

THE COORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEME FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE AREA OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL LOCAL AUTHORITY FROM 2022 ADMISSION YEAR

Introduction

It is a statutory requirement of the Admissions Code that the LA formulates a scheme for the co-ordination of admission arrangements. The current Buckinghamshire scheme is set out below. In each case unless specified where the date is not a working day the next working day will apply.

Interpretation

1. In this scheme:

“the LA” means Buckinghamshire Council (BC) acting in its capacity as the local authority

“the LA area” means the area in respect of which the LA is the local authority (i.e. the county of Buckinghamshire excluding the Milton Keynes Borough area)

“home LA” means the LA in which the applicant is resident

“primary education” “secondary education” “primary school” and “secondary school” have the same meaning as in Section 2(1), 2(2), 5(1), and 5(2) respectively in the Education Act 1996

“school” means a community, foundation, or voluntary controlled or aided school

“Academy” means a school to which Academy arrangements relate. Academies are required by their funding agreements to participate in local schemes. This includes Free Schools.

“selective Academy” is an academy which replaces a school and for which section 6(3) of the Academies Act 2010 applies

“grammar school” means a secondary selective Academy located in Buckinghamshire selecting pupils solely on the basis of academic ability.

“foundation school” means a maintained school (including trust schools), which is designated as a foundation school

“voluntary-aided school” means a maintained school which is designated as a voluntary-aided school

“admission authority” in relation to a community or voluntary-controlled school means the LA and, in relation to an Academy, foundation or voluntary aided school means the governing body of that school

“school place” means a place at any school or Academy covered by this scheme

“the equal preference scheme” is the scheme operated by Buckinghamshire Council whereby all preferences listed by parents/carers on the application are considered under the admission rules for each school without reference to parental rankings. Where a pupil can be offered a place at more than one school, the rankings are used to determine the single offer by selecting the one ranked highest on the application.

“the admission year” means the school year starting at the beginning of September in relation to which the school place offers are made

“admission arrangements” mean the arrangements for a particular Academy or school(s) which govern the procedures and decision making for the purposes of admitting pupils to the Academy or school and which relate to the admission year

“application” means the application form/process supplied by the LA electronically (via an online portal) or on paper for the purpose of admission to either primary or secondary education

“eligible for a place” means that a child has been placed on an Academy or school’s ranked list at a position which falls within the published admission number

Commencement and Extent

2. Applies to all applications received up to the first day of the autumn term commencing in September to the schools listed in Annex 2 for entry to a Reception Class (either Infant or Combined Schools), Year 3 (Combined School with a Y3 PAN, and Junior Schools), and Year 7 (all secondary schools). All other admissions will be dealt with as in-year admissions.
3. Foundation schools, free schools, voluntary aided schools and academies are their own admission authority and will apply their own admission rules to all applicants. They will be responsible for presenting their case at appeal.
4. Local authorities and governing bodies may not refuse to admit children to any relevant age group on the basis of ‘prejudice to efficient education or the efficient use of resources’ unless the number of eligible children exceeds the Published Admission Number (PAN).
5. Admission authorities wishing to exceed the PAN that they had determined during the normal determination process should notify the LA that they intend to admit above their PAN in good time and in accordance with the LA’s published scheme to allow places to be allocated as far as possible within the main allocation process.

6. Any secondary school or Academy which operates criteria for selection by ability or aptitude must ensure its arrangements for assessing ability or aptitude enable decisions to be made on applications in line with the timing requirements of this scheme.
7. The scheme shall apply to every school and Academy in the LA area with the exception of special schools and shall take effect from September 2022. This includes applications for (fee paying) boarding places at The Royal Grammar School.

PART 1 – THE APPLICATION PROCESS

8. Buckinghamshire Council will operate a co-ordinated scheme for admission that takes into account the different admission rules operated by individual admission authorities for some schools and Academies. The scheme will be an **Equal Preference Scheme**.
9. Parents can apply online or, if they are unable to apply on-line, they can complete an application form. Online applications are the preferred method.
10. The phased admission process is used for primary schools where they have points of entry (Reception and/or Junior transfer) and for secondary schools will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into the first year of secondary education in the specified year. For all Buckinghamshire secondary schools and Academies this is admission into Year 7. Year 10 entry to the UTC is included. Sixth form admissions are dealt with by schools and Academies separately.
11. Parents whose children live in Buckinghamshire should apply to Buckinghamshire LA.
12. The application process will collect basic data such as name, address and date of birth of the child either via an online or paper form. The process must be used by parents whose children are resident in Buckinghamshire, wishing to express a preference for their child:
 - To be admitted to a school or Academy within the LA area; or
 - To be admitted to a school or Academy within the area of another LA.
13. All preferences expressed will be valid applications. The parents' guide and school directories (including the Find My Child a School Place Self Service Tool) will also indicate where voluntary aided, Foundation schools, free schools and Academies provide supplementary forms to be completed in order to collect additional information to enable their particular rules to be applied. Only parents applying for these Buckinghamshire schools may need to complete the supplementary forms, although schools and Academies in other LA areas may provide them. All completed supplementary forms should be returned to the school, free school or academy concerned.
14. The application process will:

- a. Invite the parent to express up to **six** primary school or academy or **six** secondary school or academy preferences in rank order of preference.
 - b. Invite parents to give reasons for each preference;
 - c. Explain that parents will receive no more than one offer of a place,
 - d. Explain that, where such an offer is made, it will be for the highest ranked school or academy possible at which their child is eligible for a place,
 - e. Specify the closing date for applications and where the form should be returned; and
 - f. Explain that parents must apply only once via the online portal or on a paper form.
- 15.** The LA will make appropriate arrangements to ensure:
- a. That an online application process is available via www.buckscc.gov.uk/schooladmission
 - b. That a paper application form is available on request from the LA and with a small number supplied to all primary schools in the LA area to supply on request to those families that are unable to access the online portal; and
 - c. That there is a written explanation of the key features of the co-ordinated admission scheme in the parents' guides, webpages and directories which will be made available online, in full, with leaflet summaries appropriate for each age of admission group being provided to all parents.
- 16.** Where a school or academy receives a supplementary form it will not be regarded as a valid application unless the parent has also completed an application via their home LA and the school is given as one of their preferences. Under the requirements of the scheme, parents will not be under any obligation to fill in an individual school's supplementary form. The information collected on the supplementary form must comply with the limitations set out in the current Admissions Code. Any application forms received by schools direct from parents should be forwarded to the relevant home authority in a timely manner.
- 17. Secondary Scheme:** The online portal will close at **Midnight on 31 October**. All paper applications should be returned to the Admissions and Transport Team at County Hall, by **Midnight on 31 October** or the following working day if 31 October is a Saturday or Sunday. If returning an application form to the child's primary school (Buckinghamshire maintained schools only), this must be received **by 9.00 am on the last Friday before October half term**. Applications received after the closing date will be late subject to paragraph 19 below.
- 18. Primary Scheme:** The online portal will close at **Midnight on 15 January** if 15 January is Sunday then the deadline will be at the same time on the next working day. All written

applications should be received by the Admissions Team at County Hall, by **Midnight on 15 January**, if returning an application form to the child's primary school, (Buckinghamshire maintained schools only), this must be received by **9.00 am on the Friday before 15 January**. Applications received after the closing date will be late subject to paragraph 19 below.

19. As far as is reasonably practicable applications for places in the normal admission round that are received late for a good reason will be accepted provided they are received before **21 November** (secondary scheme) or **29 January** (primary scheme) or if either of these dates are at the weekend, the next working day – see above). Examples of what will be considered as good reason include: where a single parent has been ill or has been dealing with the death or serious illness of a close relative; a family including service personnel or crown servants, has recently moved into the area or is returning from abroad. Other circumstances will be considered, and each case will be decided on the basis of any independent evidence to support reasons for lateness and on its own merits. Late preferences will be processed after the timely applications in accordance with the timetable in Schedule 2.
20. The LA will process all applications which will be treated as confidential information. Voluntary aided, free schools, foundation schools and academies will, however, be provided with a list of relevant details for those pupils for whom they are a preference.
21. The LA will share information provided on the application on request to assist schools and other public bodies in their task of preventing and detecting fraud.
22. Within Buckinghamshire, where a voluntary aided, foundation school or academy is listed on the application, the LA will forward the appropriate details to the Governing Body. The admission authority for each school will then rank all pupils on that list and provide the LA with an ordered list of all pupils explaining which rule each child was deemed to be included on and the order in which places should be allocated under each rule (this list to include only those pupils for whom the LA has received an application). The admission authority will provide the ranked lists to the LA by the specified date.
23. All preferences received by the deadline will be considered before any preferences received after this date and the ranking will reflect this.
24. After all on time preferences have been dealt with, the next stage will be to consider all the late preferences and where possible offer a place at a ranked school.
25. Finally all Buckinghamshire children whether on time or late where it was not possible to offer a place at a ranked school, will be allocated a school place (subject to paragraph 38 below).

Processing the applications

26. By **15 December** (secondary scheme) and **15 February** (primary scheme) where a school in another LA is listed on the application then application details will be

forwarded to that LA. Initial exchange of preference information with neighbouring LAs will be completed on a mutually agreed timeline.

- 27.** By **15 December** (secondary scheme) and **15 February** (primary scheme) the LA will notify the admission authority for each in-county voluntary-aided, foundation school or Academy of the timely preferences expressed for the school. If either of these dates is at a weekend then the deadline will be at the same time on the next working day. Each admission authority will then apply its own admission rules to the list of applicants for the school or academy. Officers of Buckinghamshire Council will complete this process for community and voluntary-controlled schools. The governing body for each Academy, foundation or voluntary-aided school will manage this for their school, and return a ranked list of children, based on the admission rules for the Academy or school to the LA by the deadline.
- 28.** By **16 January** (secondary scheme) and **2 March** (primary scheme) the admission authority for each Academy or school will consider all applications (including late applications) for their Academy or school, apply the admission rules and provide the LA with a ranked list. If either of these dates is at a weekend then the deadline will be at the same time on the next working day. Selective Academies will rank all applications, but places will only be offered to qualified candidates.
- 29.** The LA will act as a clearing-house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities. The LA will only make any decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to
- Any preference expressed where it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority, or
 - If an applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or
 - Where an applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.

Determination of the place to offer

The LA will allocate places in accordance with the provisions set out as follows:

- 30.** Where a child can be allocated a place at the Academy or school ranked first, this will become the firm offer. It will then be noted that the child will not need to be considered for a place at any lower ranked school(s) or Academies, and the pupil's name will be removed from those lists.
- 31.** Where a child is not allocated a place at the first ranked school or Academy but is provisionally allocated a place they ranked second, this will be held provisionally pending further rounds in which it may become possible to give a higher preference. The same process as explained at point 30 would be followed regarding the offer of any places released at lower preference schools and Academies.

32. The above steps 30-31 will be repeated for all nominated preferences until it is not possible to offer any higher ranked school or Academy as a result of repeating the process.
33. Once all repetitions (iterations) of the allocation round are complete, all allocations then in existence become the firm offer.
34. For each preference, children who remain unallocated at this point in the process will be treated as being refused a place by the admission authority at any school or Academy for which they are eligible to be considered for admission.

Children who have not been allocated a place in the iterative process

35. Where possible the LA will offer a place at the next nearest school or Academy with places remaining (by agreement this may be in another LA area), in the following order.
 - Firstly to children where a Buckinghamshire upper/all-ability school has been included on the application. This might include qualified children where a grammar school place cannot be offered.
 - Then, if places remain, to children where a school in another area has been included on the application. This might include qualified children where a grammar school place cannot be offered.
 - We will not offer a place at the next nearest school with a place to unqualified children whose parents only expressed Buckinghamshire grammar school preferences on their application and knew their child's result. Parents in this group had the opportunity to include an upper/all- ability or school in another area on their application had they so wished and chose not to. However such parents are able to express alternative preferences for a later round.

The admission authority for the school or Academy will consider each of the children offered a place at the school on the same basis as if the LAs decision were a preference made by the child's parent/carer falling within section 86 of the 1998 Act.

36. Further rounds of this procedure may be undertaken if necessary.
37. Following the allocation the LA will also write to any child known to it where no application been received or where not yet allocated a place, inviting a preference where none has been made and indicating those schools in the county where vacancies still exist following the completion of the allocation. This process will also be followed where a child is not qualified for admission to a grammar school/selective Academy but only selective schools have been applied for.

Buckinghamshire parents who are also applying for schools outside Buckinghamshire

38. The LA will coordinate with other LAs to determine a single offer. This coordination will continue until all applications received before the beginning of the autumn term are processed. Other LAs will also be applying their schemes. If an LA notifies Buckinghamshire that it can offer a place to a Buckinghamshire resident, it will compare this place with the possible offer of a Buckinghamshire school and the parent's highest preference will be the one that becomes the actual offer.
39. Offers of places in other LAs will be processed by Buckinghamshire Council in the next available allocation round.

Parents applying for a place in Buckinghamshire schools from out of the county

40. Such applications will have been made to the child's home LA and details forwarded to Buckinghamshire Council.

The offer

41. The LA will notify all Buckinghamshire schools and Academies of the details of the children who will be offered a place at the school before offer letters and emails are sent, in accordance with the timetable.
42. The LA will send out all offer letters/emails to Buckinghamshire parents on behalf of all admission authorities.
43. If it is possible to offer a Buckinghamshire place to a non-Buckinghamshire resident, BC will coordinate with the home LA, to determine a single offer.
44. Offers of school places will be published on the online portal, emailed and (where necessary) posted on **1 March or the next working day** (secondary scheme) **and 16 April or the next working day** (primary scheme). The offer email/letter and/or summary background information on the website will give details of:
- a. The name of the school or Academy offered;
 - b. Where to find further information regarding the way places were allocated at each of the other Buckinghamshire schools and Academies, with
 - c. General information about any out county ranked schools; and
 - d. The date by which the place must be accepted. The acceptance of offers should be notified to the LA by parents **within 14 days either in writing or via the online portal response function.**
 - e. How to join the waiting list and/or appeal for a preferred school or Academy and any timescales for responding.

Late applications

45. See paragraph 19 above.
46. Applications (where there was no good reason for lateness) received after the **21**

November, (secondary scheme) or **29 January** (primary scheme) or the next working day in any year that either date falls on a weekend, will not be processed until after the timely applications have been allocated but will be processed in time for releasing allocations on the main offer date.

47. Applications received after **31 December** (secondary scheme) or **29 January** (primary scheme) in the relevant year will not be processed until **after the offer date**. Preference changes (i.e. in the order of preferences or additional late preferences linked to moving home) will be accepted up to but not after the above dates for inclusion in the first allocation round
48. Later applications will be processed in batches on a regular basis, as indicated in detail within the timeline in the 'Guide for Parents'.

Waiting lists

49. Following an admission round the names of children who have not been allocated a place at a preferred school or Academy for which they are appropriately qualified will be placed on the appropriate waiting list. The waiting list will be ranked in accordance with the Academy or school's admission rules. Parents will be advised to notify us if they do not want their child to be included on the waiting list and subsequently will be expected to reaffirm their wish to leave/remain on the waiting list at regular intervals. Waiting list positions will be released according to a timescale published on <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-index/school-admissions/> and in the relevant web pages [secondary waiting list page](#) or [primary waiting list page](#)
50. Following each allocation, the waiting list position of each child will only be refreshed in preparation for further allocations. Further allocations from the waiting lists will be completed according to the published timeline published on <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-index/school-admissions/> when made in any of the rounds before Transition day will automatically result in any place at a lower preference being withdrawn as the place is offered.
51. From August, parents are expected to reaffirm their wish to remain on the waiting list, and from 17 September continuing applications would be managed within the in- year processes.
52. Two weeks after the beginning of term, phased entry waiting lists will be formally dissolved unless a reaffirmation is received in which case the application is included in the in-year process.

Right to appeal

53. Where parents wish to appeal to an independent appeal panel for a place at a preferred school or Academy, the admission appeal will take place between May and the end of term. Detailed information will be made available when parents are informed that a place is not available at a preferred school.

Annex 1: TIMELINES

1. Primary Scheme Timeline

By 15 January	Application closing date.
29 January	Latest date for parents who have moved into a catchment area to provide proof and be considered as in-catchment for the first allocation round. Final date for return of application form for agreed special cases to be considered timely. Any applications or changes of preference received after this date will not be processed until after the timely applications.
15 February	Applications for schools in other LAs sent to those LAs and details of applications forwarded to foundation and voluntary- aided schools
2 March	Foundation and voluntary-aided schools send LA a ranked list of applicants.
9- 30 March	Multiple exchanges with 30 March the latest working date for results to be sent to other LAs
9 April	Final details of children to be offered places in their school sent to schools
16 April	Offer letters posted/emailed to parents
30 April	Latest date for parents to confirm acceptance of school place offered
May	Start of transfer appeals
18 September	Waiting list converted to in year process

* in all cases if any date above is at a weekend then the deadline will at the same time on the next working day.

2. Secondary Scheme Timeline*

By 16 October 2021	All The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools publish outcomes of entry testing process (assuming the testing can proceed as planned)
31 October	<p>Latest date for parents who are moving into a school catchment area to provide proof and be considered in catchment for the first allocation round. Some grammar schools set an earlier date.</p> <p>Closing date for application form to be returned to County Hall Admissions & Transport Team or online application to be submitted by Midnight.</p> <p>Latest date for parents who are moving into a catchment area to provide proof and be considered in-catchment for the first allocation round. (Some grammar schools, foundation schools, voluntary-aided schools, free schools or academies may set a different date)</p>
21 November	Final date for return of application form for agreed special cases to be considered timely. Any applications or changes of preference received after this date and before 31 December will be processed for release on 1 March but will be processed after the timely applications.
15 December	Applications for schools in other LAs sent to those LAs
15 December	Details of timely applications forwarded to foundation schools, free schools, voluntary-aided schools and academies in Buckinghamshire.
31 December	Applications received after this date (i.e. last working day of the year) will not be processed until after 1 March
16 January	Foundation schools, free schools, voluntary-aided schools and academies send LA ranked list of applicants.
29 January to 12 February	Exchange(s) of offer information with other LAs
25 February	Details of children to be offered places in their school sent to schools.
1 March	Offers posted/emailed to parents
15 March	Parents to confirm acceptance of offer and waiting list requests.
May	Start of admission appeals
17 September	Waiting list converted to in year process

* each year the dates will be nearest working date after the specified date, except for 31 October which is a nationally set date.

Annex 2

List of schools to which the scheme applies:

All schools located in Buckinghamshire are included within the Buckinghamshire Scheme.

The list of schools can be viewed here:

<https://services.buckscc.gov.uk/school-admissions/schools>

Two nursery Schools in Buckinghamshire are not included in the scheme but are included in the admission rules. They are:

Bowerdean Nursery School and
Henry Allen Nursery School