



Department
for Education

Schools Choice Framework

May 2013

Entitlement and choice

All children of compulsory school age, which is from 5 to 16 years old, are entitled to free, state provided education. The government funds local authorities and schools to provide this education.

This guide explains:

- How to express your choice
- Where to access information to make your choice
- The school admissions process
- How to complain or appeal

Choosing which school(s) to apply to

Making a choice	
How many preferences can I register?	When starting primary school and when your child transfers to secondary school, you have the right to express a preference for a school of your choice. You are entitled to state at least three of the schools you would like your child to attend, in order of preference (your application can include schools outside of the local authority where your child lives).
What types of school are there?	<p>There are now more types of state school to choose from, including more Academy schools which are run independently from the local authority. The government has a school reform programme that allows interested parties - such as education providers, charities, community groups, teachers and/or parents - to establish new education facilities such as Free Schools, Technical Academies, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools.</p> <p>These schools are established in response to parental, student and/or community demand for a specific type of provision. If you, and other parents, want to get involved in setting up a new school there is further information available on the DfE website. You can also contact the New Schools Network.</p> <p>Academies (including Free Schools) are legally independent of the local authority. This allows these schools to have greater autonomy over things such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ whether or not to deliver the standard national curriculum (they must however deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which they must publish on their website) ▪ the length of the school week and number of terms the school will have ▪ setting teachers' pay and conditions and the type of staff they can employ <p>In addition to Academies and Free Schools there are</p>

	voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and community schools adding to the diversity of provision and creating more choice than ever before as to where your children can be educated.
Can I educate my child at home?	All parents have the option of teaching their child at home, full or part-time but if you are taking your child out of school, you must write to the head teacher. You can ask the school to teach your child part-time, but the school doesn't have to accept your request.
Where can I get information on schools in my area?	Your local authority runs the main school application process each year. Local authorities will publish a Prospectus, online and in hard copy, which will contain the admission arrangements for each of the state-funded schools in the local authority area to which parents can apply (this includes Academies and Free Schools). You can also obtain information from schools' own websites. You have to apply for a primary school place by 15th January and for secondary transfer by 31st October for a place in the following September.
Where can I get further information on a school's performance?	<p>The quality of education provided by state schools is checked and reported on by Ofsted. Looking at a school's Ofsted report will give an indication of the individual school's strengths and any areas where improvement is required. Reports on individual schools are available from the Ofsted website and you can look at these before choosing a school.</p> <p>The 'Performance Tables' are published every year and provide information on the attainment levels at individual school for example; how many children attained grades in key subjects and at key stages in their education, and how much progress pupils have made. You can view these tables for individual schools on the DfE website.</p>

The School Admissions Process

How do I apply for a place?	
How does the admissions process work?	<p>You will be asked to list your school preferences and return this to your local authority. The local authority will then notify the schools that a parent has applied for a school place (but does not notify the school where it was listed in the order of preference). The school ranks all applications it has received in line with their oversubscription criteria (if undersubscribed all applicants are offered a place) and returns this information to the home local authority. The local authority is then able to see which schools are able to make an offer of a school place and notifies the parent of the offer from the highest available preference.</p> <p>If you are making an application for a school place outside of the main admissions round (for example if you have moved to a new area and missed the main admissions round), you can apply directly to a school for a place.</p>
How do schools decide who gets a place?	<p>Local authorities and schools have to provide clear information about how they will allocate places if a school has more applications than places available. The most commonly used criteria are distance of home address from the school, or catchment area. Some schools are allowed to use religious faith. The School Admissions Code sets out the legal framework for school admissions, and it requires that school places are allocated in a fair, open and transparent manner. The School Admissions Code is available on the DfE website.</p>
Who can I contact for further advice on school admissions?	<p>You can also contact the Coram Children's Legal Centre for advice on school admissions, in particular in the case of an appeal.</p>
How can I complain or appeal?	<p>There are two main ways in which you can complain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ You have a right of appeal to an independent panel if not given a place at a school of your choice and you wish to

contest the allocation. Your local authority can tell you how this process works and the timescales for having your appeal heard.

- You can also object to an independent Schools Adjudicator <http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolsadjudicator> if you feel that the local authority or a school is doing something unlawful or unfair in its arrangements.

In cases of maladministration (this is where a public body has not followed a correct procedure) and you have a complaint against your local authority and it is not resolved to your satisfaction, you might be able to make a further complaint to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#)

In the case of an Academy, your complaint would be to the [Education Funding Agency](#), which acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education



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