

# West Northamptonshire Council Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2024

## Section 1

### Timetable for Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions for September 2024 intakes

Date	Event
8 September 2023	Online applications open and information to parents/carers
9 October 2023	Generic reminder letters sent via schools for parents of Primary and Junior school children, advising them of the need to apply for a year 7 place. Email sent to schools for them to remind parents of the need to apply
31 October 2023	<b>Closing date for applications</b> (statutory). Late applications, i.e. those received after midnight on 31 October 2023, will not be processed until additional rounds of allocation (see below)
24 November 2023	West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) sends applications to other Local Authorities (LAs) and Own Admission Authority (OAA) schools
12 January 2024	Own Admission Authority schools send ranked lists to WNC
9 February 2024	WNC applies agreed Scheme for West Northamptonshire schools, informing other LAs of offers to be made to their residents
15 February 2024	EHC team to have informed the School Admissions team about any pupils with an EHC Plan, and details of the named school (statutory)
28 February 2024	Secondary schools informed by WNC of the final allocations, which may include offers made to pupils living in other LAs
1 March 2024	<b>National Offer Day</b> - offers made to parents/carers by WNC and Secondary schools informed via S2S (Statutory)
By 4 March 2024	Schools final allocation lists (ATFs) uploaded onto the S2S secure site
From 18 March 2024	Start to share late applications received with other LAs
31 March 2024	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in first round of reallocations
17 May 2024	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in second round of reallocations
28 June 2024	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in third round of reallocations
15 April, 3 June and 8 July 2024	Additional rounds of allocations will start on these dates
19 July 2024	Places allocated to children living in the West Northamptonshire Council area, currently in Primary school and who have not submitted an application for a place in year 7. Letters sent to parents to advise of the places offered
1 August 2024	In-year co-ordination commences

## Section 2

### Elements of the Scheme

#### 2.1 Regulations

The School Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations (2008) require local authorities (LAs) to have a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for the normal admission round and late applications for all publically funded schools in its area (excluding special schools). The purpose of a co-ordinated scheme is to establish mechanisms for ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that every child living within the LA who has applied for a school place in the normal admission round, receives an offer of a single school place on the same day - National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day). All schools must comply with the agreed scheme.

#### 2.2 Applying for a place in a secondary school at the normal point of entry

The normal point of entry to secondary school is year 7 and the LA co-ordinates the process of allocating places at these schools in this year group.

#### 2.3 Information for parents

Please note that throughout this scheme, the term "parent" refers to both individual parents as well as those with parental responsibility for the child, e.g. carers.

The 'Applying for a Secondary School Place in West Northamptonshire 2024-25' composite prospectus will be available in PDF format on the School Admissions pages of WNC's website from September 2023. Alternatively a hard copy can be obtained by contacting the School Admissions team.

The prospectus contains information about:

- How to apply online
- Secondary schools in each area of West Northamptonshire
- How to complete a common application form
- The Published Admission Number (PAN) for each school
- Each school's oversubscription criteria
- Whether individual schools were oversubscribed in September 2023
- Key dates for the application and allocation process
- Children with special educational needs
- Home-to-school transport
- The process for late applications
- Contact details for the WNC School Admissions team

#### 2.4 Application forms

The Common Application Form (CAF) allows parents to apply for a year 7 place at secondary school and to give reasons for their preferences. If parents apply directly to a school, the governing body/academy trust must inform the LA and parents should be advised to complete a CAF. All applications are co-ordinated by the LA (WNC) up to and including 31 July 2024.

Parents are encouraged to apply online wherever possible. Requests for paper application forms (for those who do not have access to the internet) should be made to the WNC School Admissions team and parents are recommended use recorded delivery when posting a completed application form to the School Admissions team. Please note, WNC does not accept responsibility for applications received after the closing date due to parents using insufficient postage.

Applications received after 31 October 2023 will be considered as late applications and will not be processed until after National Offer Day.

Parents can submit any additional paperwork (e.g. proof of a house move) electronically or by post to the School Admissions team at WNC, clearly stating the name of child, date of birth and the name(s) of the school(s) that are being applied for.

## **2.5 Applications for academies, foundation, voluntary aided and free schools**

The School Admissions team will ensure that parents' preferences are logged on the School Admissions database. The School Admissions team will send a list of all applications received, including any additional information, to the relevant academies, foundation, free and voluntary aided schools (own admission authority schools).

Applications will be sent to own admission authority (OAA) schools by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1 and schools will be asked to rank applicants as described in 2.11. Any parent who has not submitted a common application form to the LA by 31 October 2023, will not be considered in the ranking lists with on-time applicants. The LA will check all OAA school lists to ensure that this procedure is followed.

## **2.6 Residence in another LA**

Parents resident in one LA who wish to apply for a place in year 7 at a Secondary school located in a different LA, must apply using the Common Application Form (online or paper) for the LA in which they live (i.e. their home LA).

## **2.7 Applications for schools outside the LA and for West Northamptonshire schools from families living in other LAs**

Applications from residents in the WNC area for schools in other LAs will be logged on the Admissions database and information relating to those preferences and any additional information will be electronically forwarded to the relevant maintaining LA by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1.

Similarly, the School Admissions team will receive applications forwarded from other LAs for schools in West Northamptonshire. These will be recorded and passed on to OAA schools as appropriate. If the application is for a community or voluntary controlled school, the School Admissions team will process applications along with all other applications for WNC schools.

## **2.8 Exchange of information**

LAs and admission authorities in the area must exchange information on applications received and potential offers to be made by the dates specified in the scheme (see Section 1). A maintaining LA must inform the home LA if it intends to offer a place at one of its schools to an applicant living in a different LA area. LAs should exchange information on applications across their borders and seek to eliminate multiple offers across LA borders wherever possible. The exchange of data must, where possible, be carried out using secure data protection systems.

## **2.9 Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)**

If additional information is required by the admission authority of an academy, foundation, voluntary aided or free school in order to apply its oversubscription criteria, this will be detailed in their admission arrangements and in the specific section about that school in the LA's composite prospectus. Links to SIFs for schools which require them will be available on the WNC website from September 2023. Alternatively, contact details for each school are included in the LA's prospectus so parents may contact schools directly to obtain a SIF. **SIFs must be returned directly to the preferred school by 31 October 2023 unless otherwise stated in the schools' admission arrangements.**

## **2.10 Multiple applications**

If more than one application is made for a child prior to the closing date, only the latest dated application form will be processed. Any previously submitted application forms will not be processed.

If an offer of a school place has already been made by the LA and the applicant has chosen to submit further applications to be processed in reallocation rounds, the latest-dated application will take priority over any previous applications. If it is possible to offer a place at one of the preferences on the latest-dated application, an offer will be made and the previous offer will be withdrawn without further reference to the applicant. Applicants must place any requests to withdraw applications in writing to the School Admissions team (by letter or email) prior to the reallocation round.

Where there may be multiple applications from parents who are separated, parents will need to refer to section 2.21 of this scheme for further guidance.

## **2.11 How the co-ordination process produces the offer of a single school place**

All schools have a Published Admissions Number (PAN). This is the number of places available at the normal point of entry. Admission authorities must consider all the applications they receive and, if there are more applications than places available, they must apply their oversubscription criteria to all applicants. This process can be carried out by the School Admissions team on behalf of OAA schools as part of a Service Level Agreement (SLA). Any school wishing to use this service should inform the School Admissions team by 1 August in the year prior to the year of admission. School Admissions will always confirm any offer made with the school in question.

The LA must allocate a place at the highest preference school where the child can be offered a place. If a pupil is eligible for a place at more than one school, the applicant's order of preference will be considered and the highest preference will be offered.

- If a child qualifies for a place at all 3 preference schools, the LA will offer a place at the school that is ranked highest on the CAF. The child's name will then be removed from the ranked list(s) at the lower preference schools where they qualified for a place so that other children may be offered a place at these schools.
- If a child can be offered a place at only one of their preference schools, they will be offered a place at that school regardless of the preference order on the common application form;
- If a child cannot be offered a place within the PAN of any of their preferred schools, the LA will offer a place at the nearest school with a place available (i.e. the nearest school which has not reached their PAN and therefore has a place/places available at the time);
- If a child is offered a place at a school which wasn't their first preference, they can request to be added to the waiting list for any of the schools which was a higher preference than the school offered.
- Parents have the right to appeal against refusal of a place at any school for which they have applied, unless a higher preference has been allocated. Information about how to make an appeal is published on the LA's website.

All OAA schools are responsible for returning a ranked list of all applicants to the LA by the date stated in the scheme timetable (unless they have an SLA with School Admissions agreeing they will carry out this process on their behalf). Some schools will be oversubscribed, others undersubscribed. The surplus places at undersubscribed schools will be allocated to children who were unable to obtain places at their preferred schools.

Schools using random allocation as a tie-breaker, or as part of their oversubscription criteria, must send lists which include the names of all applicants in their randomised ranked order to the School Admissions team. The ranked list must include all children and not just those ranked up to the school's PAN. This procedure will enable the School Admissions team to identify why a place has been refused.

For LA schools (community and voluntary controlled schools), the School Admissions team will be responsible for applying the oversubscription criteria if the number of applications exceeds the PAN of the school.

Where it is not possible to offer a place at any of the preferred schools, a place will be allocated at the school closest to the home address where places are available at the time of allocation. Some pupils in this

situation will be eligible for assistance with transport costs. Parents will be referred to the school travel assistance information on WNC's website.

A single place will be identified for each child by the end of this co-ordination process. When schools have more applications than places available, places will only be allocated up to the limit of the school's PAN. The admission authorities of OAA schools **must** notify their LA of their intention to increase the school's PAN and reference to the change should be made on the school's website. Where further capacity is required to provide every child with a school place, the LA will consult relevant schools to reach an agreement.

The LA will publish details of how places were allocated on its website after National Offer Day.

## **2.12 Protocol for children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**

Reviews of EHC Plans, discussions with parents about preference and placement enquiry procedures, will all be undertaken by the EHC team at WNC. Placement decisions will be made by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1. The admission of children with EHC plans, where the school is named in the plan, will take priority over all other children.

The EHC team will inform parents of the school allocated for their child on or around or around the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1. There may be circumstances where parents have not been informed of the school allocated by this date and/or a school has not yet been named. In these cases, schools may be required to admit children over PAN if it is subsequently named on a child's EHCP.

The offer of a school place will be made by the EHC team who will also amend the EHC plan accordingly.

## **2.13 Notification of offers to all schools or other local authorities**

As part of the co-ordination process, other LAs will be informed electronically by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1 of any offers of school places that WNC is able to make to their residents. All schools, including OAA schools, will be informed of the final offers, which may include offers made to pupils living in other LAs, by the date shown in the scheme timetable in Section 1. Schools **must not** communicate with parents until *after* the offer from WNC has been sent.

## **2.14 National Offer Day**

The School Admissions team will notify all on-time applicants of their school offer on National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day) by email (for all online applicants) or by post (a first class letter will be sent to all applicants who submitted a paper application). This communication will include information about how to find out how school places have been allocated in the WNC area and, if necessary, information about how to appeal. In addition, breakdowns of how places were allocated in accordance with each school's oversubscription criteria will be published on the WNC website. Links to this page will be provided on all offer emails and letters.

The School Admissions team will assume that the place has been accepted unless communication from the parent is received to advise to the contrary.

## **2.15 Rejection of a school place**

Parents will be required to notify the relevant admission authority and the School Admissions team in writing (by email or letter) if they **do not** propose to accept the school place offered. These places will then be reallocated following the process as set out above in 2.11. Places will not be removed until the School Admissions team has been advised by the parent that they have secured an alternative education provision for their child.

OAA schools must inform the School Admissions team as soon as a place is rejected so that the School Admissions team has an accurate picture of the available school places prior to the reallocation dates.

## **2.16 Late applications**

Every effort will be made to encourage parents to complete application forms by the closing date of **31 October 2023**. If an application form is received *after* 31 October 2023, it will not be considered until all the on-time applications have been processed. Late applicants will not receive an offer of a school place on National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day). Late applications will be considered from the relevant reallocation date published in the scheme timetable in Section 1).

Parents will not be allowed to change the order of schools listed as preferences after the closing date. After this date, changes to preferences must be made on a late application form which will be processed in the further rounds of allocation (see Section 1).

For OAA schools, WNC will forward any late applications directly to the schools for their consideration (by the agreed timelines). If places are not available at the preferred school, the School Admissions team must be informed by the school so that a place can be offered at an alternative school with places available. If the alternative school is an OAA school, details of the applicant will be sent to the school before an allocation is made by the LA.

NB: The co-ordinated process in West Northamptonshire continues up to and including 31 July of each year. From 1 August, the in-year process commences.

## **2.17 Right to appeal**

Parents have the right to appeal against refusal of a place at any school for which they have applied. When an admission authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse a place, it must include the reason why admission was refused; information about the right to appeal; the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. Parents must be informed that, if they wish to appeal, they must set out their grounds for appeal in writing. Admission authorities must not limit the grounds on which appeals can be made.

The admission authority must establish an independent appeals panel to hear the appeal. The panel will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal. Where a panel upholds the appeal the school is required to admit the child.

## **2.18 Waiting lists**

Parents who have been refused a place at a school (this could either be after National Offer Day, after an unsuccessful appeal or after making a late application) may wish to place their child's name on a waiting list. Parents must contact the School Admissions team in order to request that their child's name is added to the waiting list. Following Secondary National Offer Day, there will be no distinction drawn on school waiting lists between on time and late applications: all applications will be ranked in accordance with schools' oversubscription criteria.

For OAA schools, parents need to contact the individual schools directly to ask for information on the waiting list policy for the school.

If a place becomes available, the school's oversubscription criteria will be applied to the waiting list to determine who should be allocated the available place. Any places that become available after the main admissions round will be reallocated in rounds of reallocation (see Section 1) by the School Admissions team. The LA continues to co-ordinate the allocation of places at all schools up to and including 31 July. This requires all schools which are their own admission authority to ensure clear and up-to-date communications with the School Admissions team regarding the ranking lists for each round of allocations. No allocation will be made by the School Admission team without prior agreement with the individual admission authority.

For every over-subscribed community and voluntary controlled school, the School Admissions team will retain a waiting list until 31 December. Following this date, waiting lists will be ended. If parents still wish their child's name to remain on the new waiting lists which will be established for the following term, they will need to request this in writing (via email) to the WNC School Admissions team. Waiting lists will be restarted every term, so if a parent wishes to remain on a waiting list for a whole academic year, they would make a request in writing to the School Admissions team during the Christmas and Easter breaks.

## 2.19 Child's home address

Unless otherwise stated in a school's admission arrangements, the child's home address is defined as the address at which the child normally resides with their parent/carer on the closing date for applications (31 October).

When we refer to a child's home address, we mean the permanent residence of the child. This address should be the child's only or main residence which is;

- owned by the child's parents/carers, or
- leased to or rented by the child's parents/carers under a lease or written rental agreement of not less than six months' duration.

Places cannot be allocated on the basis of an intended future change of address unless house moves have been confirmed through the exchange of contracts or signing of a formal lease.

Other admission authorities may have different definitions of a child's home address. Parents are advised to check the school's individual admission arrangements on their website or in the LA's composite prospectus.

Documentary evidence of ownership or rental agreement may be required together with proof of actual permanent residence at the property concerned.

## 2.20 Parents who do not live together

WNC's definition of a child's address states that when parents live separately and the child spends time with each parent, the home address will be treated as the place where the child sleeps for most of the school week (i.e. Sunday night – Thursday night inclusive).

If the child spends equal amounts of time at two addresses, the parents must agree which address they wish to be the child's main address.

The LA can only process one application. Where more than one adult shares parental responsibility and if the adults live at different addresses, it is important that an agreement be reached on which schools to apply for, prior to making the application.

If multiple applications are received for the same child with conflicting addresses and/or preferences, or the School Admissions team is made aware of a dispute between two parents, all applications will be placed on hold and will **not** be processed until:

- a new single application is made, signed by all parties; or
- written agreement is provided from both parents indicating which application they have agreed on; or
- a court order is provided confirming which parent's application carries precedence.

If no agreement can be made, parents are recommended to seek legal advice. If an agreement cannot be reached before the closing date, this may affect the chances of a child being allocated a place at their preferred school/s.

Further information on parental responsibility can be found on the [DfE website](#):

## 2.21 Random allocation

Random allocation, when used as a tie-breaker within an oversubscription criterion for a community or voluntary controlled school, will be observed by an independent person (not employed by the LA or with a connection to the school). This is to ensure that the process is administered correctly.

If a place is allocated from the waiting list after the initial round of allocations, and the tie-breaker is used, a new round of random allocation will be performed but not observed.

## 2.22 Definition of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

The highest priority in the oversubscription criteria for all schools must be given to 'looked after children' and 'previously looked after children'.

A 'looked after child' is a child who, at the time of making an application to a school, is:

- a) In the care of a local authority, or
- b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in exercise of its social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989)

Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they:

- a) were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see Section 12 adoption orders) or the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see Section 46 adoption orders), or
- b) became subject to a child arrangements order (as defined in Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 and as amended by Section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014), or
- c) became subject to a special guardianship order (see Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians)).

This includes children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

## **2.23 Admission of children out of their normal year group (out of cohort)**

WNC's policy is for children to be educated within their correct chronological year group where possible, with the curriculum differentiated as necessary to meet the needs of individual children. This is in line with DfE guidance which states that "in general, children should be educated in their normal age group".

Parents/carers may however seek a place for their child out of their normal age group, for example, if they are currently being educated out of their normal age group. They must put their request in writing to the School Admissions team (for community and voluntary controlled schools) and directly to the school for schools who are their own admission authority, at the time of application for their normal age group.

The admission authority of the school will consider the request and make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of:

- the parent's/carer's views;
- information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
- where relevant, the child's medical history and the views of a medical professional;
- whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group;
- whether the child may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely;
- the views of the Head teacher of the school concerned.

The admission authority of the school MUST set out clearly for parents the reasons for their decision about the year group a child should be admitted to.

Parents/carers do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

Please see further information in the School Admissions Code (2021) about the admission of children outside their normal age group.

## **2.24 Sharing information with schools**

When sharing information regarding the co-ordinated scheme with schools, the local authority (WNC) will:

- Supply information about what is required in the co-ordination process;
- Provide useful tips to schools;
- Be clear about the dates when information should/must be returned to the LA.

If schools already have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the School Admissions team, the team will carry out the agreed work and will share with the school the outcome of applications made to the school by sending out lists of successful applicants.

Schools wishing to establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the co-ordination process should contact the School Admissions team as soon as possible to discuss their requirements.

## **2.25 Relevant Area**

The relevant area for schools in West Northamptonshire is the area comprising West Northamptonshire and all adjoining local authorities.