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Academic year 2026/27

Primary and secondary school applications and offers

Preference data including applications and offers made for secondary and primary school entry each September, and the proportion which received preferred offers

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Headline facts and figures

First preference rate - primary 92.4% Down from 92.6% in 2025 ► First preference rate - primary	?
First preference rate - secondary 83.6% Up from 83.5% in 2025 ► First preference rate - secondary	?
Preferred offer rate - primary 98.7% Up from 98.6% in 2025 ► Preferred offer rate - primary	?
Preferred offer rate - secondary 96.4% Up from 96.3% in 2025 ► Preferred offer rate - secondary	?

The proportion of applicants at both primary and secondary stage who receive an offer of their first preference school, or one of their preferred schools, varies very little year on year. For entry in September 2026, secondary applicants were slightly more and primary applicants slightly less likely than in 2025 to be offered their first preference school.

Primary school applicants continue to be more likely to be offered their first preference school than secondary applicants (92.4% and 83.6% respectively). Primary and secondary applicants are both very likely to be offered one of their preferred schools (98.7% and 96.4% respectively).

The offer rates should be considered in the context of continuing changes in the volume of primary and secondary applications. Primary applications continued to fall, by 1.6% since 2025, and the number of places local authorities made available also fell, by 1.4%. Secondary applications also fell, by 1.3% since 2025, as did places, by 0.2%.

Local authorities administer separate processes for primary and secondary applications and offers. We present the figures separately because they are distinct exercises and can show different trends; for example, changes in birthrate were apparent in primary applications several years before they had an impact on secondary pupil numbers, and primary preference rates have been higher than secondary since 2015/16. However, if combined into a single rate, in 2026 the overall first preference rate (87.8%) was 0.1ppt lower than in 2025 and the preferred offer rate (97.5%) was 0.1 ppt higher. The 0.1ppt increase in preferred offer rate makes this the highest rate since the data collection began in 2014/15.

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Background

These statistics provide the number of applications and offers made for primary and secondary school entry in September 2026, and the proportion which received preferred offers.

The data is collected from local authorities. The offers were made, and data collected, based on the national offer days of 2 March 2026 (secondary) and 16 April 2026 (primary).

Figures are provided at national, regional and local authority level. A time series is provided from 2014, when primary data was first collected following the inaugural primary national offer day.

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Primary phase preferred offer rates

The proportion of primary applicants receiving an offer of their first choice school decreased slightly from 92.6% in 2025 to 92.4% in 2026. This was the second consecutive fall following a series of small year on year increases in the rate since the 2020 figure of 90.2% and is the lowest rate since 2022.

The proportion of primary applicants receiving an offer of one of their top three preferred schools was 98.4%, a slight increase from 98.3% in 2025 but still a little lower than the peak of 98.6% in 2024.

Chart

Table

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Timeseries of primary key preference rates

	Primary			
	Number of applications received	First preference rate	Top three preference rate	Preferred offer rate
2026/27	541,547	92.4%	98.4%	98.7%
2025/26	550,270	92.6%	98.3%	98.6%
2024/25	555,643	93.2%	98.6%	98.8%
2023/24	568,560	92.5%	98.3%	98.6%
2022/23	576,147	92.2%	98.1%	98.4%
2021/22	580,771	91.8%	98.0%	98.4%
2020/21	612,146	90.2%	97.3%	97.8%
2019/20	608,957	90.6%	97.5%	98.0%
2018/19	608,180	91.0%	97.7%	98.1%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Source: 2026 primary application and offer collection

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Likelihood of preference being met is a function of factors such as school quality, travel patterns, demand for school places in the area, and the availability of places. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

More information about school capacity and pupil place planning can be found in the statistical publication ‘School capacity’ - the most recently published figures for data as of May 2025 (published March 2026) are available here: [School capacity, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

Nationally, the number of pupils requiring a reception place in primary schools has been falling in recent years. The number peaked at 641,572 in 2016/17. The number of places available peaked at 713,090 in 2019.

This national picture masks regional variation, with some London local authorities in particular experiencing decreases in the number of pupils requiring school places.

Chart

Table

► Export options

The number of places available and the number of applications received for primary places between 2014/15 and 2026/27

	Primary	
	Number of admission places available	Number of applications received
2026/27	673,785	541,547
2025/26	683,507	550,270
2024/25	692,447	555,643
2023/24	699,336	568,560
2022/23	704,378	576,147
2021/22	709,911	580,771
2020/21	710,778	612,146
2019/20	713,090	608,957
2018/19	712,196	608,180
2017/18	709,548	620,330
2016/17	709,143	641,572
2015/16	700,352	636,279
2014/15	689,175	623,526

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Source: 2026 primary application and offer collection

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Regional variation in primary school offer rates

As with secondary offers, there is substantial regional variation in primary school first preference, top three preference and preferred offer rates by region.

Primary applicants in the North East and the East Midlands were most likely to receive an offer of their top preference school in 2026 - more than 95% did so. Rates in Yorkshire and The Humber and the South West were also high, at more than 94%. Applicants in London were least likely - 85.0% in Inner London and 90.0% in Outer London authorities. However, as with secondary applications, those living in London typically both experience and are offered wider choice than applicants in other parts of the country. London local authorities generally allow applicants to list up to six preferred schools, compared with three in most other regions. This reflects the greater likelihood that those living in London are practically able to access a greater number of schools. This wider choice is associated with a reduced likelihood of specific preferences being met.

This pattern shows little variation over time. Since 2019, applicants in the North East have experienced the highest first preference rates, with first preference rates consistently above 94.0%. Applicants in London have experienced the lowest, being the only region with first preference rates generally below 90.0%.

► Export options

First, top three and preferred offer rates for primary applications by region 2026/27

		2026/27		
		First preference rate	Top three preference rate	Preferred offer rate
Primary	North East	95.8%	98.7%	98.8%
	North West	92.0%	98.2%	98.3%
	Yorkshire and The Humber	94.4%	98.8%	98.9%
	East Midlands	95.6%	99.3%	99.4%
	West Midlands	93.1%	98.6%	98.8%
	East of England	91.7%	98.2%	98.5%
	South East	91.6%	98.5%	98.7%
	South West	94.3%	98.9%	98.9%
	Inner London	85.0%	95.3%	97.3%
	Outer London	90.0%	97.8%	98.7%

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Source: 2026 primary application and offer collection

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Primary phase places available and applications received by region 2026/27

		2026/27	
		Number of admission places available	Number of applications received
Primary	North East	32,792	24,679
	North West	92,947	74,288
	Yorkshire and The Humber	68,234	53,132
	East Midlands	60,904	45,941
	West Midlands	74,963	61,142
	East of England	76,886	63,375
	South East	106,119	89,185
	South West	63,708	49,207
	Inner London	31,711	25,806
	Outer London	65,521	54,792

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Source: 2026 primary application and offer collection

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Secondary phase preferred offer rates

The proportion of secondary applicants receiving an offer of their first choice school increased slightly from 83.5% in 2025 to 83.6% in 2026.

The proportion of secondary applicants receiving an offer of one of their top three preferred schools was 95.0%, a slight increase from 94.9% in 2025.

These figures have fluctuated slightly over recent years and are currently at their highest levels since 2017/18.

Chart

Table

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Timeseries of secondary key preference rates

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	Secondary			
	Number of applications received	First preference rate	Top three preference rate	Preferred offer rate
2026/27	589,747	83.6%	95.0%	96.4%
2025/26	597,670	83.5%	94.9%	96.3%
2024/25	609,576	82.9%	94.6%	96.0%
2023/24	619,991	82.6%	94.1%	95.6%
2022/23	614,059	83.3%	94.4%	95.8%
2021/22	605,206	81.1%	93.4%	95.5%
2020/21	600,352	82.2%	93.9%	95.6%
2019/20	604,496	80.9%	93.0%	94.8%
2018/19	582,761	82.1%	93.8%	95.5%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Source: 2026 secondary application and offer collection

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Likelihood of preference being met is a function of factors such as school quality, travel patterns, demand for school places in the area, and the availability of places. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

More information about school capacity and pupil place planning can be found in the statistical publication ‘School capacity’ - the most recently published figures for data as of May 2025 (published March 2026) are available here: [School capacity, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

The primary school peak in applications in 2016 rolled forwards to create a peak in pupils requiring secondary school places in 2023, when 619,991 applications were received. That coincided with a peak of 655,911 in places available. Since then there have been year-on-year decreases in both the number of secondary pupils applying for places and the number of places available, although the decrease in applications has been proportionally larger than the decrease in available places.

This national picture masks regional variation, with some London local authorities in particular experiencing decreases in the number of pupils requiring school places.

Chart

Table

► Export options

The number of places available and the number of applications submitted for secondary places between 2014/15 and 2026/27

	Secondary	
	Number of admission places available	Number of applications received
2026/27	650,300	589,747
2025/26	651,810	597,670
2024/25	654,934	609,576
2023/24	655,911	619,991
2022/23	653,490	614,059
2021/22	647,164	605,206
2020/21	644,962	600,352
2019/20	644,395	604,496
2018/19	630,712	582,761
2017/18	622,516	562,487
2016/17	613,394	548,006
2015/16	607,928	533,314
2014/15	600,903	521,274

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Source: 2026 secondary application and offer collection

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Regional variation in secondary school offer rates

There is substantial regional variation in secondary school first preference, top three preference and preferred offer rates by region.

Secondary applicants in the North East and South West are most likely to receive an offer of their top preference school or one of their preferred schools. Applicants in London are least likely. However, those living in London both typically experience and are offered wider choice than applicants in other parts of the country. London local authorities generally allow applicants to list up to six preferred schools, compared with three in most other regions. This reflects the greater likelihood that those living in London are practically able to access a greater number of schools. This wider choice is associated with a reduced likelihood of specific preferences being met.

This pattern shows little variation over time. Since 2019, applicants in the North East and South West have experienced the highest first preference rates, with first preference rates consistently between 86% and 91%. Applicants in London have experienced the lowest, being the only region with first preference rates consistently below 75%.

► Export options

First, top three and preferred offer rates for secondary applications by region 2026/27

		2026/27		
		First preference rate	Top three preference rate	Preferred offer rate
Secondary	North East	90.2%	97.0%	97.3%
	North West	85.7%	95.9%	96.5%
	Yorkshire and The Humber	88.1%	96.2%	96.9%
	East Midlands	87.1%	96.5%	97.0%
	West Midlands	82.4%	94.7%	96.6%
	East of England	85.0%	95.3%	96.6%
	South East	82.8%	95.1%	96.4%
	South West	90.9%	97.7%	97.9%
	Inner London	70.0%	90.4%	94.3%
	Outer London	70.5%	89.2%	94.3%

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Source: 2026 secondary application and offer collection

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Secondary phase places available and applications by region 2026/27

	Secondary	
	2026/27	
	Number of admission places available	Number of applications received
North East	28,243	25,179
North West	92,682	83,360
Yorkshire and The Humber	66,694	60,449
East Midlands	58,469	53,008
West Midlands	71,057	64,945
East of England	73,745	66,477
South East	105,505	97,711
South West	60,686	53,201
Inner London	30,214	25,880
Outer London	63,005	59,537

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Source: 2026 secondary application and offer collection

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Further information available

This release concentrates on the headline figures for the proportion of children receiving their first preference or a preferred offer. It also provides some context on the number of places available and local authorities which have selective schools within their secondary state-funded provision.

Underlying data files available in the data catalogue provide more information including:

- the proportion of children for whom a preferred offer was not received
- the proportion of applicants who were provided with offers within or outside their home authority
- the number of non-applicants who were made an offer
- application numbers and outcomes grouped according to whether or not the local authority provides selective secondary schools (grammar schools)

In addition, the release also provides a timeseries of school level figures which shows the number of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and total preferences expressed, and the number of offers, also by 1st, 2nd, 3rd and total preferences. Contextual data from sources external to the applications and offers data collections can be sourced from the [Get Information About Schools \(GIAS\) website \(opens in new tab\)](#). The school level file can mainly be linked to GIAS files using school LAEstab. Note that some schools cannot be found on GIAS by reference to the LAEstab as given in the school level file. A small number of schools are

identified for application purposes by a dummy code rather than their official identifier. This may be, for example, because the school has not opened yet and has not been allocated its final identifier or because it wishes to identify separately applications to a particular site, phase or stream of education.

This school level data is found in 'all supporting files' within the 'explore data and files' section of this publication. Detailed information on this data, including the processing undertaken and how it can be interpreted, is found in the 'School level data' section of the methodology document. Specific data quality issues are recorded in the 'Data quality' section.

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Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Primary and secondary school applications and offers statistics and data:

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