



Part of

## Get childcare: step by step (<https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare>)

# School admissions

## 1. Choosing schools

If you live in England contact your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) to find:

- state-funded schools in your area
- admission criteria (<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/admissions-criteria>) for the schools you're interested in

The process is different if you live in Scotland (<https://www.mygov.scot/register-your-child-for-a-school/>), Wales (<https://gov.wales/school-admissions>) or Northern Ireland (<https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/admissions>).

You can also contact your local council to apply for places at state schools in other areas. You can search online to find schools in England (<https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>).

### Private schools or home schooling

If you're looking for a place at a private school (<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/private-schools>) (also called 'independent schools'), contact the school directly.

You can also choose to teach your child at home (<https://www.gov.uk/home-education>), known as home schooling.

### Children with special educational needs (SEN)

If your child has SEN, their Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan will name a school for them. The school must give your child a place.

You can ask your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) to carry out an assessment if you think your child needs additional support with their educational, health and social needs.

### Find out about a primary or secondary school

You can find out more by:

- visiting the school - most schools have open days
- reading the school's most recent Ofsted reports (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report>)
- checking school performance tables (<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance>)
- talking to other parents about what they think of the school

### What schools must publish on their website

Schools' websites must include:

- admission arrangements, including how to apply
- details of the curriculum
- behaviour policy
- links to Ofsted reports

- links to performance data
- the school's latest key stage 2 and 4 attainment and progress measures
- their policies for children with special educational needs and disabilities (<https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs>)
- the amount of money they get for taking underprivileged children (the 'pupil premium'), what they do with it and the effect it's had

You can also get advice about choosing state-funded schools from your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>).

## 2. Admission criteria

All schools have admission criteria to decide which children get places. The school or local council usually set these.

Admission criteria are different for each school. They may give priority to children:

- who live close to the school
- who have a brother or sister at the school already
- from a particular religion (for faith schools)
- who pass an entrance exam (for selective schools, for example grammar schools)
- who went to a particular primary school (a 'feeder school')
- who are eligible for the pupil premium or the service pupil premium
- whose parent has worked at the school for 2 years or more

Your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) can give you information about schools' criteria and how to apply.

## Children in care

All state-funded schools must give top priority to admitting children who:

- are in care or being looked after
- have been in care

## Complain about unfair admission arrangements

Contact the Schools Adjudicator (<http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolsadjudicator/howwecanhelp/a0076144/how-to-raise-an-objection-to-school-admission-arrangements>) if you think a school has unlawful or unfair admission arrangements.

You need to complain by 15 May of the year before you're applying for a place. For example, to complain about admission arrangements for September 2021 the deadline is 15 May 2020.

## 3. School starting age

Most children start school full-time in the September after they turn 4.

If you do not think your child is ready to start school by then, they can start part-way through the year or part time - as long as they are in full-time education by the time they reach 'compulsory school age'.

## Children born in the summer

Children born between 1 April and 31 August can start the September after they turn 5.

Contact the local council or school to ask for your child to start later. They'll decide if your child should start in reception year or year 1 (<https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>), based on what's in the best interests of your child.

## Compulsory school age

Your child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If your child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

For example, if your child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the next term (summer term that year).

Children must stay in full-time education until they reach school leaving age (<https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>).

All 3 to 4-year-olds in England are entitled to free early education (<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-2-to-4-year-olds>) before they start school full time.

## 4. How to apply

Follow your local council's application process to:

- apply for a primary school place (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-primary-school-place>)
- apply for a secondary school place (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-secondary-school-place>)

You must still apply for a place, even if the school is linked to your child's current nursery, infant or primary school.

Apply directly for:

- a 6th form place at a school or college
- a place at a private school

## Moving to another area

You apply through your local council even if you're applying for schools in another council area or you've just moved to England.

If you're applying from another country, contact the local council in the area where you're going to live.

You may need to:

- supply proof of your new address, for example a mortgage or rental agreement or deeds for the property
- prove that you'll live in the area before the start of the next school term

## Completing the application

When you fill in the form (online or on paper) you'll be asked to list the schools you're applying for in order of preference.

Listing only one school will not increase your chances of getting a place there.

To get a copy of the application form on paper, contact your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>).

## When to apply

Applications open on different days in each local council area. Find out from your local council when applications open for primary (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-primary-school-place>) or secondary (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-secondary-school-place>) schools.

You can apply for a primary school place in the autumn term after your child turns 4. You'll need to apply then even if you want your child to start part-way through the school year.

### Application deadlines

You should apply for:

- a primary school place by 15 January
- a secondary school place by 31 October

Your child is less likely to be offered a place at their chosen schools if you miss the deadline for applications.

### When you'll find out

Councils will send offers of school places for:

- primary schools on 16 April
- secondary schools on 1 March

If either date falls on a weekend or a bank holiday, offers are sent the next working day.

You must accept the offer by the deadline given in the offer letter. Otherwise it may be withdrawn and the place given to someone else.

The local council must provide a place at another school, if your child is not offered a place at any of the schools you've applied for. This is usually your nearest school with places still available.

### Applying after the start of the school year

Contact your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) to find out about applying for a school place once the school year has started (known as in-year applications). They can tell you which schools still have places and how to apply.

Once your child has been offered a place, they will usually start school at the beginning of the following term.

## 5. School waiting lists

If your child does not have a place, contact your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) for schools with places.

You can also put your child's name down on a waiting list. The 'admission authority' for the school (usually the school itself or the council) must keep a waiting list open for at least the first term of each school year.

Contact the school or your local council if you want your child's name added to a waiting list.

You can add your child's name to a waiting list even if they have been offered a place at another school.

If your child is on a waiting list and the school offers you a place, the admission authority will send you a formal offer. You can still accept the offer even if your child has already started at another school.

## 6. Appealing a school's decision

You'll be sent a letter with the decision about your child's school. If your child is refused a place, you can appeal

against the decision. The letter will tell you how.

You must appeal against each rejection separately. You can only appeal once against each rejection.

## Preparing your appeal

The admission authority for the school must allow you at least 20 school days to appeal from when they send the decision letter.

The admission authority will set a deadline for submitting information and evidence to support your appeal. If you submit anything after the deadline, it might not be considered and may result in delays to your hearing.

Coram Children's Legal Centre ([http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/index.php?page=education\\_legal\\_practice](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/index.php?page=education_legal_practice)) may be able to give you advice about appeals.

## When the hearing will be

The admission authority must give you at least 10 school days' notice of the hearing.

Appeals must be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for making an appeal.

## What happens at the appeal hearing

There's a panel of 3 or more people at the appeal hearing. The panel must be independent and must follow the school admission appeals code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-appeals-code>).

1. The admission authority will explain why they turned down your application.
2. You'll be able to give your own reasons why your child should be admitted.
3. The appeals panel must decide if the school's admission criteria were properly followed and comply with the school admissions code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2>).
4. If the criteria were not properly followed or do not comply with the school admissions code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2>) your appeal must be upheld.
5. If your reasons for your child to be admitted outweigh the school's reasons for not admitting any more children at all, your appeal will be upheld.
6. You will usually be sent the decision within 5 school days.

You can read more about school admission appeals (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/admission-appeals-for-school-places/advice-for-parents-and-guardians-on-school-admission-appeals>).

## Appeals for infant classes

You need to go through the same process if you're appealing a decision about an infant class. In reception, year 1 and year 2, the class size is limited to 30. Your application can be turned down if all the classes already have 30 children.

Your appeal could be successful if:

- giving your child a place will not increase the class size above the limit
- the admission arrangements have not been properly followed
- the admission criteria do not comply with the school admissions code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2>)

## 7. Complain about the appeals process

You can complain about the way the appeal was carried out, but you can not complain about the decision itself.

## Maintained schools

Complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Fill in the online complaint form ([http://www.lgo.org.uk/forms/ShowForm.asp?fm\\_fid=62](http://www.lgo.org.uk/forms/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=62)).

## Other schools

Complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) about an appeal made to:

- free schools
- academies, including university technical colleges and studio schools

Fill in the online complaint form ([https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Academy\\_admission\\_appeal\\_complaint\\_form](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Academy_admission_appeal_complaint_form)) – sign up for an account if you want to save your form.

Contact ESFA ([https://form.education.gov.uk/submitform.php?self=1&form\\_id=HR41uA2F8Dh&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form\\_name=Knowledge+centre+enquiry+form&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1](https://form.education.gov.uk/submitform.php?self=1&form_id=HR41uA2F8Dh&type=form&ShowMsg=1&form_name=Knowledge+centre+enquiry+form&noRegister=false&ret=%2Fmodule%2Fservices&noLoginPrompt=1)) if you need a paper form instead.

You should get a decision on your complaint within 9 weeks (45 working days). You'll be told if it'll take longer.

You'll get a letter explaining the reasons for the decision.

If ESFA decides something went wrong with the appeals panel, it may:

- ask the school to hold a new appeal hearing with a different panel
- recommend the school reviews its appeals process

## If a maintained school becomes an academy

If you complain about an admission appeal hearing held by a maintained school that then converts to academy status, this complaint will be investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman will pass any actions to ESFA.