admissions round to primary and secondary schools. The aim of the scheme is to ensure that all parents receive a single offer of a school place on national offer day. If the prescribed date (1 March or 16 April) falls on a weekend or bank holiday, offers are sent on the next working day.

The scheme proposed by the County Council will be the subject of consultation with all maintained schools in the county and neighbouring local authorities. This co-ordinated scheme applies only to admissions to year 7 at the start of term 1. The County Council has delegated responsibility for admission to year 12 of community schools with sixth forms to the relevant governing bodies and each school displays its own admission procedures and external published admission numbers (PANs) for this year group on its website, together with any requirements for entry to particular courses.

Secondary scheme 2024/25

Key dates

September 2023: Admissions information made available

31 October 2023: Closing date for applications

1 December 2023: Exchange of preference data between local authorities

8 January 2024: Admission authorities in East Sussex to advise LA of ranked order

9 February 2024: Finalise allocations

26 February 2024: Allocations confirmed to secondary schools

1 March 2024: Decisions conveyed to parents by email

9 April 2024 (to be confirmed): Closing date for appeals

April to June 2024: 'On time' appeals heard

Applications made in the main round

1. The co-ordinated scheme is based on all preferences expressed by parents being treated equally, but where more than one school can be offered, the highest possible preference school named by the parent will be allocated. It will be for individual admission authorities to prioritise all preferences expressed for their schools against the published admissions criteria, which they have consulted on and determined. Individual academies can agree that the County Council ranks applicants on the academy's behalf. This would be a traded service. The only valid preferences are those stated on the LA common application form which is available online or in hard copy. Other admission authorities in East Sussex must not use any other application form. A separate, supplementary information form can only be used where additional information is required to determine admission within their published criteria. This form will be obtainable from and returnable to that admission authority (c/o the school/academy). A supplementary information form on its own is not a valid application. Applicants living outside East Sussex must use the common application form that is supplied by their home local authority.
2. The process will begin with the information on admission arrangements and methods of application being made available early in September 2023.
3. The LA application form enables parents to name up to any three maintained schools stated in order of preference. The form should be completed and submitted to the County Council by the closing date of 31 October 2023.
4. By 1 December 2023, East Sussex will exchange preference data with any local authority where an application has been received.
5. By 8 January 2024, East Sussex schools that are their own admissions authorities will consider their applications, apply their published admissions criteria and provide the County Council with a list of those applicants ranked accordingly.
6. By 19 January 2024, other local authorities will advise the County Council of decisions reached on applications for their schools from East Sussex residents. The County Council will apply its published admissions criteria to those schools where it is the admissions authority and determine the outcome of each preference expressed.
7. By 9 February 2024, the County Council will match the ranked lists against the parental preferences to ensure only one place is allocated per child. Qualifying late applications received up to 31 January will be included in this process.

Where a child is:

- Eligible for a place at only one school given on the application form, that school will be allocated

- Eligible for two or three schools, a place will be allocated at the highest-ranking preference school
 - Not eligible for a place at any of the named schools and the child lives in East Sussex, a place will be allocated at the nearest school to the home with a space.
8. In the period 10 February to 25 February 2024, decision notifications will be prepared. The LA where the child lives will be responsible for sending these to parents.
 9. From this point on secondary schools will be able to see their allocations in SAM. Primary schools will be able to view destination schools for their year 6 leavers in SAM with effect from 1 March 2024.
 10. On Wednesday 1 March 2024 allocation decisions will be notified to parents by email. Letters will only be sent where specifically requested, or where the application has been made on a paper form. Where a preference is not being met, the notification email will signpost parents to the County Council website where information can be found explaining to parents how places have been allocated at their preferred school(s) and advising parents of the right of appeal.

Applications received after 31 October 2023 but by 31 January 2024

1. If an application form is received after 31 October 2023, it will still be passed to the relevant admissions authority with a note that it has been received after the closing date. It will be for the admissions authority to decide how it wishes to respond to the application. This will continue up until 31 January 2024.
2. If an application is received after 31 October 2023 but before 31 January 2024, together with proof of a change of address* since the closing date, or proof of another good reason why it was not possible for the family to apply on time, it will be treated as on time in respect of community and voluntary controlled schools. If there is no proof, or the reason is not considered valid by the LA, the application will be treated as late. There is no separate right of appeal against the decision as to whether the application is treated as on time or late.
3. Applicants whose forms are received between these dates will be sent a decision on 1 March 2024. For applications received on or after 1 February 2024, we will aim to send a decision letter within 20 school days.

Changes of preference

1. Parents may change their preferences at any stage up to the closing date of 31 October 2023. After 31 October 2023, we will not allow preferences to be changed without good reason. The County Council will judge each case on its merits but will only usually accept a change of preference where there has been a significant change of circumstances (such as a house move*) thus making the original preferences no longer practical. Parents will be required to put their reasons for changing their preferences in writing, and in all cases, supporting evidence will be required. If the change of preference is agreed, a decision will be sent on 1 March 2024 provided the request was received by 31 January 2024. Such applicants will be advised that they have the right of appeal if the revised preference cannot be met.

* In the case of house moves, proof of ownership or tenancy on an East Sussex property (such as exchange of contracts or signed tenancy agreement of one year) is required if an address is to be used for the purpose of allocating a school place. If an applicant cannot provide evidence, the application cannot be accepted.

2. There is no right of appeal where the LA does not accept the change of preference.

No application form received by 31 January 2024

No secondary transfer places will be allocated unless a completed application form has been received.

Applications received on or after 1 March 2024

1. Only preferences stated on the LA application form will be valid. If the preference is for an 'own admission authority' school, the County Council will pass details to the school for a decision. The school must then advise the County Council within fourteen days as to whether a place can be allocated so the County Council can formally advise the parent of the decision. Where the preference is for a community or voluntary controlled school, the County Council will determine the outcome. If there are no places available at one of the preferred schools a place will be allocated at the nearest school with a place available (if the identified school is its own admissions authority the County Council will ask the school whether a place can be allocated). We will aim to process late applications within 20 school days. Any refused preference will carry the right of appeal.
2. Where the preference is for a school in a neighbouring authority, details will be passed to that authority for a decision to be made. Any authority refusing an application should advise the LA of the decision so the LA can consider allocating an alternative school.
3. The Co-ordinated Scheme will end on 31st August each year. Applications received after this date will be processed as in-year applications.

Appeals

1. Parents must be allowed at least twenty school days from the date of notification that their application was unsuccessful to prepare and submit their written appeal. The appeal must be against any refused preference, thus if a parent puts on the appeal form a school which did not feature as a preference on the original application form an appeal will not be arranged.
2. Parents submitting an appeal will be entitled to at least ten school days' notice of the date of the appeal. Papers relevant to the appeal will be sent seven working days before the hearing. Appeals must be heard within forty school days of the deadline for lodging appeals. Appeals for late applications will be included with those being heard for the same admission round wherever possible. If this is not possible, they must be heard within thirty school days of the appeal being lodged.
3. The LA must be advised of the outcome of all appeals.

Waiting lists

1. The LA will operate waiting lists for community and voluntary controlled schools so that it is clear as to which child will be offered any place which becomes vacant. Such waiting lists will be operational after the closing date for appeals to be lodged. The waiting list must reflect the admissions criteria. The LA must be notified by admissions authorities of any places that are subsequently allocated from the waiting list. Until co-ordination ends, it remains for the LA to offer places to parents when places become available and are allocated from the waiting list whether the admissions authority is the LA or not.
2. Waiting lists will operate until the end of Term 2, 2024 for Year 7 admissions.

Applications for children to be educated out of chronological year group

The School Admissions Code 2021 specifies that parents applying for a school place have a right to request that their child be educated outside their chronological age group. It further specifies that the admission authority for the school in question should make a decision as to whether to agree this 'on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child concerned'. The admission authority is required to take into account various factors including the views of the Headteacher.

The County Council, having sought all relevant advice, will work on the assumption that it is in the best interests of children to continue to be educated out of year group if that has been the case for the child hitherto, where they have been in a school which follows the National Curriculum, unless there are clear reasons why this is inappropriate.

Where parents submit applications for their children to be educated out of year group where this has not happened before, or where they have come from provision that does not follow the National Curriculum (e.g. private provision or overseas) the County Council will make a decision in the best interests of the child in consultation with the Headteacher of the relevant school as in the case of summer-born children applying at reception entry (see primary scheme).

These arrangements will apply to schools where the County Council is the admission authority- schools in the co-ordinated scheme which are their own admission authority are encouraged to work in the same way but the decision is for each admission authority to make in these cases.

The County Council will continue to advise all parents whose request for admission out of year group is agreed of the potential difficulties this could cause later on, and continue to require parents to agree that they have understood this and take responsibility for this decision before the child is admitted to school in East Sussex (although admission should not be held up if the parent refuses to sign- in this case it would need to be clearly documented that the parent had been advised of the risks but had refused or otherwise failed to sign the disclaimer).