

Some frequently asked questions – April 2016

Q1: How do parents know the number of places available at a particular school?

A1: All Nottinghamshire schools have a published admission number (PAN). This is the number of places that must be offered in each relevant age group in the school.

Q2: What happens if a school receives fewer applications than the PAN?

A2: If there are fewer applications than places available, all applicants are offered a place.

Q3: What happens if there are more applications than places available for the school?

A3: When there are more applications than places available, the admission oversubscription criteria are used to decide the order in which places can be allocated.

Q4: How can parents find out about the oversubscription criteria?

A4: The oversubscription criteria for Nottinghamshire community and voluntary controlled schools are available in **Admissions to schools: Guide for parents**. The admission criteria for own admission authority schools (including academy, free, studio and voluntary aided schools) are summarised in **Admissions to schools: School information**.

Q5: Are parents guaranteed a place at the school they want?

A5: The School Admissions Code 2014 says that parents may express a preference for any state funded school but admission authorities must not give any guarantees that a preference will be met.

Q6: Will a place always be allocated for a child at the school where a sibling already attends?

A6: The oversubscription criteria for Nottinghamshire community and voluntary controlled schools give high priority to catchment siblings (criterion 2) but there is no guarantee that there will always be a place available for siblings in the same school.

Q7: How many schools can parents apply for?

A7: Nottinghamshire residents can list up to 4 preferences on their application.

Q8: What happens if all the schools listed by the parents are full?

A8: If it is not possible to offer any of the preferences, the County Council may make an alternative offer of a school place. The School Admissions Code 2014 says that, if the local authority is unable to offer a place at any of the parents' preferred schools it must, if there are places available, offer a place at another school.

Q9: Will the alternative offer be for a school close to the home address?

A9: The alternative offer is made to the nearest school with places available after all on-time preferences have been considered. It may be at a distance from the home address.

Q10: If parents put only one school on their application, does this increase their chances of getting a place at that school?

A10: No. By making only one preference, parents increase the risk that they will be allocated an alternative offer at a school which may be a greater distance away.

Q11: What happens if parents apply late or want to change their preferences?

A11: Any applications received after the closing date, including changes of preferences, are considered late and will be processed after all on-time applications have been considered.

Q12: Can parents put their child's name on a waiting list for a school?

A12: Children are placed on a waiting list for every school where the parents' application is refused by the admission authority. Being on the waiting list does not affect the parents' right to go to independent appeal and/or make additional late preferences.

Q13: If a place becomes available, does it go to the child who has been longest on the waiting list?

A13: No. Waiting lists are held in admission oversubscription criteria order. The School Admissions Code says that priority on a waiting list must not be given to children based on the date their application was received or their name was added to the list. This means that a child's place on a waiting list can change as places are allocated and/or additional late preferences are added.

Q14: Will parents be offered their preferred school if they ask their MP or local councillor to intervene?

A14: No. All places have to be offered according to the determined admission arrangements to ensure fairness and consistency. This is required by the School Admissions Code.

Q15: Do parents have a right of appeal against all admission decisions?

A15: Parents have the right to go to independent appeal for any school where their application is refused by the admission authority.

Q16: Does going to appeal guarantee that parents will get a place at their preferred school?

A16: No. The appeals panel will consider all the verbal and written evidence provided by the parents and the admission authority before making a decision about whether the needs of the child outweigh any prejudice to efficient education and/or use of resources at the school.

Q17: Are there any rules about who can be on appeals panels?

A17: Admission appeals have to comply with the statutory requirements set out in the School Admission Appeals Code, including guidance on membership of appeals panels.

Q18: Are headteachers allowed to support an individual child's appeal for their school?

A18: No. The School Admission Appeals Code says that panels must not allow headteachers or other representatives of schools (including governors and special educational needs coordinators) to support individual appeals for places at the hearing itself, or by providing letters of support for appellants.

Q19: If the appeal is refused, can parents have the decision reversed by asking their MP or local councillor to intervene?

A19: No. The outcome of the independent appeal is binding on both parties.

Q20: What if parents think that the appeal was not properly conducted?

A20: Parents can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman if they believe that the appeal was not properly conducted.