



Admissions to schools in England

1. This Information sheet gives advice to Service parents on procedures for admissions to a state funded school in England. If a child has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP), or an existing Statement of SEN (valid during the transition to EHC plans up to 2018), you should contact CEAS for further advice.
2. It is essential to understand that it is a parental responsibility to apply for a school place.
3. In England, all statutory guidance on admissions to schools is set out by the Government's Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code 2014.

Application Process

4. There are three types of admissions to state-maintained schools:
 - a. Normal Admissions Rounds - applications made in the normal admissions rounds are coordinated by local authorities. You apply via the local authority in which you live (apart from when a school is an academy when the application goes directly to the school itself). The admissions rounds are:
 - For children starting school for the first time in Reception Year primary school applications must be submitted by 15 January; the 'National Offer Day' is 15 April.
 - For children transferring to secondary school at Year 7, applications must be submitted by 31 October; the 'National Offer Day' is 1 March.
 - b. Late Applications - are applications made to start either Reception Year or Year 7 but made after the deadline of the normal admissions round (above). Each local authority publishes how to submit a late application on their website.
 - c. In-Year Admissions – are any applications, other than those mentioned above including those made during the course of an academic year; for example if you are assigned and moving schools during the academic year. Depending on the type of school you are applying to, this may be managed by the school itself or the local authority. In either case, speak to the school in the first instance and they will direct you.

Academies

5. These operate their own admissions systems but they must comply with the Admissions Code. Application for a place is made directly to the academy.

School Preferences

6. As a parent you are able to express a preference for any state funded school but there is no right of access. When you complete a Common Application Form (CAF) you can choose a minimum of 3 preferences which you place in rank order.

Oversubscription Criteria

7. Good schools may often be full but all schools are required to publish over-subscription criteria setting out how places will be allocated. These criteria may seem confusing but they will also determine how children are placed on any waiting list.



8. The Admissions Code states that, 'oversubscription criteria must be reasonable, clear, objective, and procedurally fair and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation.'
9. Often, admission authorities will give priority to children who:
 - a. Have special medical or social needs.
 - b. Have a sibling already at the school.
 - c. Live closest to the school.
10. If you apply for a place at a state boarding school, then Service children have a high priority for admission.
11. Admission Limits - each school is limited as to the number of pupils it can accommodate in any one year group and this is known as the Published Admissions Number (PAN). Once a school has reached its PAN, it is permitted to admit over-numbers in-year should it wish to do so, or else refuse to admit additional pupils unless directed to do so by an independent Admissions Appeal Panel.

Appeals

12. If your child does not get a place at your preferred school you must be informed of your right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. These panels have the authority to decide whether an appeal is upheld or not on a case by case basis. CEAS are able to support you. The following are general points that are important to understand:
 - a. Different rules may apply if a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (previously known as a Statement of Special Educational Need) or has been excluded from a local authority school in England school twice; in these cases, please contact CEAS for further information and contact the SEND Department of the local authority.
 - b. Different rules apply to infant class sizes as there is a statutory limit of 30 children with one qualified teacher in all Key Stage 1 classes (Reception classes and Years 1 & 2). However, Service children are now included in the list of those pupils who can be considered as exceptions to these regulations in an in-year appeal.
 - c. The School Admissions Code makes certain specific provisions for Service families, particularly relating to addresses and allocation of places in advance; these are at Para 2.18. When applying for school places, always do so in writing or email as telephoned enquiries do not constitute applications. However, it should be noted that the Armed Forces Covenant does not ensure special entitlement to school places for the children of Service personnel and The School Admissions Code is the authoritative document.
13. The independent appeal panel's decision is binding.
14. If you intend to appeal, you should give notice without delay, by writing to the local authority or school, so that you can be sent details of the admissions appeals' process. At the same time, you are advised to notify CEAS so they can provide you with support and advice.



Making an appeal – preparing your case

15. Please note that you must make a written submission, including any evidence you believe supports your case; your reasons for wanting a particular school and your assessment of the educational, social and emotional impact(s) on your child and the family of you not being successful in your appeal.
16. It is in your interests to attend the appeal hearing if you can do so, in order that you can answer any questions the appeal panel have, otherwise they will decide your appeal on the basis of the written information that you have provided to them. You will usually be allowed to take a friend or advisor with you if you wish. Remember that it is not possible for a representative to answer detailed questions likely to be asked about your child or your family circumstances which may be crucial to the decision whether or not to admit.
17. Parent Support Officers can discuss your case with you to support your preparation for the hearing and can be contacted by email DCYP-CEAS-Enquiries@mod.gov.uk.
18. Points for your case relevant to Service personnel:
 - a. Service families are posted at the needs of the Service. They have no input into the timing of the assignment, its location or often where they live. Moves frequently do not fit in with admission rounds or with school terms.
 - b. Service families can be subject to frequent moves and may not have the support of friends or extended family.
 - c. Serving parents can be away from home for weeks or months on military duties and this can cause real turbulence to the family life.
 - d. Placement with siblings can be vital for a service child, as they can provide a stable sense of continuity within a mobile lifestyle.
19. When writing the appeal submission, remember to include the following as your letter will go before the appeals panel:
 - a. Full name of your child and date of birth.
 - b. Year group place required.
 - c. Your address or unit address/quartering address in the new area.
 - d. A brief outline about why the school is your preferred choice and reasons for the appeal at this time - mention service reasons.
 - e. Comment on how you fulfil the admissions criteria (which should be available online).
20. Write your case as concisely and positively as possible using the above suggestions. Do not make your case too or complicated as an appeals panel may have many cases to consider on the day of your appeal. Further actions to be considered:
 - a. Do speak to CEAS for advice and guidance.
 - b. Tell the school/local authority immediately that you will be making an appeal.



- c. Submit a written appeal.
- d. Attend the appeal hearing.

Hearings

- 21. A CEAS Parent Support Officer (PSO) may be able to attend the appeal hearing on your behalf if you are living overseas when the hearing is due to take place, please give as much notice as possible. It must be noted though that PSO attendance will only be in **exceptional** circumstances, and is not guaranteed.
- 22. Appeals are heard in two parts. Where there are many appeals for the same school, the first part, which considers whether or not prejudice to the efficient education of all the children concerned may be caused by additional admissions or efficient use of resources, may be heard alone or with other families. The second part, which considers the personal reasons why you want the place for your child is always held in private. The rules for these appeals are in the School Admission Appeals Code.
- 23. In the first stage, the panel hears the case put by the admission authority, explaining why it did not offer you a place at your preferred school. The panel decides whether there was a good reason for turning down the application (the phrase sometimes used is, 'whether the admission would prejudice the efficient education or the efficient use of resources'). An example might be where the school has very small classrooms and couldn't fit your child in without making the space too cramped for effective teaching and learning.
- 24. If the panel decides there was a good reason for turning down your application, it will begin the second stage of the appeal, where the panel hears your case. You can mention all the reasons why that school would be best for your child and what factors justify your child being given a place in spite of the reasons for initially turning you down. You can also set out any concerns you have about any alternative school place offered for your child. The panel then makes a 'balancing judgement' and decides whether the benefit to your child in attending the school outweighs the detrimental effects on the school and the other children of having an additional pupil in the class. If the appeal panel upholds your appeal the admission authority will then be under a duty to admit your child to the school. The decision of the appeal committee is binding.
- 25. If you are unhappy about the way the appeal hearing was carried out, you may be able to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if the appeal was for a community or voluntary controlled school, or the Education Funding Agency, if the appeal was for a place at an Academy.
- 26. Although the decision of the panel cannot be overturned, should irregularities have occurred, a fresh appeal may be recommended.

Further Information:

ACE Education Advice - <http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/>