



Essex County Council

School Admissions Service

Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Infant and Primary Schools in the Academic Year 2020-2021

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1. Introduction

The School Admissions Regulations (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) require LAs to formulate a 'qualifying scheme' each year to co-ordinate admissions to all primary schools in their area for the following academic year.

The LA is required to adopt a scheme for admissions in the academic year 2020-21 by no later 28 February 2019. If a scheme is not secured by that date, the Secretary of State can impose a scheme.

For the purposes of this document going forward, where the word 'school' or 'schools' is used, it refers to both maintained schools and Academies.

2. Statutory requirements of the scheme

A 'qualifying scheme' shall:

- 2.1. Ensure that in relation to any application made in the course of the normal admission round, so far as is reasonably practicable, each parent in the area of a local authority (LA) shall receive a single offer of a school place;
- 2.2. Communicate on a prescribed day each year a single offer of a school place to the parent of every child who has made an application for a school within the LA area;
- 2.3. Provide a common application form enabling a parent in an authority's area to apply for not less than three primary schools whether in the LA's area or not, to give reasons for that application, and to rank each application relative to others;
- 2.4. Specify criteria by which the authority shall determine whether a child is to be granted or refused admission to a primary school in their area in any case where it appears that the child is eligible to be granted admission to more than one preferred school, or is not eligible to be granted admission to any school for which an application has been made;
- 2.5. Stipulate a timetable of events;
- 2.6. Set out a procedure for determining any application made otherwise than in the course of a normal admission round, or where it is for admission to a relevant age group, is submitted to the authority later than the date stipulated by the scheme.
- 2.7. Specify whether, in determining if a child is to be granted or refused admission to a school in their area, the home LA will have regard to any information provided by the maintaining authority as to whether the child is to be granted a place at a school in that authority's area.

3. Terms of Reference: Applications

- 3.1. The common application form, available as an online or paper form, is the only acceptable form of application. The application process will be publicised on the Council's website for parents of all Essex resident children expecting to commence education in Year R during the academic year 2020-21. Parents will be able to apply online. The form will collect basic data (pupil name, date of birth, address¹, telephone number, parent/carer details, whether the child is cared for by a Local Authority, reasons for the preferences, any sibling link including their age cohort and whether the application is being made on grounds of exceptional medical circumstances).
- 3.2. Supplementary Information Form (SIF). Some admission authorities, for instance schools of a religious character, may have to ask parents to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) to gain additional information to enable them to fully apply their admission criteria. A SIF is not an application form and must be completed in addition to the common application form. In the event of a school needing to use a SIF, a copy of the form must be sent to all statutory consultees as part of the normal consultation on admission arrangements. Schools will generally send SIFs to parents when notified by the LA of a preference from a parent. A SIF must not request details of parent's preferences for other schools.

4. Key features of the scheme

- 4.1. A common application form, available online and printed in the *Primary Education in Essex booklet* (also available online), enabling parents to apply for up to four schools in preference order.
- 4.2. An online application (or paper application), to be returned to the LA no later than 15 January 2020.
- 4.3. Every eligible Essex resident who applies, as far as practicable, will be offered a single school place on 16 April 2020.
- 4.4. Foundation, voluntary aided schools and Academies will continue to be their own admission authorities and will apply their own admission criteria. They will also continue to be responsible for organising and presenting admission appeals.
- 4.5. Essex LA will continue to co-ordinate admissions and hold waiting lists for those parents unsuccessful in gaining places at any school ranked higher than the place offered until the end of the first week of the autumn term.
- 4.6. The scheme will be reviewed annually.

¹ Proof of address may be requested – ideally a **copy of** a driving licence or council tax bill, otherwise two recent utility bills will be accepted.

5. Scope of the scheme

- 5.1. The overall scheme for infant and primary schools applies to all admissions to maintained primary and infant schools (and Academies) within Essex LA for pupils born during the period 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016 (inclusive).

6. Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to the Reception Year of Essex Primary and Infant schools 2020-21

6.1. Application Form

- 6.1.1. The responsibility for applying for a school place rests with parents. The availability of the common application form, available online and printed in the *Primary Education in Essex* booklet (also published online), will be publicised on the Council's website. The form will also be available on request from the LA. Parents will be able to make applications online and to refer to the Council's website for admission policy information published in the relevant booklets. The common application form, completed either online or on paper, will be the only acceptable forms of application.
- 6.1.2. The form will allow parents to express a preference for up to four primary and/or infant schools in ranked order (including non-Essex schools).
- 6.1.3. The *Primary Education in Essex* booklet will include notes of guidance explaining the operation of the co-ordinated scheme and advice on completing the application form. Individual school's admissions policies will be detailed in the Primary Schools Admission Policy Directory for the relevant area.
- 6.1.4. The application form must be returned or an online application submitted to the LA by the closing date of 15 January 2020.
- 6.1.5. The ranked order of parental preferences will remain confidential to the LA (unless disclosed by parental comments in their application), and other LAs where relevant, unless the applicant decides to make an appeal (see 7.2).

6.2. Supplementary Information Forms (SIF)

- 6.2.1. Admission authorities will only have a SIF if they need to collect any further information from a parent which is required to enable them to apply the school's admissions policy. Admission authorities (the governing body for foundation, and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies and the LA for community and VC schools) will send this form to parents as required, generally when they receive details of the application from the LA. These forms must be returned directly to the admissions authority. A SIF must not request details of the parents ranking of the school in relation to other preferences.
- 6.2.2. Schools that require a parent to complete a SIF will be identified in the relevant Primary Schools Admission Policy Directory.

6.2.3. A SIF alone does not constitute an application for a school place. Applications can only be made on the paper common application form or the online system.

6.3. Processing Applications

6.3.1. Application forms must be returned to LA by the closing date of 15 January 2020. Online applications must also be submitted by this date. If a Governing Body receives applications directly they must send them directly to the LA.

6.3.2. The LA will co-ordinate applications and the offer of places for all Essex maintained schools and Academies acting as a clearing house for other admissions authorities (the governing bodies of foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies) and as the admission authority for community and VC schools.

6.3.3. The LA will notify schools of every preference expressed for that school together with all the applicants details (apart from the ranking of the preference unless this is required – 6.1.5) by use of an electronic list. The first list will be provided to schools during week commencing 2 December 2019.

6.3.4. Schools are permitted to remind parents who have not submitted a formal application but who appear on their own expression of interest register.

6.3.5. A full and final list of all on time applicants for a school will be sent to that school by 13 February 2020 (subject to data exchanges). The list will set out all pupil information and include details of the number of first, second, third and fourth preferences. Where VA, foundation schools and Academies use straight line distance as a criterion, the LA will supply this information using a computerised GIS system. The list will not include details of the parent's ranked preference for the school (see 6.1.5). Regular updates of late applications will also be provided.

6.3.6. VA, foundation schools and Academies must provide the LA with their lists of applications, ranked in accordance with their admission policy, by 27 February 2020. The returned list must rank all applications received.

6.3.7. The LA, using preference rankings and the ranked offer data supplied by foundation, VA schools and Academies and offer data supplied by other LAs will match the provisional allocations of places against each parent's ranking. The following will then apply:

Where a parent's first preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the first preference school and the LA will then not consider any applications for schools at second preference or below.

Where a parent's first preference cannot be met but the second preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the second preference school. The application for the first preference school will be placed on the waiting list. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at third preference or below.

Where a parent's first and second preference cannot be met but the third preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the third preference school. The application for the first and second preference schools will be placed on the waiting lists. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at fourth preference or below.

This process will continue until all preferences are exhausted.

Where none of the parent's preferences can be met: A place will be offered at the nearest school with spaces available. The LA will use a walking distance measurement to assess the nearest school with spaces available.

The right of statutory appeal will be given for all preferences which have not been offered.

6.4 Exchange of data with other LAs

6.4.1. Where Essex LA is made aware that a place is to be offered by another LA for a school with a higher ranked preference, any application for a lower ranked preference will not be actioned. If this information is not available multiple offers may occur. The LA will use the Pan-London Co-ordinated Admissions System (PLR) to securely exchange information with other LAs, which is made up of 38 authorities in and neighbouring London, or the School to School site (S2S) to exchange information with LAs that are outside of the PLR system.

6.5 Late applications and changes of preferences

6.5.1. Applications received after the closing date will be accepted but will be treated as late applications. This means they will be considered after all on time applications have been processed. However, if a late application is received on or before 3 February 2020 and the LA considers the circumstances for late submission to be exceptional, the application will be considered as on time.

6.5.2. Other applications submitted after the closing date will be accepted but treated as late applications. Admission authorities will be asked to rank the applicant in line with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days. Late applications will only be considered after all on time applications have been considered and the initial allocation of places has been made.

6.5.3. A new on time preference cannot be added after the closing date, to an application form received on time, unless in accordance with 6.5.2 above, the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional. Any new application form/preference received after 3 February 2020 will be held and not considered until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2020.

- 6.5.4. Changes in the order of preferences already expressed will not be accepted after the closing date, unless the reason is for a change of address. No changes shall be permitted after 3 February 2020 until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2020.
- 6.5.5. After 16 April 2020 the details of any applications received from parents who move into the area will be sent to schools as and when they are received. Schools will be required to rank them in accordance with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days. Names will be added to waiting lists in accordance with the admission criteria where appropriate

6.6. Allocation of Places

- 6.6.1. The LA will send offers to parents on 16 April 2020 offering a place at the allocated school and asking for parents to confirm a rejection of a place within two weeks only if they do not wish to accept the place offered. Non confirmation of a rejection will be deemed to be an acceptance of the offer made. For those that have had an application refused, the LA will inform them of their right of appeal to an independent panel. Parents who submitted their applications online will be able to access the outcome of their applications via the internet from 16 April 2020 and should receive an email informing them of the outcome of their application.
- 6.6.2. If an offer of a place is declined the LA will reallocate the place from the waiting list, in accordance with the parental rankings and the school's admission policy.
- 6.6.3. For pupils who, through the allocation process, have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools the LA will allocate and offer a place at the nearest school that has a place available.
- 6.6.4. The LA will inform schools and other LAs where necessary, of the allocations made.

6.7. Co-ordinated arrangements between the offer date and September 2020

- 6.7.1. Where necessary the LA will hold waiting lists for all schools until the end of the first week of the autumn term and continue to allocate places from the waiting lists if spaces become available. After this point, the LA will give the waiting lists to foundation, VA schools and Academies. The LA will continue to hold the waiting lists for community and VC schools until the end of the autumn term and offer places as appropriate from these lists. Thereafter, parents will have the opportunity to register their continued interest in a place.
- 6.7.2. From the offer day (16 April 2020) up to the end of the first week of the autumn term the LA will continue to co-ordinate admission arrangements for potential Year R pupils and make all offers on behalf of infant/primary schools. All new

applications during this period will continue to be made on the common application form. The online system will be unavailable for new applications following the closing date of 15 January 2020.

- 6.7.3 The offer of a revised school place will continue to be made by the LA on behalf of the school. If schools are contacted directly by a parent then it should be made clear to the parent that offers can only come from the LA. Schools must not make offers directly.

7. Appeals

- 7.1. Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at a school that they had put as a preference and for which they had not been allocated a place, even where that preference was of a lower rank than the place offered.
- 7.2. The appeal would be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school. The LA will provide the admission authority at that time with details of the preference expressed by parents.

8. Timetable - September 2020 co-ordinated admission round

By 11 November 2019	Reference to the <i>Primary Education in Essex</i> booklet, including the common application form and notes of guidance, sent to all Essex primary, junior schools. Booklet also available on the Essex County Council website. Online application facility opens on 11 November.
w/c 2 December 2019	LA notifies schools of all preferences expressed at that point in the process.
15 January 2020	Statutory national closing date for all applications, including online. The online application system will be closed after this date.
w/c 15 January 2020 onwards	LA to consider all applications received after the closing date.
By 13 February 2020	LA sends final lists to all schools detailing applications received (subject to data exchange).
February 2020	Admission authorities will apply their own admission criteria and rank the preferences received.
By 27 February 2020	LA to receive list of preferences ranked in accordance with admissions criteria from admissions authorities within Essex.
February / March 2020	LA to process applications with reference to allocation lists and parental preference and establish an initial 'best fit' of offers. The LA will also exchange offer data with other LAs where appropriate and refine 'best fit' in the light of changes.
By 9 April 2020	LA to send 'final' allocation lists to all primary schools in Essex (subject to data exchange).
16 April 2020	Offer date. LA will notify Essex resident parents of the outcome to their application.
April-August 2020	LA maintains waiting lists for all schools and fills any places that become available.
September 2020	Waiting lists cease to be held by LA. Waiting lists sent to foundation, VA and Academies.

9. Co-ordination of pupil admissions to Year 3 of Essex junior schools 2020-2021

- 9.1 A specific scheme is published separately for admissions into Year 3 of junior schools for September 2020. It is available to view on the website www.essex.gov.uk/admissions.

10. Applications for School Places Received In-Year (mid-year)

Scheme for the co-ordination of 'in-year' pupil admissions to primary, infant, and junior schools or academies in the academic year 2020-2021

11 Introduction

- 11.1 There is now no requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in-year applications for places outside the normal admission round i.e. applications other than for the start of Reception (or Year 3 in the case of Junior Schools).
- 11.2 However, the County Council believes that in the interests of fairness and consistency, and given that the Council is the admission authority for the majority of primary schools, that it should continue to co-ordinate all in-year applications for infant, junior and primary school places. The arrangements below will therefore apply with effect from 1 September 2020, in line with the current/previous in-year co-ordinated arrangements.

12 Key features of the scheme

- 12.1 A common application form will be available at all Essex schools, on the Essex County Council website and on demand from the LA's School Admissions Team, enabling parents to apply for up to four primary/infant/junior schools in preference order.
- 12.2 Essex LA will send all offers of places to parents who have applied for a school place, where that place is for a school in the Essex LA area. In the case of foundation, VA schools and Academies, such offers will be made on behalf of the admission authority in question.
- 12.3 Foundation, VA schools and Academies will continue to be their own admission authorities and will also continue to be responsible for organising and presenting admission appeals.
- 12.4 The scheme will be reviewed annually.

13 Scope of the scheme

- 13.1 The overall scheme applies to all applications made by parents for an in-year place at any maintained primary, infant, junior school or Academy inside the Essex LA area.

14 Scheme for the co-ordination of 'in-year' pupil admissions for Essex resident children in the academic year 2020-21

14.1 Application Form

- 14.1.1 There will be a single common application form for all in-year applications to primary/infant/junior schools and Academies. The forms will be available at all local schools, on the Essex County Council website, and on demand from Essex LA's School Admissions Team. Notes of guidance explaining the operation of the co-ordinated scheme and advice on completing the application will be available with the form. The common application form will be the only acceptable form of application.
- 14.1.2 The form will allow parents to express a preference for up to four primary/infant/junior schools/academies in ranked order. In the event of parents applying for more than one school, the ranked order of parental preferences will remain confidential to the LA. Preference ranks will be shared with other LA's where relevant or if an applicant decides to make an appeal (see 16.2).

14.1.3 Parents wishing to apply for a place at a school in the area of a different LA will need to follow the application procedures set down by that LA. Likewise, parents from other LA areas wishing to apply for Essex schools will need to apply directly to Essex using the Essex application form.

14.2 **Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)**

14.2.1 Admission authorities will only have a SIF if they need to collect any further information from a parent which is required to enable them to apply the school's admissions policy. Admission authorities (the governing body for foundation, and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies and the LA for community and VC schools) will send this form to parents as required, generally when they receive details of the application from the LA. These forms must be returned directly to the admissions authority. A SIF must not request details of the parents ranking of the school in relation to other preferences. In the case of in year admissions however, a place will be considered to be available (unless otherwise indicated) at a preferred school if the number on roll in the relevant year group does not meet or exceed the admissions number (see 14.3.3 below), even if the parent has not completed a SIF.

14.2.2 However, for schools that do require a SIF to apply their admissions criteria it will be good practice for schools to issue to parents at the same time the LA common application form is provided. In the event of the LA refusing a place at a foundation, VA school or Academy which normally requires a SIF, the parent may lodge a statutory appeal against the refusal, and, if the facility is available, place their child on a waiting list for admission held by the school.

14.2.3 Schools that require a parent to complete a SIF are identified in the Primary Schools Admission Policies Directory booklets, available at schools, on the Essex County Council website, and on demand from Essex LA's School Admissions Team.

14.2.4 A SIF alone does not constitute an application for a school place. Applications can only be made on the common application form.

14.3 **Processing Applications**

14.3.1 The LA will co-ordinate applications and the offer of places for all maintained schools and academies in Essex, acting as a clearing house for other admission authorities (the governing bodies of foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies) and as the admission authority for community and VC schools within Essex.

- 14.3.2 Upon receiving a completed common application form, the LA will contact the relevant school(s) to confirm their current numbers on roll. Schools must respond to the LA within 5 school days of receiving the request.
- 14.3.3 Following receipt of number on roll information, if the school(s) indicate(s) that the number on roll in the relevant year group is lower than the admissions number, the LA will consider a place available at that school, unless otherwise indicated.
- 14.3.4 In the case of multiple applications, the LA, using preference rankings will match the allocation of places against the applicant's ranking upon receipt of number on roll information. The following will then apply:

Where a parent's first preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the first preference school and the LA will then not consider any applications for schools at second preference or below.

Where a parent's first preference cannot be met but the second preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the second preference school. The application for the first preference school will be formally refused and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal. The LA will not consider an application to a third preference school where one exists.

Where a parent's first and second preference cannot be met but the third preference can be met: A place will be allocated at the third preference school. The LA will not consider an application to a fourth preference school where one exists. The application for the first and second preference schools will be formally refused and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal.

Where none of the parent's preferences can be met: The applications for all preferred schools will be formally refused and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal. See point 14.4.4 below.

- 14.3.5 In the event of a parent applying for multiple schools where more than one school has a place available in the relevant year group, the LA will offer a place at the highest ranked school with a place available and send a copy of the offer letter to the school.

14.4 **Allocation of Places**

- 14.4.1 The LA will write to all parents who have submitted an in-year application form, no later than 5 working days from the receipt of number on roll information from the relevant school(s) (see 14.3.2 above), confirming the offer and / or refusal of a place. Non rejection of the offer will be deemed to be an acceptance of the offer made.

- 14.4.2 In the case of more complex applications, it may not be possible to comply with the above timescales in all instances.
- 14.4.3 If an offer of a place is declined the LA will inform the school concerned.
- 14.4.4 For pupils who have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools, in the case of pupils already with a local Essex school place, the LA will, on request, advise the parent of the nearest school that has places available. In the case of pupils without a school place, the LA will offer a place at the nearest school with a place available.
- 14.4.5 The LA will inform other LAs where necessary, of the allocations made.

15. Waiting lists

- 15.1 The minimum requirement under the Statutory Admissions Code is that admission authorities must maintain a waiting list until at least 31 December in the normal year of entry. There is no requirement to keep a waiting list at any time or for any other school year. Admission authorities may choose to keep waiting lists for longer than one term and in other school years if they wish.
- 15.2 Parents whose applications are refused a place at a foundation, VA school or Academy will be advised to contact the individual school to ask whether a waiting list is held and if their child is being added to the list.
- 15.3 The responsibility for maintaining waiting lists (where admission authorities choose to do so) rests with individual admission authorities i.e. the LA for community and voluntary controlled schools, the governing body for VA, foundation schools and the Academy Trust for Academies. Children must be ranked on a waiting list (where one is held) in accordance with the published oversubscription criteria.
- 15.4 Schools that are their own admission authority and wish to make an offer from a waiting list will need to notify the LA so that an offer can be sent on their behalf.

16. Appeals

- 16.1 Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at a school that they had put as a preference and for which they had not been allocated a place, even if it is a lower preference than that offered.
- 16.2 Any appeal lodged will be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school within Essex. The LA will provide

the admission authority at that time with details of the preference expressed by parents.