



Essex County Council

School Admissions Service

Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Junior Schools in the Academic Year 2021-2022

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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 junior schools in their area for the following academic year.

The LA is required to adopt a scheme for admissions in the academic year 2021-2022 by no later 28 February 2020. 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 junior 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 junior 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 consider 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, are the only acceptable forms 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 3 during the academic year 2021-2022. 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* and 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 2021.
- 4.3. Every eligible Essex resident who applies, as far as practicable, will be offered a single school place on 16 April 2021.
- 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 first day 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 applies to all admissions to maintained junior schools (and Academies) within Essex LA for pupils born during the period 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014 (inclusive).

6. Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to the Year 3 of Essex Junior schools 2021-2022

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 available 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 junior 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 2021.
- 6.1.5. The ranked order of parental preferences will remain confidential to the LA, 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 online system or using the paper common application form.

6.3. Processing Applications

- 6.3.1. Application forms must be returned to the LA by the closing date of 15 January 2021. 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 8 December 2020.
- 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 12 February 2021 (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). Admission Authorities will be advised of subsequent late applications as appropriate.
- 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 26 February 2021. 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 5 February 2021 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.
- 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 5 February 2021 will be held and not considered until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2021.
- 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 5 February 2021 until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2021.

6.5.5. After 16 April 2021 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.

6.5.6. Applications for Primary Schools

In most cases Year 3 of a primary school is not a relevant year group in the context of co-ordinated admissions. Applications received for a Year 3 place at a primary school from parents of children who are not attending Year 2 of an infant school will therefore be treated as 'in-year' admissions. The LA will not process any preferences for primary schools as part of this process, except for Chigwell Primary, Lambourne Primary and Wickford Primary schools.

6.6 Allocation of Places

6.6.1. The LA will send offers to parents on 16 April 2021 offering a place at the allocated school. Parents should 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 2021 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 (if a waiting list exists), in accordance with the ranking of parental preferences 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 and do not already have a school place, the LA will allocate and offer a place at the nearest school that have places 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 2021

6.7.1. Where necessary the LA will hold waiting lists for all schools until the first day 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 (31 December 2021) 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 2021) up to the first day of the autumn term the LA will continue to co-ordinate admission arrangements for potential Year 3 pupils and make all offers on behalf of junior 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 2021.
- 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 2021 co-ordinated admission round

9 November 2020	Online facility opens. <i>Primary Education in Essex</i> booklet available on the ECC website.
w/c 8 December 2020	LA notifies schools of all preferences expressed at that point in the process.
15 January 2021	Statutory national closing date for all applications, including online. The online application system will be closed after this date.
From 15 January 2021 onwards	LA to consider all applications received after the closing date.
February 2021	LA sends/receives files to/from co-ordinating LAs.
By 12 February 2021	LA sends final lists to all schools detailing applications received (subject to data exchange).
12-26 February 2021	Admission authorities will apply their own admission criteria and rank the preferences received.
By 26 February 2021	LA to receive list of preferences ranked in accordance with admissions criteria from admissions authorities within Essex.
March 2021	The LA will also exchange offer data with other LAs where appropriate and determine the highest ranked preference that can be offered to each child.
By 9 April 2021	LA to send 'final' allocation lists to all junior schools in Essex (subject to data exchange).
16 April 2021	Offer date. LA will notify Essex resident parents of the outcome to their application.
April-August 2021	LA maintains waiting lists for all schools and fills any places that become available.
September 2021	Waiting lists cease to be held by LA. Waiting lists sent to foundation, VA and Academies.