

Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme
September 2024/25

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This scheme applies to the area of Stoke-on-Trent City Council (the Local Authority) and is for admission to school from September 2024.
- 1.2 The scheme meets the requirements of the School Admission (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admissions Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, made under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA/98) and applies to all publicly funded, mainstream Stoke-on-Trent schools.
- 1.3 Applications for places made through the normal admissions round are coordinated by the home local authority, which for families resident in Stoke-on-Trent is Stoke-on-Trent City Council.
- 1.4 The purpose of this scheme is to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, each parent who applies for a school place at the normal age of entry receives a single offer of a school place, whether that be at a school within the City or one maintained by another authority.
- 1.5 Parents making applications as part of the normal admission round for publicly funded schools in other authorities with a different age of transfer (i.e. middle and upper schools) are included within these arrangements.
- 1.6 The normal admissions round covers applications for places in the following 'relevant age groups' (i.e. the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school for the first time):
 - Reception class in an infant or primary school
 - Year 3 in a junior school
 - Year 7 in secondary school
- 1.7 To apply for a school place during the normal admission round, parents living in Stoke-on-Trent must complete the application form provided by this local authority, even if the preferred schools are in other local authority areas. Parents seeking places at independent (i.e. fee paying) schools must apply direct to the school.
- 1.8 This scheme does not cover applications made outside the normal admission round, referred to as in-year applications. An application is an in-year application if it is for the admission of a child to a relevant age group (see paragraph 1.6) but it is submitted on or after the first day of the first school term of the admission year; or it is for the admission of a child to an age group other than a relevant age group. To make an in-year application, parents must contact their preferred school/s.

- 1.9 The Local Authority will collate information from schools in its area on in-year applications and outcomes and will advise parents of the nearest schools with vacancies where applications have been unsuccessful.

2 Nursery admissions

- 2.1 Every three- or four-year-old child is entitled to receive 570 hours of early years provision over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year (15 hours per week). Anyone who pays their council tax to Stoke-on-Trent City Council who wishes to access a funded place in Stoke-on-Trent should visit a childcare provider of their choice to secure a place from the term after their third birthday. Children who are aged two years may also be eligible for a funded place based on their circumstances and can apply at www.stoke.gov.uk/beststart.
- 2.2 For entry to Stoke-on-Trent nursery classes in September, parents of children aged three years on or before 31 August must apply on the Local Authority's application form, which is available online at www.stoke.gov.uk/admissions. Applications for nursery places at other times of the year are made to the nurseries.
- 2.3 Once a nursery class is full a waiting list will be held in oversubscription order, as set out in the published admission arrangements, until the end of the academic year.
- 2.4 Attendance at a particular nursery setting will not guarantee admission to a reception class at the school.
- 2.5 As nursery education is not compulsory there is no right of appeal against the refusal of a place.

3 Primary admissions (including transfer from infant to junior schools)

- 3.1 Admission to primary school is provided for all children in the September following their fourth birthday. This means these children will turn 5 during their first school year. Where a child is offered a place at a school, that child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday.
- 3.2 Children born from 1 April to 31 August are 'summer born children' and reach compulsory school age in the September following their fifth birthday. Parents may request admission to the Reception class in the September after their child's fifth birthday. Parents should follow the relevant admission authority's policy in relation to educating children out of their normal year group. Parents are advised to read the [Department for Education Guidance](#).

- 3.3 Parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age. Parents will not, however, be able to defer admission beyond the academic year for which the original application was accepted or beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday. Parents may also request part-time attendance until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.
- 3.4 Parents can request that the date their child is admitted to the primary school is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age in that school year. Applications for deferred admissions must be made by the primary admissions published closing date.
- 3.5 Regulations require that infant classes (those where the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6 or 7 during the school year) must have no more than 30 pupils to a single school teacher. Additional children may be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances. The excepted children are listed in paragraph 2.16 of the School Admissions Code.

4 Secondary transfers (including transfer at 12+ to upper school)

- 4.1 Applications for places in year 7 as a secondary transfer at 11+ start at the beginning of September in the year preceding admission. Applications must be made on the home LA's common application form.
- 4.2 Parents of children attending a middle school and applying for a place in a secondary school (rather than to a school that admits children into Year 9 as the normal point of entry to the school) must apply to the school through the in-year admissions process towards the end of the academic year (e.g. 6 weeks before the end of the summer term).
- 4.3 Requests can be made for early or late transfer to secondary school. Parents considering such a request must, in the first instance, speak to the headteacher of the child's primary school and preferred high school(s) as the decision on whether a child can be taught out of cohort rests with the school's admission authority.

5 Parents right to express a school preference

- 5.1 Section 86 of the SSFA/98 provides that local authorities must make the necessary arrangements for parents to express a preference for the school they wish their child to be educated at.

- 5.2 Parent is defined within s.576 of the Education Act 1996. Parents can be natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child; and any person who has care of the child.
- 5.3 Only those holding parental responsibility for the child are able to make an application and they will be required to make a declaration to this effect as part of the application process. Ordinarily, it is expected that this person resides at the same address as the child and is referred to as the parent for admissions purposes.
- 5.4 Only one application can be made for each child. Parents should agree on school preferences for a child before an application is made. The Local Authority is not in a position to intervene in disputes between parents over school applications and will request that these are resolved privately. Where parental responsibility is equally shared, the child's parents should determine which parent should submit the single application. If parents cannot agree and neither has obtained a court order stating who should be making the application, the Local Authority will accept an application from the parent living at the address at which the child is registered at a previous nursery/primary school or at the GP. The Local Authority will be entitled to require evidence of this.

6 The 'home' address

- 6.1 Applications will be based on where the child is residing at the closing date for applications and in accordance with the school's published admission arrangements. If the address changes from the time the application was submitted to the closing date for applications, the Local Authority must be notified and will be entitled to request evidence of this change. Failure to do so may result in the school place offered being withdrawn.
- 6.2 To ensure a fair process, administrative checks may be undertaken, which will include verifying addresses against Council Tax records. Proof of residency may also be requested, which may include supporting information to confirm where the child is registered at a nursery/school or at the GP.
- 6.3 Exceptions will be applied for families of service personnel with a confirmed posting, and crown servants returning from overseas to live in Stoke-on-Trent. In these cases, admission authorities will use the address at which the child will live, as long as parents provide evidence of their intended address. Admission authorities will also use a Unit or quartering address as the child's home address, where a parent requests this.
- 6.4 In most cases, children arriving from overseas have the right to attend schools in England. It is the responsibility of parents of foreign national children to check that their children have a right under their UK entry conditions to study at a school before applying for a school place. It is not the role of state-funded schools or local

authorities to ask for proof of eligibility before offering a place. [Further information is published online by the Department for Education.](#)

7 School admission arrangements

- 7.1 The Local Authority (LA) has the role of admission authority for Stoke-on-Trent community and voluntary controlled schools and will allocate places at these schools in accordance with the LA's published admissions arrangements.
- 7.2 For admission to Academies (including those that are Free Schools) this responsibility is held by the Academy Trusts and for voluntary aided and foundation schools, by governing bodies.
- 7.3 The Local Authority will publish on its website, with hard copies available on request, the admission arrangements for all schools in its area by 12 September each year.

8 Applying for school places

- 8.1 The application process will commence on the following dates:

| Admission year groups | Application rounds | Application start dates |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Reception class | Infant and primary schools | 1 November |
| Year 3 | Junior schools only | 1 November |
| Year 7 | Secondary schools | 1 September |

- 8.2 The common application form will invite parents to express 5 school preferences ranked in order of priority. Parents can give reasons for their preferences and provide any additional documents in support of their preference/s.
- 8.3 Parents are asked to provide details of any siblings attending the preferred school at the time of application and who will continue to attend at the time of admission, along with details of the current school attended.
- 8.4 If a parent expresses a preference for a school designated as having a religious character (faith school) they will be asked to state the religious denomination of their child on their application form. Parents will be advised to contact the school as they may also be required to complete a supplementary information form. Forms will be available from the school. Supplementary information forms (SIFs) will request information in addition to that provided on the common application form.

Examples of additional information that can lawfully be requested include membership of, or relationship with the church, or a reference from a priest or other religious minister as proof of religious commitment.

- 8.5 Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)¹ are considered separately and must be admitted by the school named on their EHCP. Parents of children undergoing a statutory assessment which has not been completed must make an application for a school place through this admissions process to avoid disadvantage.
- 8.6 Applications should be submitted to the Local Authority by the following statutory dates:

| Admission year groups | Application rounds | Application deadlines |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Reception class | Infant and primary schools | 15 January |
| Year 3 | Junior schools only | 15 January |
| Year 7 | Secondary transfers | 31 October |

- 8.7 Paragraph 2.18 of the School Admissions Code enables a parent to request that their child is admitted outside of their normal age group (e.g., if a child is summer-born, gifted and talented, or has experienced problems such as ill-health, etc). Admission authorities are responsible for making the decision on which year group a child should be admitted to, but are required to make that decision based on the circumstances of the case. If parents request delayed admission until the following year, an application must be submitted in accordance with the dates published for that application round.
- 8.8 The Local Authority cannot accept responsibility for any application or supporting information that is not submitted correctly via the online system or is lost in the postal system. Correctly submitted on-line applications generate an electronic receipt, which must be retained by the applicant. Paper applications can be given to the local primary school. It is recommended that receipts are obtained. For postal applications, it is recommended that the form is sent by recorded delivery.

¹ An Education, Health and Care Plan is a plan made by the local authority under Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014 specifying the special education, health and social care provision required for that child.

9 Allocating school places

9.1 Academy Trusts and governing bodies must

- forward to the Local Authority details of any application made to the school direct, together with any supporting information provided by the parent, in order that the Local Authority can process the application in accordance with this coordinated scheme.
- make the necessary arrangements for preferences for the school to be ranked using the school's published oversubscription criteria to determine if a place can potentially be offered by the Local Authority on its behalf.
- notify the Local Authority of their determination or arrange for the body appointed by them to notify the Local Authority on their behalf.

9.2 Where a school receives a supplementary information form, this Local Authority will not consider it to be a valid application unless the parent has also listed the school on their home LA's Application Form, Supplementary information forms should be completed and returned to the school concerned.

9.3 When a parent has applied on the common application form but has not also submitted a supplementary information form (where relevant), the admission authority will consider the application in accordance with legal requirements². Where a SIF has been received, the admission authority will be proactive in ensuring that there is an application in order for the preference to be considered. In circumstances where a SIF has not been completed, the application will be assessed on the basis of the information submitted to the governing board on the home local authority's common application form.

9.4 All preferences submitted will be considered on the basis of the equal preference model for allocating places, in accordance with legal requirements. This means that in the first instance, all preferences will be considered against the relevant published oversubscription criteria only, i.e. without reference to the preference ranking. Thereafter, where a pupil can potentially be allocated more than one school place stated on the application form, the single offer determined by the home local authority will be for the school ranked highest by the parents.

9.5 Preference ranking will not be shared with admission authorities as this cannot lawfully be used when applying oversubscription criteria.

9.6 Preferences made in accordance with the Local Authority's arrangements will be met except where this would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources, for example, where the year group is full.

² Para 4.3 of Section 86(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

- 9.7 The duty to comply with parental preference is removed for a period of two years where the child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools and from the date on which the latest exclusion took place. The twice excluded rule does not apply to children who were below compulsory school age at the time of the exclusion; children who have been re-instated following a permanent exclusion (or would have been had it been practicable to do so); and children with special educational needs statements.
- 9.8 All schools must have a Published Admission Number (PAN) based on the school's physical (net) capacity or as set out in an Academy's funding agreement, which applies to the relevant age group, e.g. the reception class in a primary school or year 7 in a secondary school. Places allocated in the relevant age group will normally only be offered up to the PAN.
- 9.9 Admission authorities that intend to admit above the published admission number where it is considered that further admission/s would not have a detrimental effect on the school, will be required to notify the Local Authority at an early stage, as set out in the agreed timetable, to enable it to deliver its coordination responsibilities effectively.
- 9.10 Where a school receives more applications than it has places available, the admission authority's published oversubscription criteria will be applied to determine priority.
- 9.11 For schools that use residency within a defined catchment area in their published oversubscription criteria, maps showing the catchment area are available to view on the Local Authority's website at www.stoke.gov.uk/admissions and from the school.
- 9.12 Where published admission arrangements include a distance measurement to determine priority for admission, the LA uses a geographic information system (GIS) to calculate home to school distances. For allocation and waiting list purposes, this will normally be a straight-line distance measurement in miles. The exception will be for admission authorities that use walking distances to determine priority within their admission arrangements. GIS determines co-ordinates of the applicant's home address using the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) and OS Address Point data.
- 9.13 The LA will exchange applications for schools in other local authorities' areas with all relevant local authorities and will provide data containing details of applications to admission authorities in its area for consideration by Academy Trusts and governing boards.
- 9.14 Stoke-on-Trent admission authorities will inform the Local Authority of the pupils eligible for a place under their admission arrangements and will provide details of pupils who cannot be offered places listed in oversubscription criteria order.

- 9.15 The LA will inform other local authorities of offers to be made to pupils resident within their boundaries and request details of offers they will be making to Stoke-on-Trent residents.

10 Single offer of a school place

- 10.1 A single offer of a school place will be notified to parents by the Local Authority on behalf of school admission authorities. This will be on the National Offer Day unless this date falls on a weekend, when the offer will be made on the next working day.

The dates that apply are:

| Admission year groups | Application rounds | School offer dates |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Reception class | Infant and primary schools | 16 April |
| Year 3 | Junior schools only | 16 April |
| Year 7 | Secondary schools | 1 March |

- 10.2 Where a place cannot be offered in accordance with parental preference, a place will be allocated by the Local Authority for children resident in Stoke-on-Trent at the nearest school with a vacancy. If a preference has been received from a parent resident in another local authority and a place cannot be offered, a place will not be allocated.
- 10.3 The offer made by the Local Authority will include places in schools in other local authorities where parental preference for such schools has been successful.
- 10.4 Where online applications have been received, the parent making the online application will be able to view their offer in their online account and will also receive their offer by e-mail on the published date.
- 10.5 For all paper applications, offers will be confirmed in writing. Letters informing parents of the decision on their application will be sent out on the published offer day by second class post.

11 Waiting lists

- 11.1 Waiting lists for Stoke-on-Trent publicly funded schools will be held until the end of the academic year. All waiting lists will be ordered in oversubscription criteria and

not on a first come first served basis. A position on a waiting list may change at any time. Inclusion on a school's waiting list does not guarantee a place at the school.

12 Late applications and changing preferences

- 12.1 Any application submitted after the closing date is deemed to be late and will be considered after all on-time applications.
- 12.2 Exceptionally, late applications will be considered alongside those received by the closing date if the late application is received before schools have ranked their applications (see timetable) and only in limited circumstances, as set out below:
- The family moved into the area after the deadline for the receipt of applications.
 - Exceptional circumstances preventing an on-time application, stated in writing at the time of the application and with supporting evidence.
 - An error on the part of the school.
- 12.3 Any additional school preferences requested (including where the applicant has decided to change preference/s already submitted) must be made in writing to the LA and requests submitted after the closing date will be processed as late applications.
- 12.4 Late applications will be considered at the end of the allocation process and in accordance with the timetable set out in part two of this scheme. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application is submitted on-time.
- 12.5 When submitting a late application supporting evidence may be requested. For a recent house move, this may include using Council Tax data to verify addresses provided. Other evidence, such as a letter from the solicitor confirming the completion date or a signed rental agreement showing the start of the tenancy, may be required. Further confirmation may also be requested including evidence of disposal of previous property and recent utility bills to confirm the actual place of residency. Where medical reasons prevented an earlier application, a letter of confirmation from a medical practitioner will usually be required.

13 Withdrawing school places

- 13.1 Once parents have been notified by the Local Authority of an offer of a school place, the Local Authority will only withdraw the offer in exceptional circumstances, as follows:
- If the offer was made based on fraudulent or misleading information on the application form, e.g. a false claim to residence within a catchment area.
 - Where a place was offered in error.

- 13.2 Where an offer is withdrawn on the basis of misleading information, the application will be considered afresh and if a place cannot be offered, the parent will be notified of their legal right of appeal.
- 13.3 A place will not be withdrawn once a child has started at the school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained.

14 Repeat applications

- 14.1 Repeat applications will not usually be considered within the same school year. The exception to this will be where the child's or the school's circumstances have changed significantly since the original application was made.
- 14.2 Full details of the change of circumstances must be provided for consideration by the admission authority. The Local Authority reserves the right to request supporting information to verify details provided in support of a repeat application to ensure that records held are correct. This may include using Council Tax data to verify addresses provided.

15 Admission appeals

- 15.1 Parents will be informed in writing of their legal right of appeal against any decision not to offer them a place at a school stated as a preference on their application form. When an admission authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse their child a place at a school for which they have applied, it will include the reason why admission was refused; information about the right to appeal; the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. Further information on the appeals process is available on the Local Authority's website and by contacting the Local Authority or relevant admission authority.
- 15.2 School admission authorities have 2 distinct roles in relation to school admission appeals, which are:
1. To arrange for an independent appeal panel to hear appeals from parents for a place at their school where the parent's application has been unsuccessful.
 2. To present evidence to the independent appeal panel as to why the admission authority refused to admit the child who is the subject of the appeal.
- 15.3 Parents can submit an appeal in respect of each school for which admission has been refused. In cases where an application has been for a different age group, the legal right of appeal does not apply if a place is offered at the school, but it is not in the preferred age group.
- 15.4 Appeal deadlines will be published online by 28 February 2024.

- 15.5 Appeals against decisions notified after the published offer day will be heard within 40 days of the published appeals deadline where possible, or if received too late, within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.
- 15.6 Applications for appeals against decisions on late applications should be received within 20 school days from the date of notification that the application was unsuccessful.
- 15.7 The decision to appeal does not prevent parents from accepting an alternative school while the appeal process takes place.

Part Two – Key Dates Coordinated Admissions Scheme 2024

| Process | Secondary Transfers | Primary Admissions (including infant schools) |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| Application start date | 4 September 2023 | 1 November 2023 |
| Closing date for applications | 31 October 2023* | 15 January 2024* |
| Preferences shared between LAs | 14 November 2023 | 31 January 2024 |
| Preferences shared with City admission authorities | 29 November 2023 | 28 February 2024 |
| School admission authorities to rank preferences | 18 December 2023 | 13 March 2024 |
| Provisional allocations for other LA resident children at City schools sent to home LAs | Around 8 January 2024 | Around 20 March 2024 |
| Responses to other LAs on potential offers for City residents. | Around 8 January 2024 | Around 20 March 2024 |
| Allocations finalised | 12 February 2024 | 1 April 2024 |
| Offers made | 1 March 2024** | 16 April 2024** |
| Waiting lists generated and processed, including late applications. | 4 March 2024 | 17 April 2024 |
| Offers for late applicants*** | 18 March 2024 | 1 May 2024 |

* National closing date for applications

** In accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021, offers must be made on National Offer Day (1 March for secondary transfer, and 16 April for primary admissions) or the next working day.

*** Wherever possible, late applications received before schools rank their applications will be processed in time for the national offer dates, but this cannot be guaranteed.