



Admissions Policy

September 2023

Part one

Applications for school places for the normal admission round into reception the September following the child's fourth birthday, transfer to secondary school the September following the child's eleventh birthday and applications received for in year (i.e. into any year group outside the normal admission round), shall be determined in accordance with the provisions set out below. These admission arrangements apply to all community and voluntary controlled schools, as listed in Part three, admissions within the borough for the school year 2023-24 and for subsequent years, subject to any review.

Compulsory school age

Children reach compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Under the council's policy, children may start school in the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Applications for admission are normally considered in relation to the availability of places in the child's chronological age group, other than in exceptional circumstances. Parents can request that the date their child starts school in the reception class is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age in that school year. Applications for deferred admissions must be made by the published closing date. For parents and carers with children born between 1 April and 31 August they should contact the authority to obtain information on the 'Summer Born Policy' and for advice if they wish to consider delaying their child's entry for a full year. Parents and carers considering this option must apply in the child's chronological year group to ensure that they are part of the process should they decide not to delay their child's entry. The vast majority of children in Cheshire West and Chester are taught in their chronological year group. To help younger children adjust to school, schools may propose to phase full time admission over the first four weeks of term, admitting these children on a part time basis. However it should be noted that parents have the right to insist that their child receives full time from the start of September and that they also can request that their child attends school on a part time basis until the child reaches compulsory school age.

Secondary transfer

For transfer to secondary school, children will normally transfer at the beginning of the autumn term following their eleventh birthday. In exceptional circumstances requests can be made for early or late transfer to secondary school. Parents and carers considering such a request must in the first instance speak to the head teacher of the child's primary school. However, parents and carers must apply for a school place by the published closing date. The application should include details of the request for a place outside of the chronological age range to ensure that if early or late transfer is not agreed that their child is not disadvantaged and is included in the secondary transfer process.

Application process

Applications from Cheshire West and Chester residents for places in local authority maintained schools and academies, including applications for schools maintained by other local authorities, must be made on the Cheshire West and Chester Council common application form. The application process will begin on 1 September 2023. Appendix 1 As required by law, Cheshire West and Chester Council makes arrangements for parents and carers resident within the authority's administrative area to express up to three preferences for any English authority school/s, ranked in order of priority, using the council's common application form or online application facility and to give reasons in support of each preference, including any supporting documentation, before any places are offered.

Applicants not resident in an English authority or resident abroad should apply on the common application form or online application facility to Cheshire West and Chester Council if they wish to be considered for a Cheshire West and Chester school or academy. Applications received for the

admission of pupils who are not resident in Cheshire West and Chester authority are always considered on an equal basis in relation to oversubscription criteria and deadlines as Cheshire West and Chester residents.

Acknowledgements

An acknowledgement confirming receipt of applications can be provided on request from parents and carers. A stamped addressed envelope must be provided. Online applicants will receive an automated email acknowledgement.

Children with a statement of special educational needs or an education health and care plan

Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires the governing bodies of all maintained schools to admit a child with a statement of special educational needs or education health and care plan that names their school.

Published admission numbers

The council in relation to community and voluntary controlled schools have set published admission numbers, which is the number of children that will be admitted into the relevant age group in the normal admission round. If the Council receive an increase in applications in certain areas of the borough, the council where necessary, will use its power as the strategic commissioner of school places to temporarily increase the number of places available above the published admission number. These increases will not constitute an increase to the published admission number as stated in paragraph 1.4 of the School Admissions Code December 2014.

For applications received in year, which are those received after the first day of the school year into the relevant age group or into any other year group, the published admission number will normally continue to be applied as the relevant age group progresses through school. There may be occasions when a school's organisation permits the admission of additional children into an oversubscribed cohort at the expense of places in an undersubscribed cohort. Should there be subsequent application to the undersubscribed cohort it may not be possible to admit to the published admission number.

Published admission numbers for Cheshire West and Chester maintained schools are listed in the authority's composite prospectus which is available on the council's website at the start of the application process.

All preferences made in accordance with the local authority's admission arrangements will be met except where this would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources, when the year group in question is full. In some circumstances the local authority may Appendix I agree with the school that admitting further pupils will not adversely affect the school in the longer term. In such circumstances, a preference will be met, even where the year group is full. Unless the child is a permitted exception as defined in The School Admissions Code, December 2014, the local authority will not normally be able to agree admission over the published admission number where to do so would result in a breach of infant class size legislation. The law requires that infant classes, where the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven, contain no more than 30 pupils with a single qualified teacher.

Oversubscription criteria

Where more applications are received than there are places available and after the admission of pupils with statements of special educational needs or an education health and care plan, where the school is named in the statement, preferences for community and voluntary controlled schools,

together with any supporting information, will be considered in accordance with the council's published oversubscription criteria as follows:

- A looked after child or a child who was previously looked after by an English Local Authority but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a child arrangements or special guardianship, order. A looked after child is a child who is in the care of a local authority or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions, as defined in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989.
- A looked after child or a child who was previously looked after outside England but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a child arrangements or special guardianship, order. A looked after child is a child who is in the care of a local authority or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions, as defined in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989.
- Siblings. Pupils with brothers or sisters, step brothers or step sisters, half-brothers or half-sisters, adopted brothers or adopted sisters living together as part of one household, already attending the preferred school in years reception through to year five in a primary school, years seven to ten and year twelve in a secondary school and expected to continue at the school in the following school year, at the time of admission. Siblings in year six and year eleven will not be considered under this criterion for the normal admission rounds.
- Children resident within the designated catchment zone of the school. Children will be classed within this category if they and their parents or carers are resident within the area served by the school at the time of application. However, for the normal admission rounds, the authority may consider a change of address providing the child is resident in the new property and supporting documentation is received by 10 December 2023 for secondary transfer and 18 February 2024 for reception applications, when the authority will begin the allocation of places process.
- Children not resident within a school's local catchment zone but attending a school designated as a partner school for admissions purposes. (Only applicable for secondary applications)

Equal preferences

All preferences will be considered on the basis of the equal preference model for allocating places, in accordance with legal requirements. This means that in the first instance, all preferences will be considered against the school's published oversubscription criteria only, without reference to the preference ranking. Where a pupil can potentially be allocated more than one school place stated on the application form, the single offer, determined by the home authority, will be for the school ranked highest on the application form by the parents or carers.

If the pupil is a Cheshire West and Chester resident and Cheshire West and Chester Council, as the home authority, is not able to offer any of the preferences stated on the form a place will be allocated at the nearest Cheshire West and Chester school (including faith schools) with known vacancies using the authority's mapping system for measuring straight line distances from the Basic Land and Property Unit point of the home address to the Basic Land and Property Unit point of the school in miles.

Where an application has been received from a parent resident in another authority and a place cannot be offered, Cheshire West and Chester Council will not allocate an alternative school place.

Children of multiple births

In relation to children of multiple births, exceptionally it may be necessary to offer places over the published admission number. This is to ensure that, as far as possible, siblings (twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) can attend the same school. In normal circumstances the local authority will not be able to agree admission over the published admission number where to do so would result in a breach of infant class size legislation, which requires that infant classes, where the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven contain no more than 30 pupils with a single qualified teacher. However the School Admissions Code, December 2014 allows the admittance of a sibling in the same school year (twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) as a permitted exception where one sibling can be offered and not the other. This is a discretionary permitted exception and may not be agreed if the admittance of more children into a particular year group would cause prejudice to the efficient education and efficient use of resources to other children in that year group.

Children of UK service personnel

Places will be allocated in advance of the family arriving in the area for children of UK service personnel and veterans, if accompanied by an official government letter which declares a relocation date and a unit postal address or quartering area address for considering the application against local authority oversubscription criteria. In addition it may be necessary to offer places above the published admission number as the School Admissions Code, December 2014 allows the admittance of a forces child as a permitted exception in relation to infant class size legislation. This is a discretionary permitted exception and may not be agreed if the admittance of more children into a particular year group would cause prejudice to the efficient education and efficient use of resources to other children in that year group. Consideration for applications for children of UK service personnel and veterans is given in accordance with the Cheshire West Armed Forces Covenant.

Parents and Carers with shared responsibility for a child

Where parents or carers have shared responsibility for a child the place of residency will be determined as the address where the child lives for the majority of the week, for example, where the child wakes up between Monday to Friday. Full details must be submitted in writing to enable the local authority to determine which address will be used for the purpose of admission. A panel of officers will consider the information provided. If the panel agree that sufficient evidence has been provided, then this address will be used for the purpose of assigning a criterion to the application.

Where the local authority is unable to reach a decision based on the information received, for example, where a child lives equally with both parents, the address provided for claiming child benefit and where appropriate, child tax credits or equivalent will be applied to the admission application. In such circumstances, documentary evidence must be provided. Any delay in receiving any required information will result in the local authority determining residence for the purpose of admission based on the information available to it.

In the event of two applications being received for a child residing equally with both parents/carers, neither application will be considered and the parents/carers will be asked to agree a single application between themselves.

Moving house

Parents and carers must inform the authority immediately of a change of address, even if details of a future change of residency were included on the application form as this may change a child's oversubscription criteria for a particular school. The authority will require supporting evidence to show that the place of residency has changed, for example completion of sale, tenancy agreements, council tax and utility bills and any other information considered relevant to the application, including disposal of previous property. In addition proof that the child now resides at the new property will be required i.e. child benefit or child tax credit. For normal admission round supporting evidence must be received by the date as stated in part two.

In respect of applications made as part of the normal admission round, for example, into the reception class in a primary school and into year seven as a secondary transfer in September for the first time, information and supporting evidence must be received by the dates in part two of these arrangements. Proof of residency received after the published dates will not be used to process the application, but will be used to send the decision letter on the published offer date.

Waiting lists

Waiting lists will be held in oversubscription criteria order and not on a first come, first served basis. A vacant place will be reallocated to the child with the highest oversubscription criteria on the school's waiting list on the day the place became available. Placing a child's name on a waiting list does not affect the statutory right of appeal. Waiting lists must be held until the end of the autumn term.

Normal admission round

The normal admission round refers to applications made before the offer release date for admission into the relevant age group i.e. into a reception class in a primary school or year seven in a secondary school in September.

Waiting lists for oversubscribed schools will be prepared in line with the dates specified in part two. Any child refused a school place will automatically be placed on the school's waiting list. They will also consist of children for whom an appeal has been received by the dates specified in part two together with any late applicants.

Changing preferences

In respect of applications made for the normal point of entry, for example, into reception class in a primary school or year seven in a secondary school for the first time, the local authority will not accept a change of preference made after the published closing date without a genuine reason, such as a recent house move. Full details must be provided to the local authority for consideration, along with supporting documentation.

If the authority's decision is that the reason, based on the evidence provided is not valid, then the application will be treated as a late application and as such notification of the outcome of that application will be after the accept/decline date as stated in part two. It is important therefore that parents and carers give full consideration to the preferences they make on their on time application form.

Other relevant changes of circumstances, e.g. admission of a sibling

Further information received after the supporting documentation deadlines, as stated in part two will not be considered as part of the on time allocation process. The information will be assessed after the accept/decline date and any changes that would assign a different criteria to an application, for example, sibling, in catchment, will be applied to the application and used to determine where the child falls on a waiting list.

Late applications – Normal admission round only

Late applications for places at Cheshire West and Chester schools, i.e. applications not submitted to the authority by the relevant statutory closing date will be considered after all on time applications unless the local authority considers that there are good reasons for the application being late, which must be stated at the time of application, for example, exceptional medical reasons preventing an earlier application, late removal into the area. Supporting documentation must be provided. Where supporting documentation has been received by the date specified in part two of these arrangements and the authority has accepted reasons stated for the late application, the application will be considered as if it had been received on time.

Late applications and supporting documentation received after the dates specified will be considered after all on time applications even where the authority accepts that there are good reasons for the late application and as such these applications may be disadvantaged in the consideration of their preferences.

Late applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application after the published offer date specified in part two of these arrangements.

In year applications

In year applications are those received after the 1 September into the relevant age group or at any time into any other year group.

Applications for admission are normally considered in relation to the availability of places in the child's chronological age group, other than in exceptional circumstances. In exceptional circumstances requests can be made for entry into a year group outside the chronological age range of a child. Parents and carers considering such a request must in the first instance speak to the head teacher of the school they will be applying for. The decision as whether it would be in the child's best interest to be educated outside the chronological year is determined by the head teacher of the schools concerned in agreement with the parent/carer.

Parents and carers, irrespective of where they reside who are seeking in year school places for schools and academies in Cheshire West and Chester authority are required to apply direct to the school or academy. Parents and carers must either complete an application form obtained from the school or complete an online form available on the local authority's website, which is directed to the school or academy for processing.

Waiting lists will be held for community and voluntary controlled schools in oversubscription criteria order and not on a first come, first served basis. Any child refused a school place will automatically be placed on the school's waiting list and will be considered together with children for whom an appeal has been received and any new applicants. Schools will be responsible for administering and updating their waiting lists and must be clear to parents and carers as to how the waiting lists will be operated on an annual basis. A school place is not considered available until the school or academy is able to remove a child from roll according to the local authority's safeguarding protocol. Parents and carers must notify the school if there are any changes in circumstances that would impact their oversubscription criteria for the waiting list.

The holding of in year waiting lists for aided, foundation, studio, free schools and academies will be determined by the school or academy.

Right of appeal

Parents and carers who are not offered a place for their child at a school stated as a preference have a right of appeal to an independent appeals panel. Parents can submit an appeal in respect of each school for which admission has been refused. Application forms to appeal against a decision by the local authority to refuse admission to a community or voluntary controlled school are available on the authority's website or can be obtained by contacting the authority. All appeal application forms for community or voluntary controlled schools must be returned to the school admissions team within 20 school days of the issue of the refusal notification.

Repeat applications and appeals

Repeat applications and appeals will not be considered within the same school year, unless the parent, carer or school's circumstances have changed significantly since the original application was made. Full details of the change of circumstances must be provided for consideration by the local authority.

Vacancies occurring in a year group which was fully subscribed at the time of the initial application will be deemed to constitute a significant change in the school's circumstances and a repeat application will be permitted.

Part Two

Timetable for applying for schools places for the normal admission rounds	Secondary transfers	Primary admissions
Application process starts. Online application facility opens and paper application forms available. Composite prospectus available	1 September 2023	1 September 2023
Closing date for applications	31 October 2023*	15 January 2024*
Deadline for receipt of supporting documentation. Information received after this date will not be considered until after the accept/decline date listed below	12 December 2023	20 February 2024
Allocations to be finalised	11 February 2024	25 March 2024
Offers released Parents will be informed of the school place offered either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By letter to those parents and carers who have applied using a paper application form and to those online applicants who have requested their offer by letter • By email to those parents and carers who have applied using the web based online facility and requested their offer to be sent as an email. In addition, online applicants can view their offer on this day by logging in to their online account 	1 March 2024**	16 April 2024**
Waiting lists prepared and vacancies re-allocated. Waiting lists will be held in criteria order.	After 1 March 2024	After 16 April 2024
Deadline for application appeals against local authority / governing body decisions	29 March 2024	18 May 2024
Appeal hearings (on time applications)	By 16 June 2024	By 20 July 2024
Appeal hearings (late and in year applications)	Within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged	Within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged
Late applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application after this date and within 10 school days of this date or receipt of application (whichever is the later), as far as possible	After 1 March 2024	After 16 April 2024

*National closing date **In accordance with regulations which state that offers must be posted out on these dates except where these dates fall on a Saturday or Sunday and offers must be posted on the next working day. All dates will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with National guidance.