

Proposed In-year Co-ordination scheme for West Northamptonshire Council 2021-2022

Background

The DfE has recently published a revised School Admissions Code 2021 (“the Code”), following a consultation exercise which ended in October 2020. Subject to parliamentary approval, the Code will be in force from 1 September 2021.

The new Code aims to improve the operation of the admission system to ensure that vulnerable children are out of school for as short a time as possible. It is the duty of admission authorities to act in accordance with the Code and there will be an obligation for all admission authorities to undertake certain actions to ensure compliance with the Code’s new requirements. The key changes to the Code concern: Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, In-year admissions and the Fair Access Protocol. In addition to these main areas, there are a number of minor policy and technical drafting changes.

In-year applications

An application is an in-year application if it is for the admission of a child to a relevant age group and it is submitted on or after the first day of the first school term of the admission year; or it is for the admission of a child to an age group other than a relevant age group.

Requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021)

- A parent can apply for a place for their child at any school, at any time;
- Local authorities (LAs) are not required to co-ordinate in-year applications for schools for which they are not the admission authority;
- LAs may, however, co-ordinate in-year applications for any or all own admission authority schools in their area, with the agreement of the relevant admission authorities – see below for information about the schools in Northamptonshire which are part of the WNC in-year co-ordination process;
- In 2021, information will be published on the WNC website by 31 October 2021 to explain how in-year applications can be made and how they will be dealt with from 1 November 2021 until 31 August 2022. **In all subsequent years, WNC must** publish information on their website by **31 August** at the latest each year to explain how in-year applications can be made and how they will be dealt with from 1 September onwards in that year;
- WNC will set out which schools they will co-ordinate the applications for and which schools will manage their own in-year admissions;

- Contact details for any admission authority that manages its own in-year admissions will be provided.

Responsibility of own admission authority schools (OAAs)

- **In 2021**, own admission authority schools **must** inform the local authority (LA) by **1 October** whether they intend to be part of the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme for the period to 31 August 2022 (where this is offered);
- **In all subsequent years**, own admission authorities **must** inform the local authority by **1 August** at the latest each year whether they intend to be part of the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme for the following 1 September to 31 August (where this is offered) or whether they will be managing their own in-year admissions;
- From 2022, by 1 August, for schools that intend to be part of the local authority's in-year co-ordination for the following academic year, they **must** also provide the local authority with all the information that the local authority is required to publish on its website, including application forms;
- WNC will provide a suitable application form (and a supplementary information form where necessary) for parents to complete when applying for a place for their child at a school for which the council co-ordinates in-year admissions;
- Where WNC receives an in-year application for a school which manages its own in-year admissions, it **must** promptly forward the application to the relevant admission authority, which **must** process it in accordance with its own in-year admission arrangements.

Actions required by OAAs and governing bodies of schools

- In 2021, own admission authorities and governing bodies **must** set out on the school's website by **31 October 2021** how in-year applications will be dealt with from the 1 November 2021 until 31 August 2022;
- **In all subsequent years**, they **must** set out by **31 August** at the latest each year, on the school's website how in-year applications will be dealt with from the **1 September** until the following **31 August**;
- They **must** set out how parents can apply for a school place, and, where they manage their own in-year admissions, provide a suitable application form for parents to complete (and a supplementary information form where necessary), and set out when parents will be notified of the outcome of their application and details about the right to appeal;
- If the admission authority is to be a part of the local authority's in-year co-ordination scheme, it **must** provide information on where parents can find details of the relevant scheme.
- An admission authority, governing body or local authority (WNC) **must** provide a hard copy of the information about in-year applications on request for those who do not have access to the internet.

- Admission authorities must, on request, provide information to prospective parents about the places still available in all schools within their area;
- The admission authorities for all schools in the area **must** provide the local authority with details of the number of places available at their schools whenever this information is requested, to assist a parent seeking a school place. Such details should be provided no later than **two school days** following receipt of a request from the local authority;
- With the exception of designated grammar schools, all maintained schools, and academies, including schools designated with a religious character, that have places available **must** offer a place to every child who has applied for one, without condition or the use of any oversubscription criteria, unless admitting the child would prejudice the efficient provision of education or use of resources. For example, admission authorities **must not** refuse to admit a child solely because:
 - a) they have applied later than other applicants;
 - b) they are not of the faith of the school in the case of a school designated with a religious character;
 - c) they have followed a different curriculum at their previous school; or
 - d) information has not been received from their previous school.
- Where an admission authority is dealing with multiple in-year admissions and does not have sufficient places for every child who has applied for one, they must allocate places on the basis of the oversubscription criteria in their determined admission arrangements only;
- Parents must not be refused the opportunity to make an application or be told that they can only be placed on a waiting list rather than make a formal application.

Timescales for in-year applications

- Upon receipt of an in-year application, the admission authority, or the local authority if it is co-ordinating the admissions authority's in-year admissions, should aim to notify the parents of the outcome of their application in writing within 10 school days, but they **must** be notified in writing within 15 school days;
- Where an application is refused, the admission authority **must** also set out the reason for refusal and information about the right to appeal in accordance with paragraph 2.32 of the Code;
- Where an admission authority manages its own in-year admissions, it **must** also notify the local authority of every application and its outcome as soon as reasonably practicable, but should aim to be within **two school days**, to allow the local authority to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area and to ensure they are aware of any children who may not have a school place;
- Where an applicant is offered a school place following an in-year application, and the offer is accepted, arrangements should be made for the child to start school as soon as possible, especially where the child is out of school (5 school days).

Right to appeal

When an admission authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse their child a place at a school for which they have applied, 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 In-Year Co-ordination process in West Northamptonshire

- The School Admissions team will process in-year applications for school places in the WNC local authority area;
- While Local authorities (LAs) are not required to co-ordinate in-year applications for schools for which they are not the admission authority, WNC co-ordinates in-year applications for the vast majority of own admission authority schools in its area;
- WNC does **not** co-ordinate in-year applications for the schools listed below – these school are responsible for conducting their own in-year admission process.

School which are *not* part of the WNC In-year Co-ordination scheme (for 2021-22)

Buckton Fields Primary School
Bracken Leas Primary School
Marie Weller Primary School
Northampton School for Boys
Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School
Preston Hedges Primary School
Pineham Barns Primary School
Parklands Primary School
The Radstone Primary Academy
Silverstone UTC
Woodland View Primary School

WNC – In-year co-ordination Scheme 2021

Aims

- Parents seeking school places in-year within WNC will be able to access clear, simple and consistent information and advice on the In-Year application process either online or by contacting a member of the School Admissions Team via telephone or email;
- The School Admissions Team will respond to all parental enquiries and aim to do so within three working days;

- Parents will be able to access information on how to apply for an In-Year school place, by referring to the Composite Prospectus of Schools in the LA: “Applying for a Primary / Secondary School Place in WNC published each academic year and available online;
- Parents will be able to use WNC’s online Schools’ Directory search engine on the website to help them to identify their local schools;
- The School Admissions Team will provide on request parents/carers and professionals with information to parents on the availability of school places within the LA.

The in-year co-ordination scheme for West Northamptonshire Council will operate as follows:

1. The LA will provide a Common Application Form for in-year applications. An online form will be available at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/admissions. A paper form will be available upon request from the School Admissions Team: admissions.ncc@northanorthants.gov.uk. The In-Year application form will be the only acceptable form of application for schools and academies taking part in WNC scheme of In-Year coordination.
2. The application form allows parents/carers, applying from both inside and outside the Local Authority (WNC) to express a preference for up to **three** WNC schools in ranked order. If parents / carers apply for more than one school, the ranked order of school preferences will remain confidential to the LA prior to allocation, but the information may be made available at appeal.
3. The LA will also provide access to an application form (and Supplementary Information Form, where required) for all schools within WNC which do not take part in the WNC’s IY Co-ordination Process. These forms can be accessed by visiting the website: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/admissions
4. When the School Admissions team receives a completed in-year application form, the application will be placed on the computer data base within **2 working days** and the application details will be forwarded to the admission authority of the school(s) applied for.
5. The LA aims to provide outcomes for applications within **10 school days** and parents must be made within 15 school days. Own admission authority schools must decide if they can offer places and these schools are expected to respond promptly to the LA with an outcome of the application so that the published timeframes are adhered to. Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied.
6. In-year applications should not be made more than a month in advance of when the school place is required as the LA does hold places open. **In-year applications received more than four weeks in advance** of when the school place is required are treated as ‘applied too early’. The School Admissions Team will contact (by email or letter) parents who apply too early, advising them to apply again within 4 weeks of the date the school place is required. The exception to this is in the case of children of UK service personnel and crown servants where the applications may be processed in advance.
7. Families living overseas, and those living out of the WNC area, but intending to move to WNC

or back to an existing WNC address, may apply for a West Northamptonshire school place on the WNC In-Year application form. However, the address used to process the application must be where the child lives at the time of application. The West Northamptonshire address will not be used until the LA/school has received proof that the child is living at that address.

8. Children of UK service personnel or crown servants are an exception to this requirement. In these cases, WNC will allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area, provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address in West Northamptonshire, for consideration of the application against oversubscription criteria. If it is not possible to offer a place at a preferred school, a place will be offered at the closest school with a vacancy in the appropriate year group.
9. If an applicant owns a property in West Northants but is not living in it, for example: because they are working abroad at the time of application, the WNC address will not be accepted for the purposes of admission until the child is living at that address.
10. WNC parents wishing to apply for a place at a maintained school or academy in a different local authority must apply directly to the LA where the school is situated.
11. If the School Admissions team receives an application for a school or academy which does not co-ordinate in-year applications within the WNC Co-ordination Scheme, details of the application will be forwarded directly to the school and parents will be informed. The school or academy must then notify the School Admissions team of the outcome of the application and inform the parent of their statutory right of appeal if a place is refused. The same timeframes apply to own admission authority schools as to the LA i.e. 10 days for schools to provide an outcome; however, a written outcome **must** be provided to parents/carers by 15 school days at the latest.
12. All admission authorities will remain responsible for school place allocation decisions and for ranking applications and waiting lists in accordance with schools' oversubscription criteria. Own admission authorities may ask the School Admissions team at WNC to undertake the administration of in-year applications on their behalf.
13. The School Admissions team aims to process in-year applications and notify applicants of the outcome of their applications within 10 school days of receipt of the WNC in-year application form. However, applicants must be notified in writing within 15 school days.

These timescales apply not only for the School Admissions team when they process in-year applications, but also to the own admission authority schools which manage their own in-year application process.

14. The School Admissions team will offer places at community and voluntary controlled schools as well as at the other schools or academies operating within the scheme. Places will be offered to children on a waiting list, as vacancies arise. Waiting list will be maintained in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria.

Where the School Admissions team manages the waiting lists for schools, numbers on roll will be requested frequently (and must be provided by schools within 2 school days) and places will be offered from the waiting list when they become available.

How preferences work

15. Parents may apply for up to 3 schools. If more than one school has a place available in the relevant year group, a place will be offered at the highest ranked school where the child qualifies for a place. When a place cannot be offered at any of their preferred schools, the following process applies:
 - the School Admissions team will offer a place at the nearest school with a place available;
 - the School Admissions team will advise parents, on request, about place availability in other schools or academies/Free Schools;
 - the School Admissions team will not offer a place at an alternative school to pupils who are already on roll at a WNC school (unless the child/family has moved house).
16. If a place could be offered at a school within WNC's IY Co-ordination scheme and a place has already been offered by a school outside the scheme (or vice versa), School Admission officers will contact the family to ascertain which is the preferred school.
17. A place will be considered to be available (unless otherwise indicated) at a preferred school if the number on roll in the relevant year group does not meet or exceed the published admissions number (PAN).
18. Upon receipt of a completed application form, the LA will check our records of place availability) to confirm their current numbers on roll at the preferred schools.
19. If a parent declines the offer of a school place, the School Admissions team will inform the school concerned. Parents and carers (of children of Compulsory School Age) who refuse offers of school places, must inform the LA about how they intend their children to be educated – this will be followed up by the School Admissions Team.
20. If parents need assistance with Transport they must contact the School Transport team.

What happens after places are allocated?

21. Schools are expected to contact parents about a start date and to place children on roll within 5 school days of allocation. Every effort must be made by the school to contact the parent. If the parent fails to respond, the place may be withdrawn and reallocated. Schools must follow their safeguarding procedures as advised in the allocation letter.

School Appeals

22. Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied.

23. In the event of a school or an academy refusing to allocate a place, the School Admissions team (for community and voluntary controlled schools and on behalf of the governing bodies of own admission schools and authorities which have opted into the IY co-ordination scheme) will include the reason for refusal; information about the right to appeal; the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. Parents will be informed that, if they wish to appeal, they must set out their grounds for appeal in writing. The LA and other admission authorities must not limit the grounds on which appeals can be made. Schools should not refuse admission if places are available, unless paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11 of the School Admissions Code (2021) apply.
24. Some in-year applications will be complex and may have to be referred to the Fair Access Process where different timescales apply. For further information on Fair Access, the Fair Access Protocol can be found here: [link to WNC's FAP](#).
25. The School Admissions team (and OAA schools which manage their own in-year process) will write to parents inform them both of their statutory right of appeal and of the waiting list process.

Operation of Waiting lists

26. Waiting lists for all community and voluntary controlled schools will be held and administered centrally by the School Admissions Team for all year groups and will be ranked in accordance with the published admission criteria for the respective school.
27. The LA administers the waiting lists at the request of some OAA schools. As in 29. Above, the waiting lists will be ranked in accordance with the published admission criteria of the respective schools.
28. Waiting lists are cleared at the end of each full term. In order for your child to remain on the waiting list you must submit your request to the School Admissions Team in writing after the Easter and Christmas Break.
29. Applicants wishing to remain on the waiting list of a school in the following academic year must make a new application (as the application will be for a different year group).
30. Parents should contact OAA schools which manage their own in-year application process the waiting list policy for these schools may differ from the WNC's process.

Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

31. It is the clear expectation of West Northamptonshire Council that where a school receives an In Year application for a school place for a Looked After (LAC) or Previously Looked After Child (PLAC) then that school will ensure a place is offered to that child within 10 school days.

32. Should any school for whom the Local Authority acts as the Admission Authority refuse to offer a place to a LAC or PLAC or fail to do so in a timely manner, the Local Authority will direct that school to make a place available for the LAC or PLAC with immediate effect. Should any 'Own Admission Authority' school refuse to offer a place to a LAC or PLAC or fail to do so in a timely manner then the Local Authority will refer the matter to the Regional Schools Commissioner or Office of Schools Adjudicator as appropriate, for further action (please see sections 3.27 – 3.29 of the Code for further information on local authority's powers of direction).
33. WNC will seek to comply with the following notes within the Code, footnote 63 (relating to 2.32 'Right to Appeal') in the 2021 Code states:
'Where a looked after child has been refused a school place, it is likely to be more appropriate for the local authority looking after the child to use the powers of direction set out in paragraphs 3.27 to 3.29 of the Code, than to submit an appeal.'