

Guidance

Opening, closing and making changes to schools

Schools adjudicator decisions on opening, closing and making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools.

From:

[Office of the Schools Adjudicator](#)

Published

16 August 2022

Last updated

10 June 2026 — [See all updates](#)



[Get emails about this page](#)

Applies to England

Contents

- [Opening a maintained school](#)
- [Closing a maintained school](#)
- [Significant changes to maintained schools](#)
- [Foundation proposals](#)

Opening a maintained school

The adjudicator decides on proposals to open a new school under section 10 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) ('the EIA 2006') where the local authority:

- will have a role in the foundation of a proposed foundation school in one of the ways set out in paragraph 10(2) of Schedule 2 to the EIA 2006
- is the proposer of a new school under section 10 of the EIA 2006
- does not decide proposals for a new school under section 10 of the EIA 2006 within 2 months of the end of the representation period

It also makes decisions on proposals where:

- the Diocesan Board of Education of any Church of England diocese, or the bishop of any Roman Catholic diocese, any part of which is comprised in the local authority area appeals the decision
- the proposers of a new school refer a decision to reject proposals made by the local authority

Find out more from the statutory guidance on [opening and closing maintained schools](#) (before 1 September 2026) or [opening new schools](#) (after 1 September 2026).

Closing a maintained school

The adjudicator decides on proposals to close a school where:

- the local authority does not decide proposals to close a school within 2 months of the end of the representation period
- the Diocesan Board of Education of any Church of England diocese or the bishop of any Roman

Catholic diocese any part of which is in the area of the local authority appeals the decision of a local authority

- the governing board or trustees of a voluntary or foundation school refer the decision of a local authority

Find out more from the statutory guidance on [opening and closing maintained schools](#) (before 1 September 2026) or [closing maintained schools](#) (after 1 September 2026).

To make a referral, email the relevant documents as set out in the statutory guidance to:

osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk.

Significant changes to maintained schools

These changes include:

- enlargement of premises (expansion)
- changes to special schools and special education needs provision, including change in number of pupils in a special school
- change of age range
- transfer to a new site
- changes of category
- single sex school becoming co-education (or vice versa)
- changes to boarding provision

The adjudicator decides these proposals where:

- the local authority does not decide proposals within 2 months of the end of the representation period
- the proposal is related to a proposal which must be decided by the adjudicator

- the Diocesan Board of Education of any Church of England diocese, or the bishop of any Roman Catholic diocese any part of which is in the area of the local authority appeal the decision of a local authority
- the governing board or foundation of a voluntary or foundation school refer the decision of a local authority

Find out more from the statutory guidance on [making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools](#).

To make a referral, email the relevant documents as set out in the statutory guidance to:

osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk.

Foundation proposals

Local authorities may refer a proposal for a foundation school to acquire a foundation trust or a foundation majority to the adjudicator if it considers the proposal to have a negative effect on the standards at the school. This must be done during the 4-week representation period.

To make a referral, email the relevant documents as set out in the statutory guidance to:

osa.team@schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk.

Published 16 August 2022

Last updated 10 June 2026 —

10 June 2026

Updated to reflect recently published guidance on opening new schools and closing maintained schools.

16 August 2022

First published.

 [Get emails about this page](#)

[↑ Contents](#)

Explore the topic

[Running and managing a school](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. [Please fill in this survey \(opens in a new tab\)](#).

Cancel



Services and information

[Benefits](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

Government activity

[Departments](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#)

[Terms and conditions](#) [Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#)

[Government Digital Service](#)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© [Crown copyright](#)