

Co-ordinated school admissions England

What are co-ordinated admissions?

This advice applies if you have a child starting primary school (Year R) or secondary school (Year 7) in England for the first time. Please note that some Local Authorities (LA) have a middle school point of entry.

Applications for school places at these points are run on a national co-ordinated scheme. All admission authorities work to the same dates and timescales which are set in the [School Admissions Code](#).

Application deadlines

- Primary school places: **15 January** of the year that the child starts school
- Secondary school places: **31 October** of Year 6

Avoid late applications if possible. National offer days follow in March and April, exact dates are published in advance on LA websites. Check your LA website for application forms, application policies and any criteria for entry for specific schools.

Top tips for service families

Choosing a school

Research schools in the area within which you are applying. We would recommend that you visit if you can, or at least speak to key members of staff at the school ahead of making decisions. Different schools suit different children, so base decisions on your child's needs and not necessarily where everyone else chooses to send their child.

- Find and compare schools in England [website](#).
- All schools must publish policies in relation to how they do things within the school. You should be able to see an Admissions Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Behaviour Policy etc. on the school website. Can you support this approach?
- Ofsted reports are a snapshot of a few days in the life of a school. Some reports may have been written some time ago. Keep an open mind when reading inspection reports.
- Does the school website tell you how the school use any Service Premium money?
- Consider the journey to school and access to transport. Your choices could impact on access to transport or not (be aware of financial implications before making applications).
- You will be asked to rank order your preferred schools. Naming just one school does not increase your chances of being offered a place there.

Making the application

- Research how applications for school places are administered by the Admission Authority you are applying to.
- The admission authority should publish guidance and application processes on their website.
- The admission authority should provide information on key dates and how any late applications are administered- this may include key decision points.
- The admission authority should provide details about appeal processes and timescales if you should need to use this route.
- Once you have made your application, ensure you receive and retain a copy of the confirmation that your application has been made.

What happens after the application?

You will receive the offer of a school place for your child on National Offer Day.

- If your child has not been offered your first preference you may choose to appeal. You can accept the school place offered and still appeal for your first preference. Accepting the place will provide you with the assurance of a school place for your child should your appeal be unsuccessful. If you refuse the offer, it may not be available again in the future.
- Ensure your child has been placed on the waiting list of your preferred schools. Please note that positions on a waiting list can change. Positions are prioritised according to the school's over-subscription criteria i.e. if you are told your child is first on the waiting list but another child (who has needs considered a higher priority) requests a place, then they will move ahead of your child on the waiting list.
- The admissions authority must provide you with guidance on how to lodge an appeal. We advise you contact EAT(UK) before submitting your letter of appeal. They have 40 school days to offer you an appeal hearing you will need to prepare your case. EAT(UK) can offer you guidance to do this.

Lodging an appeal

If you have been refused a place at your preferred school, you can either accept a different school or appeal for a place at your preferred school. The outcome of appeals is not guaranteed.

- Appeal panels should be held by an independent panel. You should receive information from the clerk to the appeal panel.
- Refer to the school's Admissions Policy and specifically their oversubscription criteria. This will allow you to see which groups of children are given priority entry etc.
- EAT(UK) can provide you with bespoke guidance on preparing an appeal and submitting your case- ensure you are aware of deadlines for appeal submissions etc.

FAQs for service families

I am in the UK and due posting should I apply here or in my new location?

Families who are due to move into another LA area after the closing date for applications will need to apply to their 'home authority' (the authority where the child is resident at the time of application). So, you would apply to your current home LA for a place in the new LA. The home authority must then pass information on applications to other local 'maintaining' authorities about applications to schools in their area. The maintaining authority must determine the application and inform the home LA if a place is available. The offer to parents must be made by the home local authority.

Ensure you include all relevant official documents indicating proof of the move and identifying the address you wish to be used when your application is considered (SFA/ Unit address).

Examples of official confirmation:

- Assignment order identifying date of relocation, unit address etc.
- Official letter (headed paper) that declares a relocation date
- Copy of the SFA offer including address and date of occupation
- Proof of your new address, for example a mortgage or rental agreement or deeds for the property
- Proof that you'll live in the area before the start of the next school term

I think we will be moving to a certain location. Can I apply for a school where we are now and where we are moving to just in case?

See response above about residency. You can only apply to one admission authority at a time, and this is the one where you have residency, or if you are returning from outside of England the authority where you hold formal confirmation you will return to.

We are currently posted out of England, when should we apply?

If you know where you will live when your child is due to start school and you can provide an official letter that declares a relocation date, then you can apply by the published dates i.e. 31 October for secondary places and 15 January for primary places. Please refer to the School Admissions Code (detailed below).

I don't want a place at the closest school, will I get free transport?

Under the Department for Education's Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (July 2014), LAs have a duty to provide transport to children who are attending their nearest suitable school, where that school is over the statutory walking distance (2 miles each way for children up to the age of 8, 3 miles each way for children aged 8 and over). If you apply for a school which is further away than your nearest suitable school, then you are likely to be responsible for all transport

arrangements. Refer to the Local Authority's transport policy for further guidance about how routes are measured etc.

My child has an EHCP, how do I get a school place?

If your child is due to transfer from one phase of education to another, their EHCP should be reviewed by 15 January of the year they will move to primary or secondary school. It is during the EHCP review that you express a preference for the school you want your child to attend and the LA will consult for a place. The school your child will attend will be named in Section I of their EHCP ready for the new school year. Ensure you are aware of the timescales involved and you have had communication from your caseworker about the school named. If you are due to move, please ensure the review paperwork is clear about the type of school it has been decided your child will attend and that the EHCP has been effectively reviewed before you move. EAT(UK) can provide guidance on this.

My child is currently in a MOD School setting and has a SCAN, how do I get a school place?

You will need to make an application as per the LA website i.e., (as above) use the official confirmation of posting to engage with the LA you will return to. Should you feel that your child will require SEND support within a special needs school or high levels of additional provision in a mainstream school. EAT(UK) strongly urge you to engage with the SENCo at the MOD School as soon as possible so that transition arrangements for the return to the UK can be arranged. It is very important that you are proactive and plan ahead.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant considered during this process?

If you are in a location which enables you to make applications by the given dates then you have the same access to opportunities as all other school applicants.

The core principles of the AFC are that no Service family should face disadvantage because of Service. Service families have equal access to school places alongside other families in a given area and there are no special provisions under the AFC.

Families should be offered a school place for their children of statutory school age should they request places however there is no duty to comply with parental preference. Please note that the AFC will not guarantee that Service children get their first choice of school or be spared the inconvenience of children from the same family allocated places in different schools.

The School Admissions Code (below) references the AFC and potential considerations.

School Admissions Code (England) 2021

All admission authorities in England (whether that is the Local Authority or an individual school/ academy) must adhere to the regulations as set out in the School Admissions Code.

In acknowledgment of the AFC, the School Admissions Code places several duties on admissions authorities which relate directly to a Service-related lifestyle.

What does the School Admissions Code say?

Section 2.21: Children of UK service personnel (UK Armed Forces) For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting, or crown servants returning from overseas, admission authorities must:

- a) allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area (as long as one is available), provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date. Admission authorities must not refuse to process an application and must not refuse a place solely because the family do not yet have an intended address, or do not yet live in the area.
- b) use the address at which the child will live when applying their oversubscription criteria, as long as the parents provide some evidence of their intended address. Admission authorities must use a Unit or quartering address as the child's home address when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria, where a parent requests this.
- c) not reserve blocks of places for these children.
- d) ensure that arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children. Arrangements must be appropriate for the area and be described in the local authority's composite prospectus.

Excepted pupils

Mobile service families with children needing infant class places in schools can find the inflexibility of the limit on infant class sizes, creates difficulties when they are posted to a new area. To address this, a child whose parent is in the armed forces and who is admitted to the school outside a normal admission round can be considered an 'excepted pupil'.

Excepted pupils can be admitted to a class even if it means the numbers rise above 30 pupils per single teacher. Admission authorities are not required to treat all infant service children as excepted pupils. However, they can use their discretion to do so for those service children whose parents make in-year applications. The Government guidance says this provision is not intended to, and does not, offer preferential treatment. It provides flexibility to lessen the disadvantage experienced by some service families. Service families who are in a location at the time of a normal admissions round and therefore make their school application at the same time as other families will not be offered this discretionary consideration. Service families who are in an area to make an application within the normal admissions round will have their application considered in the same way as all other families in that area.

Useful links

- [School Admissions Code](#)
- [DCS GOV.UK page](#)
- [Home to school transport FAQs](#)
- [EHCP Phase Transfer](#)