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Department for Education

Reporting year 2026

Admission appeals in England

Appeals submitted by parents against their child not getting an offer to a preferred primary or secondary school for the start of the academic year.

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Published

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Headline facts and figures

7,600 appeals were heard relating to primary school places for entry in 2026, representing 1.0% of new admissions. The rate has fallen in recent years as has the number of admissions, from approximately 755k to 734k between 2025 and 2026. Both the number of admissions and the number of appeals are the lowest since the series began in 2016.

1,100 primary appeals were successful, representing 15.0% of those heard. This is the lowest success rate since the series began, and a fall from the high of 19.7% in 2019.

27,100 appeals were heard relating to secondary school places for 2026, representing 3.6% of new admissions. This was a decrease from 2025, when 29,600 (3.9% of new admissions) appeals were heard. The total number of secondary admissions fell to approximately 743k from approximately 757k for places in 2025.

5,300 secondary appeals were successful, representing 19.5% of those heard. There has been a trend for secondary appeals to be less successful over time, with the success rate declining from 26.3% in 2016 to 19.5% in 2026.

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Background

These statistics provide information about appeals made following the refusal of a school place application.

Most appeals are made when an applicant has not received an offer, via the annual coordinated admissions process, of a place at their first preference school for entry into primary or secondary school. However, appeals relating to other transfers at the start of the school year are also included. Appeals relating to ‘in-year’ admissions are not included.

Appeals relating to community and voluntary controlled schools are collected as aggregated totals by local authorities. Academy, foundation and voluntary aided schools provide school level appeal figures via the spring school census.

The latest data covers appeals relating to admissions at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year (reporting year 2026). The appeals must have been lodged with the appropriate admissions authority by 1 September 2025. A comparable time series back to the 2015/2016 academic year (reporting year 2016) is provided. The date referred to in the text is the reporting year.

The figures detail the number of appeals lodged, heard (by an appeals panel) and successful. Rates for appeals lodged and heard are calculated against an estimate of the total number of relevant new admissions based on school census data. The rate of successful appeals is calculated as the number successful divided by the number heard.

The figures are provided by school phase, with primary schools split into infant and other primary classes. The data is also presented by school governance type and at national, regional and local authority level.

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Appeals lodged

Applicants can lodge appeals for any school they have not been awarded a place in. Appeals can be withdrawn; for example, because the child has been offered a place at the school via the waiting list.

The text of this release refers mainly to the number of appeals which reach the stage of being heard by the appropriate authority. Figures for appeals lodged can be found in files in the data catalogue and via the table tool.

In 2026, 12,300 primary appeals were lodged (equating to approximately 1.7% of total primary admissions), and 7,600 (approximately 1.0% of admissions) were heard by an appeals panel. At secondary school phase, 34,800 appeals were lodged (approximately 4.7% of secondary admissions) and 27,100 (approximately 3.6%) were heard.

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Appeals by school type

Foundation schools had the highest rate of appeals heard in 2026 at 2.6%. The rate for foundation schools has varied from 1.9% in 2017 to 2.7% in 2024. Before 2026, academies had the highest rates of appeals heard, with the rate varying from 2.8% in 2022 and 2025 to 3.6% in 2020. In 2026 academies had the joint second highest rate of appeals (with voluntary aided schools) at 2.5%.

Foundation schools had the highest rate of successful appeals in 2026, at 26.8% of appeals heard. Historically, foundation schools have consistently had the highest rates of successful appeals, with the rate varying from 24.1% in 2025 to 29.7% in 2016. By contrast, at 14.8% the successful appeal rate for community and voluntary controlled schools is the lowest it has been since 2021 and the rate has never risen above its peak of 19.1% in 2018.

As the proportion of schools that are academies continues to grow, the proportion of appeals accounted for by academies has increased year on year. In 2026, 71.3% of appeals heard were for places in academies compared with 70.5% in 2025 and 69.5% in 2024.

This data looks across school phases and does not take account of differences in governance type by phase which may explain some variation; for example, if primary schools are more likely to be community and voluntary controlled than secondary.

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Number of appeals heard, as a percentage of estimated admissions, and number and percentage of appeals heard that were successful 2026

	2026			
	Appeals heard by an appeals panel	Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	Successful appeals	Successful appeals (percentage)
Academy	24,743	2.5	4,698	19.0
Community and voluntary controlled	6,125	1.8	906	14.8
Foundation	1,337	2.6	358	26.8
Voluntary aided	2,506	2.5	452	18.0
Total	34,711	2.4	6,414	18.5

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Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Primary appeals

Primary and infant classes

Primary admissions and appeals are split between infant (reception and years one and two) and other primary classes. Restrictions embodied in the The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 (opens in new tab) require infant classes to be limited to 30 children apart from a number of lawful exceptions. This reduces the possibilities of appeals for these year groups.

Parents and carers are accordingly less likely to lodge appeals for these year groups (1.3% of admissions vs 3.6% for older primary year groups), less likely to pursue them to a hearing (0.8% vs 2.2%) and less likely to experience a successful outcome (8.1% vs 26.4%). The rates of appeals lodged and appeals heard from infant class entries remained unchanged between 2025 and 2026 - the reduction in the overall primary rates is the result of reductions in the rates of appeals lodged and heard for older primary groups. The number of admissions fell between 2025 and 2026 for both primary groups, and the number of appeals lodged and heard has also reduced over the period for both groups. The success rate has also fallen for both groups.

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Primary school admissions appeals lodged and heard, and as a percentage of estimated admissions, and the number and percentage successful, by type of primary class 2026

	2026		
	Primary (infant classes)	Other primary classes	Primary
Admissions	604,007	129,633	733,640
Admission appeals lodged by parents	7,671	4,659	12,330
Admission appeals lodged by parents (percentage)	1.3	3.6	1.7
Appeals heard by an appeals panel	4,757	2,870	7,627
Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	0.8	2.2	1.0
Successful appeals	387	759	1,146
Successful appeals (percentage)	8.1	26.4	15.0

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Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Primary appeals over time

The proportion of appeals heard decreased from 2.6% in 2016 to 1.0% in 2026. The proportion of appeals that were successful was at a low of 15.0% in 2026 compared with a high of 19.7% in 2019, having fluctuated over the intervening period.

Note that the underlying data gives breakdowns by primary sub-group. In light of relatively small numbers and methodology changes in 2025, caution is advised when comparing the 2025 onward rates for other (non-infant) primary appeals lodged and heard with earlier years. See the methodology document for explanation of how estimates of admission numbers have been derived for purposes of calculating rates in 2025.

▶ Export options

Number and rate of primary appeals heard and number and proportion of those heard that were successful, 2016 to 2026

	Primary								
	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2
Admissions	733,640	754,955	780,187	788,205	795,146	802,673	812,953	815,051	82
Appeals heard by an appeals panel	7,627	8,999	10,238	9,628	9,672	11,239	12,465	14,086	1
Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.7	
Successful appeals	1,146	1,595	1,848	1,580	1,667	1,823	2,310	2,779	
Successful appeals (percentage)	15.0	17.7	18.1	16.4	17.2	16.2	18.5	19.7	

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Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Geographic variations in primary appeals

There is some regional variation in rates of primary appeals heard and success rates. In 2026 the South West region had the lowest rate of appeals heard (0.6%) and a relatively high success rate at 21.5%. Conversely, North East region had the highest success rate at 22.6% and a mid-range rate of appeals heard at 0.9%.

London was low on both measures - the appeal heard rate across London local authorities was 0.7% and the success rate was the lowest of any region at 4.1%.

The overall pattern of regional variation between 2016 and 2026 is consistent. North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, East Midlands and West Midlands have been the regions with the highest rates of primary appeals heard and London has generally had the lowest. North East, Yorkshire and The Humber and South West regions have generally had the highest successful primary appeal rates, and London has had the lowest.

Each year a small number of local authorities hear no primary appeals. City of London has only one primary school with around 30 admissions annually and hears appeals rarely. In 2026 North East Lincolnshire, Rutland and Torbay also recorded no primary appeals heard. Of those that recorded hearing at least one appeal, 22 LAs recorded no successful appeals. These included Hackney (29 appeals heard), Lambeth (42), Tower Hamlets (23), Brent (21), Haringey (33), Stockport (33) and Windsor and Maidenhead (37). The others had all heard fewer than 20 appeals each.

Isles of Scilly has one all-through school which accepts all pupils resident on the islands. The local authority has not been required historically to submit data on appeals as none are ever submitted.

For data on geographical variations in appeal rates see the featured tables generated from data file ‘Admissions

appeals by geography - 2016 to 2026' or use the table tool to create bespoke table views.

Chart | Table

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Rates of primary appeals heard and proportion of primary appeals heard that were successful by region 2021 to 2026

		2026		2025		202
		Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	Successful appeals (percentage)	Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	Successful appeals (percentage)	Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)
Primary	**North East**	0.9	22.6	0.6	34.3	0.6
	North West	1.5	16.3	1.9	19.4	2.3
	Yorkshire and The Humber	1.3	22.1	1.6	23.2	2.1
	East Midlands	1.5	13.8	1.8	15.8	1.8
	West Midlands	1.1	13.7	1.6	13.9	1.6

Midlands					
East of England	0.9	16.0	0.9	19.0	1.0
London	0.7	4.1	0.7	6.7	0.6
South East	0.9	13.0	0.9	16.8	0.9
South West	0.6	21.5	0.7	24.9	0.8

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Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Secondary appeals

Secondary appeals over time

Overall, the proportion of appeals heard was similar in 2016 and 2026 (3.6%), although it rose as high as 4.9% in 2020 before falling back over subsequent years. The proportion of appeals that were successful has decreased fairly consistently from 26.3% in 2016 to 19.5% in 2026.

▶ Export options

Number and rate of secondary appeals heard and number and proportion of those heard that were successful, 2016 to 2026

	Secondary								
	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2
Admissions	743,055	756,707	757,189	747,182	729,916	720,280	724,747	695,861	68
Appeals heard by an appeals panel	27,084	29,640	32,107	30,379	28,687	29,871	35,648	31,769	2
Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.9	4.6	

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appeals
(percentage)

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Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Geographic variations in secondary appeals

There is some regional variation in rates of secondary appeals heard and success rates. In 2026 the South West region had the lowest rate of appeals heard (2.2%) and the second highest success rate at 23.8%. The North West region had the highest rate of appeals heard (5.2%) and a mid-range success rate of 19.1%. The highest success rate was 32.7% in North East region, and the lowest was London at 8.3%.

The overall pattern of regional variation between 2016 and 2026 is fairly consistent. North West has been consistently the region with the highest rates of secondary appeals heard, usually followed by South East. East of England and South West have had consistently the lowest. The North East and South West generally have the highest successful secondary appeal rates. London has always had the lowest since 2016, with the successful secondary appeal rate for Inner London mostly lower than Outer London.

City of London has no secondary schools and therefore records no secondary appeals. Isles of Scilly has one all-through school which accepts all pupils resident on the islands. The local authority has not been required historically to submit data on appeals as none are ever submitted. In 2026, Rutland also recorded having no secondary appeals heard. Only Haringey recorded having no successful secondary appeals, from 65 heard.

For data on geographical variations in appeal rates see the featured tables generated from data file ‘Admissions appeals by geography - 2016 to 2026’ or use the table tool to create bespoke table views.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Rates of secondary appeals heard and proportion of secondary appeals heard that were successful by region 2020 to 2026

		2026		2025		2
		Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	Successful appeals (percentage)	Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage)	Successful appeals (percentage)	Appeals heard by an appeals panel (percentage
Secondary	**North East**	2.6	32.7	3.1	27.6	3.0
	North West	5.2	19.1	5.9	19.3	5.9
	Yorkshire and The Humber	3.9	22.2	3.7	23.8	4.4
	East Midlands	4.1	21.6	4.8	23.5	5.3
	West Midlands	3.8	14.3	4.3	15.7	4.8
	East of England	2.3	19.2	2.7	20.7	2.7
	London	2.9	8.3	2.8	10.1	3.4
	South	4.8	23.6	4.7	21.5	5.0

South East	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
South West	2.2	23.8	2.5	25.3	2.7

Show full screen table

Data symbols

Source: Admissions appeals collection and spring school census 2016 to 2026

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Further information available

This release concentrates on the headline figures for the proportion of appeals heard and which were successful by school phase. However, the underlying data provides more information including:

- The governance of the school being appealed by school phase
- The number and proportion of appeals initially lodged
- A full list of local authority and regional figures

For data on the outcome of applications for primary and secondary places via the local authority applications and offers process, see the publication, Primary and secondary school applications and offers.

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Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Admission appeals in England statistics and data:

Admission appeals statistics team
Email: admissions.appeals@education.gov.uk
Contact name: Ann Claytor

Press office
If you have a media enquiry:
Telephone: 020 7783 8300

Public enquiries
If you have a general enquiry about the Department for Education (DfE) or education:
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