

# SOMERSET LOCAL AUTHORITY LA ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS



This over-arching policy applies to;

- All Somerset County Council maintained primary and secondary schools and Academies, except for Special Schools.
- Parents/carers and students seeking admission to the year of entry at a school or academy. This excludes admission to a sixth form, for which an alternative policy applies.

This policy describes how first admission and transfer between phases of education is co-ordinated and administered by the Local Authority.

The Local Authority (LA) is the Admissions Authority for Community and Voluntary Controlled secondary and upper schools and is responsible for admissions to the sixth form at these schools. The Governing Body is the Admission Authority for a Voluntary Aided school, Foundation school, or Academy and is directly responsible for admission to sixth forms at these establishments.

## 1. Admission of Pupils to Somerset Schools

This policy document should be read in conjunction with the Somerset 2012/13 primary and secondary schemes and Sixth Form policy document

The key principles that underpin the authority's admissions policy are:

- to coordinate all first admission to and transferring between phases of education at all maintained schools and Academies for all children resident in Somerset
- to provide parents with clear and easy to understand information relating to admissions and transport;
- to support the LA's policy of local schools for local children
- to ensure a consistent and equitable method of allocating schools places
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The following are key features of the admissions policy:

- parent/carers can express up to **three** preferences
- most schools across Somerset have a specific catchment area. Parents can determine from the catchment area their local school and whether their child is likely to receive priority for admission if the school is oversubscribed

- priority is given to local children over siblings who live outside the catchment area
- school places are allocated on the basis of a pupil's home address. For a Somerset address to be taken into consideration, children must be resident in Somerset on or before the published application closing date. Where a school is over-subscribed evidence of a house move will be required where the move is into the schools catchment area. This must include exchange of contract or fixed term (minimum six month) letting/tenancy agreement. Where this can't be provided, other evidence to substantiate a firm residency for the child(ren) concerned, may be acceptable. Supporting evidence must be received at the time of application
- the over-subscription criteria for all community and voluntary controlled schools support the inclusion of children in the care of the local authority, children with special educational needs, children from service families, family church links (should the applicant wish their child to attend a church school)

For the purpose of measuring home to school distance, statutory walking routes, and the first 2 miles of any transport route, distance calculations will be measured using a straight-line measurement from the address point of the home to the address point of the school using the LA's GIS mapping system. (Address Point is a dataset that uniquely defines and locates residential, business and public postal addresses in Great Britain. It is created by matching information from Ordnance Survey digital map databases with more than 27 million addresses recorded in the Royal Mail). In the case of multi-level dwellings such as flats, the staircase will be included in the distance measurement.

For the purpose of allocating places at Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools in respect of Christian, Anglican and Methodist faith criteria; A Supplementary Information Form must be provided at the time of application, confirming any required evidence that is stated in individual school admission arrangements. For Voluntary Controlled and Community schools, for which the LA is the Admissions Authority, this evidence must indicate regular church attendance of at least once per month for a consecutive period for no less than 6 months may be required.

## **2. The Authority's Admissions Policy**

The School Standards and Framework Act 2002 and the School Admissions Code, places a duty on all LAs to share admission application information. Locally, all LAs have agreed some specific arrangements to co-ordinate admission applications across LA boundaries.

Somerset Co-ordinated Primary and Secondary Admissions Schemes, including relevant over-subscription criteria are consulted on and deposited with the Department for Children Schools and Families on an annual basis. These Schemes detail the timescale on which the Admissions Process will be administered.

This Admissions Policy document, applicable to all maintained schools in the County, underpins the Primary and Secondary Admissions Schemes.

Where a school is not oversubscribed all preferences submitted by the published application closing deadline will be agreed. In the event of a Community, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided school or Academy being over-subscribed, the relevant over-subscription criteria will be applied and places will be allocated up to the statutory published admission number (AN) applicable for the school and year concerned.

All preferences for Community, Voluntary Controlled, Voluntary Aided school or Academy places will be allocated using the 'Equal Preference with Ranking' allocation method. This ranks all applications against the published over-subscription criteria for the school concerned. Where more than one school can be offered, the highest ranked preference will be allocated.

Any application received after the published primary and secondary closing dates will be deemed late, and will only be considered after completion of the formal on-time appeals round. Allocations will continue on a monthly basis until the start of the new academic year in line with published dates. Applications received after the start of the academic year will be dealt with in line with the published 'in-year' allocation procedure.

### **3. Admission Numbers**

A legal published Admission Number (AN) is set annually by the Admissions Authority for the year of entry at all schools (including new entry to the Sixth Form). All other year groups have an admission limit, normally set at the Indicated Admission Number (IAN) which takes account of the overall number of places available at the school or academy. The IAN indicates the maximum number of places available in any year group other than the year of entry.

### **4. Middle school definition**

The Education (Middle School) (England) Regulations 2002 provides a definition for Middle Schools. Somerset Local Authority adopts this definition for the purpose of School Admission co-ordinated arrangements. A Middle School will be classified as primary where there is an entry age before 11, and secondary where the entry age is older than 11.

### **5. Exceptional circumstances**

Late applications will be accepted, in very limited specified circumstances, up to the published exemption period deadline. Thereafter all applications will be deemed 'late' and will be considered only after completion of the formal 'on-time' appeals round, on a monthly basis until the start of the new academic year

The exceptional circumstances are:

- (i) *Where a Statement of Special Educational Needs has been issued for a child, or a multi agency professional team has identified specific needs requiring a particular school.*
- (ii) *Where there is clear evidence of an administrative error by a member of school staff, or officer of the Children and Young People's Directorate or other LA.*
- (iii) *A delay in submission of the application due to the death of a family member or serious illness.*

- (iv) *Families of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants who have been subject to movement within the UK and from aboard, at relatively short notice*

It is at the discretion of the Admissions Authority to request evidence to support a claim under exceptional grounds.

## **6. Appeals Procedure**

If the Local Authority is unable to offer a place at a preferred school or academy, parents and/or students age 16 have a legal right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel.

The Admissions Authority will ensure that appeals are dealt with fairly and impartially in compliance with the requirements of the Admission Appeals Code. In all cases where a parent is refused a place for their child at a preferred school, they will be sent an appeal information pack including an appeal application form.

## **7. Waiting Lists**

A ranked waiting list, including all children refused places at a preferred school or academy will be held by each Admissions Authority. If places subsequently become available within the published Admission Number, they will be allocated to the highest ranked application held on the waiting list for the particular school, which includes; the original refusal list, any new applications already under consideration and parents refused a place at appeal for the school in question.

## **8. First Admissions to school**

In Somerset, children may start school in the September following their fourth birthday. However, legally a child must be receiving full time education at the start of the school term following their fifth birthday.

Admission to Somerset schools takes place once per year in September unless parents have entered into a formal deferred entry arrangement with the Authority.

## **9. Deferred Entry**

Where the admission authority for a primary school offers places in reception classes before the children are of compulsory school age, the Secretary of State requires the Admission Authority to offer parents/carers the option of deferring their child's entry until later in the school year if they are summer born.

Somerset operates a Deferred Entry Scheme that enables parents/carers of children born between 1 April and 31 August to defer entry for the autumn term. Their child(ren) may then start school in the following January. Where a parent chooses to defer entry, their child will always join their chronological age year group.

### **Phased/Staggered Entry**

To help children settle smoothly into school, some schools operate different start dates for children entering reception classes. This is known as "Phased or Staggered Entry". All children should start school within the first ten days of term, but may attend on a part time basis until the autumn half term. After the fourth week of term the school will provide a minimum average of 2.5 hours per day. In exceptional circumstances - for children not of statutory school age - this minimum level of attendance may continue and the LA will consult with parents/carers, health visitors

and other professionals to accommodate children for whom continued part-time school attendance may be beneficial.

## **10. Transferring to the next phase of education**

Due to the different age ranges of schools in Somerset, depending on where they live, children may transfer to their next school, at ages:

- 7+ Junior
- 9 + Middle
- 11+ Secondary
- 13 + Upper

Children will transfer to the next school if the appropriate age is reached between 1 September and 31 August (both dates inclusive).

## **11. Retentions and Accelerations (children taught outside of their chronological year group)**

The Department for Education anticipates that children will be taught in their chronological year group. However, there is provision within the School Admissions Code for individual cases to be considered, where parents wish their child to be accelerated or retained one year above or below their chronological age.

Somerset Admissions Authority will consider applications from parents who wish their child to be accelerated or retained. Requests, however, will only be supported in **very exceptional** circumstances where a multi-agency professional team considers the evidence provided with the parent's application to justify acceleration or retention. In all cases the final decision rests with the head teacher and/or governing body of the school concerned.

## **12. General Terms of Reference**

### **Siblings**

There is no guarantee that siblings can remain together. However, LA over-subscription criteria applying to Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools have been developed to ensure priority for a school place is given, as far as possible, to siblings.

For the purposes of Admission, a sibling is defined as a child living at the same address as a half or full brother or sister, an adoptive brother or sister or children of the same household.

### **Parent or parent/carer**

Parent/carers are defined as; Natural parents, whether they are married or not, or any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person. This will be the person(s) with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child.

### **Home Address**

The home address is very important, as school places are allocated on the basis of the home address of each child. A child's home address is considered to be where the child spends the majority of their time with parents or carers.

Documentary evidence of home ownership or suitable rental agreement may be required, together with proof of permanent residence at the property concerned. Places cannot be allocated on the basis of an intended future address, unless the house move can be confirmed through the formal 'exchange of contracts' or the signing of a formal lease agreement. The Local Authority reserves the right to seek further documentary evidence to support a claim of residence.

Please note that the LA is unable to allocate a place to anyone moving to the United Kingdom from abroad prior to their arrival in Somerset. Proof of residency will always be required. The only exceptions are children of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants (including Diplomats) for whom special circumstances apply.

An address used for childcare arrangements cannot be used as a home address for the purpose of applying for a school place. Fraudulent claims relating to the home address of a particular child may lead to the withdrawal of any offer of a school place.

The LA School Admissions Team, County Hall, Taunton must be notified of any change of address during the admissions procedure.

### **Issues relating to shared residency arrangements**

The administering of school applications may be severely delayed where shared residence arrangements are in place and parents/carers of the child submit 2 separate applications for different schools. In this situation the LA requires parents to resolve matters between themselves, and inform the LA which application should be processed. The LA will not become involved in private disputes. The LA does recognise that there may be situations where parents cannot ultimately reach an agreement between themselves and it is, therefore, necessary for the LA to take a decision. Where this is the case the LA will try to establish the child's permanent address and prioritise the application made by the parent living at this address.

Each parent will be required to write to the LA and inform them of the number of days each week the child spends with them. Where the child spends equal time with both parents the LA may ask for additional information including evidence of which parent/carer is in receipt of child benefit, or the name of the GP surgery at which the child is registered. When the LA has received all the necessary information from both parents a decision will be reached based on the evidence provided.

### **Distance Measurements**

For the purpose of measuring home to school distance, all calculations will be measured using a straight-line measurement from the address point of the home to the address point of the school using the LA's GIS mapping system. (Address Point is a dataset that uniquely defines and locates residential, business and public postal addresses in Great Britain. It is created by matching information from Ordnance Survey digital map databases with more than 27 million addresses recorded in the Royal Mail). In the case of multi-level dwellings such as flats, the staircase will be included in the distance measurement.

### **13. Multiple birth applications (for example twins)**

In the case of multiple birth applications, where it would not normally be possible to admit one or more children with Admission Number, a place will be allocated above Admission Number at the point of allocation. This will ensure that multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the same school (sibling definition still applies).

Infant class size legislation prevents the Authority from applying this approach where admitting these children would breach the statutory limit of 30 infants (key stage 1 children) per qualified teacher. Where it is clear that the school concerned cannot restructure its classes to avoid this situation, multiple birth siblings will be refused.

#### 14. School Transport

School transport entitlement will be advised whenever a school place is agreed.

Subsidised school transport will be provided in the following circumstances;

- When a pupil has been allocated a place at their catchment or nearest school (or is already attending) and lives more than statutory walking distance from this school (two miles for children under age eight and three miles for children aged eight or over).
- pupils from low income families (defined as families eligible for Free School Meal entitlement and/or maximum working tax credit) will be entitled to subsidised school transport to one of the three nearest secondary schools, or the nearest suitable primary school within two to six miles of the home address, providing a school place has first been secured. Children from low income families who have a place allocated at a designated faith school (or is already attending) will be entitled to subsidised school transport to schools within 2 to 15 miles of the home address on the same basis.

For the purposes of measuring distances between a child's home and their catchment or nearest school, the following procedure will apply:

- the first two miles of the journey will identify the shortest available walking route that is considered suitable for the child to walk or cycle accompanied by a responsible adult as necessary
- the remaining part of the measurement will identify the shortest available driven route to the school
- the method of measurement will be by the use of GIS mapping software
- statutory walking routes that are considered potentially unsuitable (by parents or the LA) will be assessed by a Road Safety Officer, providing the child concerned lives less than statutory walking distance from their catchment or nearest school and is regularly attending that school

Somerset County Council actively promotes sustainable travel. Some parents will choose for their child(ren) to walk or cycle to school, which may help children to enjoy a happier, healthier journey to school. The School Travel Team can offer advice about sustainable modes of travel and can be contacted on 0845 3459155 or by visiting [www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk](http://www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk).

High visibility jackets suitable for children walking and cycling to school, or waiting for school buses, are available from the Local Authority and it is recommended that they are worn during every journey between home and school. There is a charge of £5 made for each jacket which goes towards administration and postage, however the

jackets are available free of charge for children from low income families. Full details are available upon request to the School Travel Team on 0845 3459155.

**15. Admission to children of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants outside the normal admissions round**

Families of UK Service personnel and other Crown servants may be subject to frequent movement within the UK and from aboard, often at relatively short notice. Somerset LA will allocate places to children of Service Personnel families and other Crown servants in advance of the approaching school year if the school application is accompanied by an official MOD, FCO or GSHQ letter declaring a firm relocation date.