

CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEME FOR LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES 2016/17

1. Introduction

Lancashire's co-ordinated admission scheme provides a fair and transparent route for the consideration of parental preferences in accordance with legislation and the Department for Education (DFE) School Admissions Code.

The scheme allows parents of all pupils living within Lancashire to complete a single application expressing up to three preferences for admission to maintained schools, academies and free schools within Lancashire and, if they wish, to include those in neighbouring authority areas.

Following consideration of expressed preferences, the Local Authority (LA) will issue to parents living within Lancashire the offer of a single school or academy place. This will be for all admission authorities which are required to comply with the statutory co-ordinated scheme.

All preferences from parents will be considered equally and where more than one offer is possible the priority order in which the parents expressed their preferences will then be used to determine which single offer is made.

The scheme seeks to preserve the powers and responsibilities of individual admission authorities to determine and apply their published admissions policies. At the same time it enables decisions to be taken within a co-ordinated framework covering the whole County.

For the scheme to operate successfully it is important for all admission authorities to work together closely and to share information as required and as far as possible within the agreed timescales.

2. Applying for School Places

Lancashire's on-line admission application system is the main route for all applications for new reception (primary) and Year 7 (secondary) places.

Paper copies of the prospectus and application form will not be routinely available. These will however be supplied on request in exceptional circumstances eg where there is no broadband link or for medical reasons.

Full versions of the prospectuses and application form can be viewed on the on-line application system and the Lancashire County Council website.

3. The Offer of a Place

Lancashire's scheme will ensure that parents only receive a single offer.

The scheme also ensures that each parental preference is considered equally. Where multiple offers are possible the Local Authority (LA) will refer to the priority order of preferences identified by parents on their application. In these circumstances the school or academy which is the highest ranked priority on an application will be the confirmed offer.

Processing of Preference Forms

3.1 Stage 1 - Expression of preferences

During late Summer and early Autumn terms each year the LA will provide flyers and information notices for schools to issue / include in communication with parents. These will refer all prospective applicants to the on-line application system and to contacts for information and advice.

The parents of children who do not attend Lancashire primary schools or academies and those who reside outside of Lancashire's administrative boundaries will be able to access information and advice via the on-line application system and via the County Council web site.

Admission information for parents will include:-

- a) Details of how the process is co-ordinated with all admission authorities within Lancashire and with neighbouring local authorities.
- b) A summary of the determined admission arrangements for all Lancashire maintained schools, academies and free schools.
- c) Information about the number of applicants received the previous year and for some schools and academies a breakdown showing under which admission criteria places were allocated.
- d) Other admission information to help parents to make realistic preferences and to help them assess the likelihood of obtaining an offer for a preferred school or academy.
- e) Timescales for the primary and secondary admission processes and for the subsequent admission appeal schedule.

ALL LANCASHIRE PARENTS MUST USE LANCASHIRE'S ON-LINE ADMISSION APPLICATION SYSTEM (SOME WILL STILL ACCESS A PAPER FORM) TO BE LEGALLY REGISTERED WITHIN THE ANNUAL PROCESS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY INTAKES.

Some schools and academies have a supplementary information form (SIF) which parents may complete. This allows that school or academy to apply particular criteria within its own published admission arrangements. The on-line system will provide standard downloadable SIFs for Lancashire's voluntary aided

schools and academies (automatically flagged up where a relevant primary school or academy is a parental preference). Information will also point all parents towards individual schools and academies which will issue their own SIF. Completion of a SIF is not a legal requirement – it is however necessary if parents applying for these schools and academies wish to have their application considered fully against the relevant admission criteria.

Lancashire resident parents must however fill in Lancashire's common (on-line or paper) application for their children to be considered for reception and year 7 places for each September. **Completion of only a SIF does not constitute registration within the annual admission process for primary or secondary intakes.**

Parents living outside of Lancashire can access the on-line system and the County Council web site. These parents **must** however apply for school places via their home local authority – even where they wish to express preferences for Lancashire schools and academies.

Lancashire resident parents will in the main return applications on-line direct to the Local Authority. For those where paper forms are still required these can be returned to Area Pupil Access Teams (in Lancaster, Preston and Accrington) or to the child's primary school or academy if this is within Lancashire.

All application must be returned by the national statutory closing date

(see timetable).

Parents who apply near to the closing date are encouraged to apply on-line. This is a secure system which provides e-mail acknowledgement of receipt of an application and allows earlier e-mail notification of the school offer.

3.2 Stage 2 – Circulating Preferences

Lancashire primary schools and academies must forward any paper applications received to the Area Pupil Access Team by the agreed date (see timetable).

Primary schools and academies must not forward applications or the details of these to any secondary schools or academies. Under no circumstances must primary schools provide the priority order of parental preferences to secondary schools or academies.

All preferences received will be transferred or inputted into the Lancashire's admissions database. This will include all on-line applications and paper applications including those received individually or in bulk from out of area.

Voluntary aided and foundation schools, academies and free schools will be provided with details of all their applications. They will not be informed of their own establishment's priority order on each parent's application.

The Governing Bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools, academies and free schools must consider and rank all received applications. Schools and

academies which have a SIF must consider applications even where a SIF has not been completed (based upon the information which is available at that time).

If schools or academies chase SIFs which have not been provided with applications this must be for all applicants without a SIF and not only for selected cases.

If a SIF only has been completed then there can be no consideration for a place. Schools and academies should notify the Area Pupil Access Team where this has happened. Pupil Access must be made aware of these cases in order to make alternative offers later in the process.

By an agreed date (see timetable) the Local Authority will notify other admission authorities about all of their preferences. This notification will include straight line distance measures. Any additional or supplementary information provided by parents will also be provided. Lancashire will also exchange information with neighbouring local authorities (information exchanges will continue throughout the process as required).

At this time Lancashire also verifies the details of many applications eg in relation to children in care, special needs, siblings, addresses and claimed medical, social and welfare issues.

(Please note that the accuracy checks and verifications and the provision of distance measures will only be provided to Lancashire academies and Free Schools which have bought into the admissions traded service).

Stage 3 – First Sort

By (see timetable) each Lancashire voluntary aided and foundation school, academy and free school will return to the Local Authority (electronically via the Schools Portal) a ranked list of all applicants for places at that establishment.

By (see timetable) any admission authority which wishes to exceed its published admission number (PAN) for the forthcoming September intakes (reception or year 7 or Year 10) will notify the Local Authority. This will allow time for effective co-ordination to occur and for the necessary system changes to be made.

It is necessary for every application to be ranked in priority order to accurately allocate places for all admission authorities (those from in and outside of Lancashire).

All Governing Bodies must therefore be aware that their own ranked list will be manipulated in accordance with the agreed equal preference admission scheme and each parent's priority order of preferences as stated on their application.

The Local Authority will:-

- a) Identify applications where more than a single offer would be possible and then refer back to that parent's preference priorities. The school or academy with an available place listed highest in priority by the parent will be the single offer.

- b) Identify where a first preference school or academy cannot be offered and ensure that the parents other preferences are considered.
- c) Identify where none of a parent's preferences can be offered and ensure that an alternative offer is made. This will usually be the nearest suitable school or academy with an available place (straight line measure).
- d) Ensure that all non-first priority offers issued automatically refer parents to the appropriate reserve list and appeals information and documentation.

Stage 4 – Notification of Offers

By (see timetable) the Local Authority will provide all other admission authorities with details of those pupils who they originally wished to offer a place but who will receive an alternative offer.

All admission authorities will then need to revise their own ranked lists and submit an updated version to the Area Pupil Access Team.

A similar exchange of information and revision of offers lists will be undertaken with neighbouring local authorities.

This element of the process will continue to be repeated as required. This is necessary as initial changes often lead to others (and so on).

The Local Authority will send all other admission authorities their final offer lists by (see timetable). There will be some time to review these again and make changes if these are absolutely essential.

NO CHANGES TO OFFER LETTER WILL BE MADE AFTER (see timetable).

The Local Authority will issue offers for primary and secondary schools on the defined national statutory offer dates (see timetable). These will be electronic for all on-line applicants (around 95%) and by letter – 2nd class – for those who submitted paper forms.

Offers will be for Lancashire resident applicants only – parents' resident outside of Lancashire will receive offers from their home local authority. Offers made on behalf of other admission authorities (voluntary aided and foundation schools, academies and free schools) will state that this is the case.

On-line applicants will be able to view their school or academy offer slightly earlier – on the day on which offer letters are issued.

4. Late Applications

Applications received after the statutory closing dates (see timetable) may be made on an e-form or a paper form may be requested. The on-line system closes at 11.59 pm on each closing date.

Applications received late must be receipted and / or date stamped. These will generally only be considered if the following apply:-

- (a) If the overall number of preferences received for a school or academy is below its published admission number or;
- (b) The school or academy is exceeding its published number to a defined limit and has notified the Local Authority in time for co-ordination to successfully occur (and if available places remain) or;
- (c) There are extenuating circumstances justifying a late application.

These may include:

- (i) Parents moving into the County or Country (see note 5) after the closing date;
- (ii) Parent / carer illness which required hospitalisation for the major part of the period between the issue of admissions information and the closing date for applications.

Individual parents will be responsible for providing evidence to support consideration of including a late application within the admission process. The Local Authority will determine the appropriateness and strength of each case and there will be liaison with other admission authorities where this is necessary.

The Local Authority will therefore refer some late application cases (but not all) to other admission authorities.

IT IS NOT ANTICIPATED THAT ANY LATE APPLICATIONS WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE PROCESS AFTER PROVISIONAL OFFERS HAVE BEEN RANKED.

Forms received after the statutory offer dates (see timetable).

Any applications received for places after the offer date will be considered by the Local Authority as being late. If parents provide reasons / evidence which they feel justify acceptance of a late application the relevant admission authority will consider this.

The LA will retain the responsibility for issuing offer letters to parents up to 31st December (for reception and year 7 places) in liaison with own admission authority schools and academies as required.

This process will operate until the start of Autumn term after which any enquiries for places will be directed to the appropriate admission authority who will make decisions and arrange for the issue of letters accordingly (unless they receive this element of the process as part of a bought in service from the Local Authority)

There is a requirement that after September term start all Lancashire maintained schools, academies and free schools will liaise with the LA about any reception and year 7 offers which they make. This will allow closer monitoring of the overall availability of places across the County and facilitate dealing with new applications.

Late allocation changes (each year)

Offers are issued centrally (from County Hall). This requires the electronic transfer of information from each Area Pupil Access Team. Arrangements will be made to signpost or include other information with some offers (eg reserve lists, appeals and home to school transport).

It is not possible to make any amendments to the primary or secondary allocations in the 7 to 10 working days preceding these being issued.

Waiting Lists (Reserve Lists)

All admission authorities must retain reception or year 7 waiting lists for 1 term into the new school year (up to 31st December).

Parents may express an interest in a pupil's name being added to a waiting list for a school / academy at any time. Names of pupils to be added to waiting lists will be collected by the LA and shared with other admission authorities. These are not restricted to those who applied initially for particular establishments – any parents may access any reserve lists. Parents can therefore have a place on a school / academy waiting list even if this was not one of their initial preferences.

The LA will compile waiting lists in the priority order of each school or academy admission arrangements (in liaison with individual admission authorities). The LA will issue any offers which can be made as a result of places becoming available (the number of offers for a school falling below the school's published admission number for the required year group).

The only legal offers up to 31st August will be from the LA. All parents may place children on school / academy waiting lists in the priority order of the relevant admission arrangements (irrespective of whether they originally applied for that school or academy or if they are new to area). Lists must not be held on a first come first served basis and neither must places be offered first come first served.

Any pupils who are subject to a Local Authority direction to admit or who are allocated in accordance with Fair Access Arrangements (as described within the School Admissions Code) must take precedence over others who are on any school or academy waiting list.

Individual admission authorities must continue to compile and manage waiting lists until 31 December*. Parents who want a pupil to be included on a school or academy list after this date must then contact that establishment direct to enquire about their particular arrangements and requirements

*The Local Authority will provide this service for academies and free schools which buy into the traded admissions scheme.

5. Applications From Abroad (and other areas of the UK)

It is required that families must be physically resident in Lancashire (or nearby) in order to apply within the annual intake processes. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on request (and will require that individual families provide the necessary evidence for consideration). Exceptions will usually include:-

- a) UK Service Personnel families who can provide evidence of a posting into the area and the date from which this will occur.
- b) New to area families purchasing / renting / leasing an address in Lancashire (providing legal evidence of a contract exchange or lease agreement as a minimum) – see notes below.

Where families are planning to return to an address (whether pre owned or not) within Lancashire, and can provide evidence of ownership, it is required that they are physically in residence during the application period in order for applications to be accepted for annual intakes. This means that the child is in residence with parent / parents at their permanent address. This applies to those returning from living abroad and those returning from periods of employment / secondment abroad. This principle applies also to b) above. If there are challenges to an LA decision not to accept an application within the agreed arrangements to coordinate then individual admission authorities will be consulted. Note however that admission policies require that a family does not just own a property in a particular location, but that they are actually resident at that property.

Where families relocate or return to an address in Lancashire after a statutory closing date but during the allocation period (ahead of finalisation of offers) then there will be consideration of accepting a late application. Appropriate evidence must be provided of ownership and date of relocation and residence at that address.

The agreed timetable for co-ordination for the primary and secondary annual intake processes include agreed dates after which offers will not be amended.

Please note that late entry to the annual intake processes will not be possible after the statutory closing dates unless an exception is agreed by the Local Authority and / or the admission authority.

**TIMETABLE
CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEME FOR
LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES 2016/17**

SECONDARY		PRIMARY	
DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION
1 September 2015 (Tuesday)	On-line application system goes live and requests for paper forms / booklets accepted and considered	1 September 2015 (Tuesday)	On-line application system goes live and requests for paper forms / booklets accepted and considered
31 October 2015 (Saturday)	Closing date for applications (statutory)	15 January 2016 (Friday)	Closing date for applications (statutory)
6 November 2015 (Friday)	Primary schools / academies to forward any paper applications to Area Pupil Access Teams		
20 November 2015 (Friday)	Preferences information exchange with other admission authorities	12 February 2016 (Friday)	Preferences information exchange with other admission authorities
11 December 2015 (Friday)	Admission authority to confirm intention to exceed PAN with the LA	12 February 2016 (Friday)	Admission authority to confirm intention to exceed PAN with the LA
11 December 2015 (Friday)	Prioritised (ranked) lists back to the Local Authority	11 March 2016 (Friday)	Prioritised (ranked) lists back to the Local Authority
Secondary continued		Primary continued	
25 January 2016	Further		

(w/c Monday)	exchange of lists with other admission authorities		
15 February 2016 (Monday)	No changes at all can be made to offer letters after this date	4 April 2016 (Monday)	No changes at all can be made to offer letters after this date
22 February 2016 (w/c Monday)	Issue finalised offer lists to secondary schools / academies	11 April 2016 (w/c Monday)	Issue finalised offer lists to primary schools / academies
1 March 2016 (Tuesday)	Issue offer letters (statutory date is 1st March or the next working day)	18 April 2016 (Monday)	Issue offer letters (statutory dates)

The closing dates and offer dates are national statutory requirements. The dates of exchanges of information may on occasion vary slightly by agreement to take into account localised issues associated with workload and / or specific situations affecting a school / academy or a group of establishments. Occasionally delays may occur as neighbouring authorities will be working to different timetables.