



# One minute guide

## School Admissions

No. 81, March 2026

### What does school admissions involve?

The admissions team work with schools and families to ensure children aged 4 to 16 years secure a school place. There are two types of admission application:

**Normal round** (annual cycle) **applications** for all Leeds children who are due to start Reception, Junior or Secondary school for the first time. Families apply in advance, under a national timetable and the admissions team coordinate applications for all Leeds schools. Single school place offers are made to Leeds resident children on national offer day. All local authorities (LAs) make offers on the same day

**In-year applications** for children who need to change school, after the school year started or in any other year groups, including children who are new to Leeds (please see below). The team works collaboratively with Leeds schools under the Fair Access protocol to secure places for vulnerable children without one.

### Normal round applications for primary and secondary school places

Each year we allocate around 9500 [primary](#) (reception or junior) and 9500 [secondary](#) (year 7) places in advance for the school's entry year groups. Families apply to their home local authority (who empties their bins) for places at their preferred schools, even if requesting schools in another LA. All LAs work together. The home LA makes one school place offer on national offer day. There are national closing and offer dates which apply to every Local Authority:

#### Secondary

National closing date: 31 October. National offer day: 1 March (or next working day)

#### Primary

National closing date: 15 January. National offer day: 16 April (or next working day)

The admission rules vary across schools - we have lots of different criteria in use in Leeds. The following rules apply to all applications:

- All preferences received by the national closing date are equal.
- All places are allocated by applying the rules in the school's individual admissions policy called oversubscription criteria.
- No child is guaranteed a place at any school.
- Living in a catchment area simply moves a child higher up the list.
- Not all schools offer standalone sibling priority.
- Attending a nearby primary school can only be an oversubscription criteria if the primary school is expressly named in the policy.
- Attending a school nursery doesn't guarantee a place. In fact, this is rarely an oversubscription criteria.

### In-year applications (transfer process for children and young people moving schools)

Any parent can apply for a place for their child at any time to any school outside the normal admissions round for any reason. In-year applications are for places:

- in any year group that isn't an entry year group (i.e. year 1-6 and 8-11)
- into an entry year group (i.e. reception/year 7) made after 1 September

The Admissions team coordinate in-year applications for Leeds schools through our online portal. For most schools, parents receive one decision letter by email. A small number of schools make their own decisions and parents will receive their decision directly—this is made clear in our email. There is no national timetable nor national offer day.

Families may need support to navigate this, and to make the appropriate online applications.

## Fair access

Leeds has a [Fair Access Protocol](#) to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people have an appropriate school place. 'Vulnerable children' can include: those with formal involvement from the Children's Social Work Service; the criminal justice service; children of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds; children who are homeless, living in refuges; children who are carers; and children in alternative provision, with challenging behaviour or permanently excluded. This list is not exhaustive; please see the [protocol](#) for further details.

Representatives from local schools and professionals meet monthly at fair access panels to review individual cases and school circumstances and offer appropriate school places.

## Appeals process

If the child or young person is refused a school place, they have the right to [appeal](#) the decision to an independent appeal panel. It is important that families lodge their appeal as soon as possible, to prevent delays, which may have an impact on their child's education. Appeals take around six weeks to be heard and only take place in school term time

Appeals are heard by a panel of three people independent from the school and the local authority. Parents can present as much information as they like to the appeals panels in support of their case and can bring a friend to support them - though these people cannot be connected to either the school or the local authority. Schools are represented by a presenting officer - this may be the Headteacher. At the hearing, the panel hears both cases, asks relevant questions, and has the power to decide the child should be offered a place, even if the class is full, based on applying legal grounds. The appeals grounds are limited, so families should look at these carefully when considering whether to appeal.

Schools with their own admission policies may run their own appeals processes; families will need to contact the school directly for details about how to appeal.

## How can practitioners support families in securing school places?

Parents have a legal responsibility to secure education for their child. Families can be supported to make the best applications by:

- Applying on time and online. If you are supporting a family who does not have access to the internet, paper forms can be requested via the email addresses below.
- Include five school preferences on the application to give the best chance of a local school. If a family is unaware of their local schools, the [catchment address check](#) can be used to see where the application might receive a priority based on address.
- Families should preference some schools where they have a reasonable chance of an offer.
- Admissions must be told about any change in circumstances, such as a house move.
- Families should read the information on our website [www.leeds.gov.uk/apply](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/apply) and watch the YouTube video <https://youtu.be/WRU1SrS7IJE>.
- Appealing or going on a waiting list doesn't guarantee a new offer will be made.
- Families who forgot to apply in the normal round must contact admissions urgently - we may be able to add the application before offer day, even if it's after the deadline.

The school admissions team are available to advise practitioners and families on all aspects of the process. They can be contacted by telephone on 0113 222 4414, or via email at:

[startingprimary@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:startingprimary@leeds.gov.uk) (primary reception and junior school admissions)

[startingsecondary@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:startingsecondary@leeds.gov.uk) (secondary year 7 admissions)

[education.transfers@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:education.transfers@leeds.gov.uk) (in-year school transfer admissions)

[education.appeals@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:education.appeals@leeds.gov.uk) (school appeals team)