

Proposed Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for reception and year 3 (of junior schools) entry September 2024/25

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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 the national allocation date. If the prescribed date 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.

The co-ordinated schemes apply only to admissions to Reception, and year 3 of junior schools at the start of term 1.

Primary scheme 2024/25

Key dates

September 2023: Admissions information made available

15 January 2024: Closing date for applications

26 January 2024: Preferences for each school established

9 February 2024: Exchange of preference data between local authorities

15 March 2024: Admission authorities in East Sussex advise LA of ranked order

28 March 2024: Finalise allocations

16 April 2024: Allocations confirmed to primary schools

16 April 2024: Decisions conveyed to parents by email

10 May 2024: (to be confirmed): Closing date for appeals

June to July 2024: 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 admissions authority (voluntary aided (VA) schools). 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. It should be completed and submitted to the LA by the closing date of 15 January 2024.
4. By 26 January 2024 East Sussex County Council ("the County Council") will exchange preference data with any local authority where an application has been received.
5. By 9 February 2024 East Sussex schools that are their own admission authorities will consider all applications for their school, apply their published admissions criteria and provide the County Council with a list of those applicants ranked accordingly.
6. By 15 March 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 28 March 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 before 15 March 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 2 April 2024 to 15 April 2024 decision notifications will be prepared. The LA where the child lives will be responsible for sending these to parents.
 9. On 16 April 2024 lists will be prepared of children allocated places at each primary school in East Sussex, and these will be sent to the schools in question.
 10. 16 April 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 15 January 2024 but by 15 March 2024

1. If an application form is received after 15 January 2024, it will still be passed to the relevant admissions authority with a note that it has been received after that date. It will be for the admissions authority to decide how it wishes to respond to the application. This will continue up until 15 March 2024.
2. If an application is received after 15 January 2024 but before 15 March 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 County Council, 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 16 April 2024. For applications received after 15 March 2024, we will aim to send a decision email within 20 school days.

Changes of preference

1. Parents may change their preferences at any stage up to the closing date of 15 January 2024. After 15 January 2024, we will not allow preferences to be changed without an exceptional reason. The LA 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 16 April 2024 provided the request was received by 15 March 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

1. No Reception or junior transfer places will be allocated unless a completed application form has been received.

Applications received on or after 16 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 admission 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, the 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 31 August each year. Applications received after this date will be processed as in year applications.

Appeals

1. Parents must be allowed at least 20 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 hearing will not be arranged.
2. Parents submitting an appeal will be entitled to at least 10 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 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.
3. The County Council must be advised of the outcome of all appeals to other admission authorities.

Waiting lists

1. The County Council will operate waiting lists for all community and voluntary controlled primary, infant and junior schools so that it is clear 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 County Council 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 County Council to offer places to parents when places become available and are allocated from the waiting list whether the admissions authority is the County Council or not.
2. Waiting lists will operate until the end of Term 2, 2024.

Admission of summer born children to Reception classes.

Parents of summer born children who are due to start in reception can request that their child starts on a part-time basis or joins Reception later during the school year.

However, parents can also request that their child starts in Reception in the September following their fifth birthday (i.e. when they would normally be starting Year 1). Parents making such a request should do so during the normal admission round.

The County Council will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the child's academic, social and emotional development together with the Headteacher and parent's views. If the request is refused but the child is offered a place in the school (but not the preferred year group) the parent would not have the right of appeal.

If the request is agreed, parents will need to be clear that this does not mean the child will remain in the year below their chronological age group for all of their school career, particularly on transfer to secondary school.

The County Council will base its decision-making on the assumption that it is in the best interests of summer born children (i.e. those born between 1 April and 31 August) to be admitted to Reception at compulsory school age where their parents request it, unless there are clear reasons why this is inappropriate (e.g. safeguarding or the pupil has an EHCP or is undergoing statutory assessment).

Parents are, however, required to make a case for this so that it can be demonstrated that the County Council has considered the rationale behind the request and made the decision in the child's best interests. Parents also need to be clear that own admission authority schools in East Sussex will not necessarily work on the same assumption, although they are encouraged to do so by the County Council.

The County Council will, however, advise all parents whose request for admission out of year group is agreed of the potential difficulties this could cause later on, and will 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 by signing a disclaimer to this effect. Should the parent refuse to sign, admission will not be held up if the child is already compulsory school age, but it will be

clearly documented that the parent has been advised of the risks but has refused or otherwise failed to sign the disclaimer.