



Department
for Education

Ad-hoc Notice: School preferences

**Analysis of secondary school-level
applications and offers data by school
type, England, 2016**

1 October 2016

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Introduction

This report includes new analysis of applications and offers data for September 2016 entry to secondary schools in England (also known as “preference data”) on parents’ choices of school for their children. School preference data gives us a way of looking at the relative demand for different school types as expressed by parents through the application process.

Parents must be allowed to express at least three preferences but some authorities allow expression of up to six preferences. The applications are ranked against the schools’ published oversubscription criteria.

Methodology

The data comes from the application and offer process undertaken by local authorities to enable them to send out offers of a place in a secondary school to all applicants on the national offer day of 1 March 2016.

This analysis includes two elements:

1. A comparison of the number of first preferences for state-funded selective schools (“grammar schools”) expressed by parents with the number of places offered by these schools¹.
2. Comparing the rate of first preferences for selective schools to those for non-selective schools as an indicative way of assessing the relative level of parental demand for selective and non-selective schools. This section also includes similar analysis covering only outstanding schools. Both of these comparisons are with parental preferences for all non-selective schools, not just within selective local authority areas.

More detail on the collection methods and wider analysis of application and offer data can be found in [Secondary and primary school applications and offers: March and April 2016](#).

¹ It is possible that a number of applications for selective schools will relate to pupils who have not passed the 11 plus tests. The first preference data in this publication is a reasonable proxy for demand for places in selective schools.

Key findings

Section 1: The number of first preferences for state-funded selective schools compared with the number of places offered by these schools

There were 35,385 first preferences expressed by parents for 24,491 places offered in the 163 state-funded selective schools in 2016². This means that demand for selective school places exceeded supply by 10,894 places¹.

Section 2: Comparing the rate of first preferences for selective schools with the that for non-selective schools

Table 1 below shows a comparison of first preferences for selective schools compared to first preferences for all non-selective schools, suggesting that demand for selective schools is around 50 per cent greater than for non-selective schools.

Table 2 below compares first preference applications per place available in selective schools with first preference applications per place offered in non-selective schools which were rated outstanding by Ofsted for data up to 31 March 2016.³ That comparison was undertaken to allow for the fact that most selective schools are rated outstanding so that a more like-with-like indicative comparison is with similarly rated non-selective schools.

The table suggests that, for all types of schools with selective admissions, more first choice preferences are expressed than for outstanding non-selective schools, suggesting that selective school places are more in demand from parents than are places in non-selective schools, even when we restrict the comparison to outstanding schools.

² These figures include boarding places

³ [Maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes as at 31 March 2016](#)

Table 1. First preferences of parents compared to the number of places offered by state-funded schools

School type	Non-selective schools	Selective schools	All schools	Number of non-selective schools ^{^*}	Number of selective schools ^{^*}	Total number of schools ^{^*}
Academy Converter	1.04	1.45	1.07	1194	141	1335
Academy Sponsor Led	0.89	-	0.89	574	0	574
City Technology College	0.46	-	0.46	2	0	2
Community School	0.94	1.28	0.94	523	9	532
Foundation School	0.87	1.41	0.89	250	7	257
Free Schools	1.10	-	1.10	111	0	111
Voluntary Aided School	1.02	1.64	1.03	263	7	270
Voluntary Controlled School	0.95	1.06	0.96	32	1	33
All school types	0.98	1.44	1.00	2949	165	3114

Table 2. First preferences of parents compared to the number of places offered by outstanding state-funded schools

School type	Non-selective schools	Selective schools	All schools	Number of non-selective schools ^{^*}	Number of selective schools ^{^*}	Total number of schools ^{^*}
Academy Converter	1.23	1.49	1.29	329	116	445
Academy Sponsor Led	1.37	-	1.37	52	0	52
City Technology College	0.46	-	0.46	2	0	2
Community School	1.19	1.38	1.20	56	6	62
Foundation School	1.11	1.23	1.13	22	4	26
Free Schools	1.40	-	1.40	16	0	16
Voluntary Aided School	1.21	1.67	1.24	59	6	65
Voluntary Controlled School	1.04	-	1.04	3	0	3
All school types	1.23	1.49	1.27	539	132	671

Sources of data:

Analysis of secondary phase data from [Secondary and primary applications and offers 2016](#).

Ofsted inspection outcomes from [Maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes as at 31 March 2016](#).

Methodology:

Using the secondary phase pupil preference data “times put as 1st preference” was divided by the “total number of places offered” to find the 1st preference per place offered value for each grouping in the tables above, schools with a school type of “N/A” were excluded. Schools offering zero places were also excluded from the analysis.

‘-’ indicates no data in this group.

‘^’ schools that offer day boarding or termly boarding places have these recorded in additional rows in the preferences data, so these figures are not the same as the number of schools

* school totals apply to schools with year 7 entry (so exclude all-through schools, middle deemed secondary schools etc.)

Coverage:

State-funded mainstream schools admitting pupils to secondary phase



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About this publication:

enquiries Helen Bray, IFD Analysis, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings,
Great Smith Street,
London, SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0207 783 8300 Email: school.preferences@education.gov.uk

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