

THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED, VOLUNTARY AIDED, ACADEMY & FREE PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

The purpose of this document is to provide information for Elected Members, Governing Bodies, and other Local Authorities, the Diocese, Parish Councils, and parents on the admission arrangements for community / voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, academy and free schools both primary / secondary sectors in Stockton-on-Tees for the school year 2023/24.

The updated School Admissions Code (the Code) was updated in September 2021 and applies to admissions to all maintained schools and Academies. The Code is made under section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ('SSFA 1998'). The Code has been made following consultation under Section 85 (2) of the SSFA 1998 and after being laid before Parliament for forty days. Admission authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements for 2023 comply with the mandatory provision of the Code. The Admission arrangements for Stockton on Tees, laid out in this report for 2023/24, are compliant.

CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS
(Community, Voluntary Aided, Academies and Free
Schools)

Includes:

Applications for Primary Schools
Applications for Secondary Schools
In year transfer requests

2023/24

Introduction

1. The 1998 Act, as amended by the Education Act 2002, has introduced new statutory requirements for every Local Authority (LA) to draw up a scheme covering every maintained school in its area. Stockton-On-Tees LA has drawn up a full co-ordinated admissions scheme for the main rounds for Primary and Secondary applications and 'in year' transfer requests for the academic year 2023/24.

Interpretation

2. In this scheme:

"the LA" means Stockton on Tees Borough Council acting in their capacity as local education authority.

"the LA area" means the area in respect of which the LA is the local education authority.

"the CAF" means Common Application Form.

"primary education" has the same meaning as in section 2(1) of the Education Act 1996.

"secondary education" has the same meaning as in section 2(2) of the Education Act 1996.

"primary school" has the same meaning as in section 5(1) of the Education Act 1996.

"secondary school" has the same meaning as in section 5(2) of the Education Act 1996.

"school" means a community, foundation, or voluntary school (but not a special school) which is maintained by the LA.

"VA schools" means those schools which are voluntary-aided church schools.

"Academy" means a publicly funded state school.

"Free School" means a publicly funded state school.

"admission authority" in relation to a community and voluntary controlled school means the LA and, in relation to a VA schools and Academies, means the governing body of that school.

"determination year" means the academic year (i.e., the period from 1 August to the following 31 July) immediately preceding the offer year. This is the academic year in which admission authorities determine their admission arrangements.

"admission arrangements" means the overall procedure, practices, criteria, and supplementary information to be used in deciding on the allocation of school places and refers to any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered.

"in-year admission" means any application for a place in a school in any year of education that is received after 1 September 2023 except in the case of admission into Reception and Y7 in which case these will be treated as the 'normal' round of admissions up to the end of the Autumn term 2023.

"nearest appropriate school" is defined as the school closest to the home address with places, unless your child is a baptised Catholic then a place would be offered at the nearest Roman Catholic School with places.

Compliance with the Code

3. It is the responsibility of admission authorities to ensure that admission arrangements are compliant with this Code. Where a school is their own admission authority, this responsibility falls to the governing body or Academy Trust.
4. Section 88P of the SSFA 1998 requires local authorities to make reports to the Schools Adjudicator about such matters connected with relevant school admissions as required by the Code.

5. Objections to the admission arrangements of both maintained schools and Academies can be made to the Schools Adjudicator whose decisions are binding and enforceable⁵.
6. The Secretary of State may refer the admission arrangements of any school to the Schools Adjudicator at any time if the Secretary of State considers that they do not or may not comply with the mandatory requirements of this Code or the law.
7. The Schools Adjudicator may investigate the admission arrangements of any school that the Adjudicator considers do not or may not comply with the mandatory requirements of this Code or the law.
8. Any decision of the Schools Adjudicator will be binding on the admission authority. The admission authority **must**, where necessary, revise their admission arrangements to give effect to the Schools Adjudicator's decision within two months of the decision (or by **28 February** following the decision, whichever is sooner), unless an alternative timescale is specified by the Adjudicator. An Adjudicator's determination is binding and enforceable. Where admission authorities fail to implement decisions of the Adjudicator the Secretary of State may direct the admission authority (either the governing body, the local authority, or Academy Trust) to do so under Section 496 or 497 of the Education Act 1996 or the Funding Agreement.
9. The table below sets out the admission authority for each type of school in England.

Type of School	Who is the admission authority?	Who deals with complaints about arrangements?	Who is responsible for arranging / providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at a school?
Academies	Academy Trust	Schools Adjudicator	Academy Trust
Foundation Schools	Governing Body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing Body
Voluntary aided Schools	Governing Body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing Body
Community Schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority
Voluntary Controlled Schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority

Applying for a school place

10. There will be a standard form known as the Common Application Form (CAF) which will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into the reception class for primary school and the first year of secondary education in the determination year. In the main rounds for applications for primary and secondary places, an on-line facility will be set up to enable parents to apply for places online. A separate form known as the 'In-Year Application for a school place or a change of school place' will be available for any applications made for an "in year transfer" into any year group. There is no on-line facility yet although a form can be requested by contacting the School Admissions team via email school.admissions@stockton.gov.uk or by phoning 01642 526605.
11. The on-line application / CAF and 'In-Year Application for a school place or a change of school place' form must be used as a means of expressing one or more preferences for the purposes of section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, by parents permanently resident in the LA area who wish to express a preference for their child:
 - (a) To be admitted to a school within the LA area (including VA schools, Academies and Free School).
 - (b) To be admitted to a school located in another LA's area (including VA schools and Academies).
12. The on-line application / CAF and 'In-Year Application for a school place or a change of school place' form will:

- (a) Invite parents to express up to four preferences (secondary only) by completing the form including, where relevant, any schools outside the LA's area, in rank order of preference.
- (b) Invite parents to give their reasons for each preference.

13. The CAF will:

- (a) Specify a closing date (for the determination year) and where it must be returned.

14. The LA will make appropriate arrangements to ensure:

- (a) That the on-line application / CAF is available on request from the LA and the 'In-Year Application for a school place or a change of school place' form will be available from the LA; and
- (b) That a written explanation of the scheme is available from the LA and on their website.

15. All preferences expressed on the on-line application / CAF are valid applications. The governing body of a VA school / Academy can require parents who wish to nominate, or who have nominated their school on the CAF, to provide additional information on a supplementary form only where the additional information is required for the governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria to the application. Where a supplementary form is required, this will be requested after the VA schools / academies have received information from the LA about who has applied for their schools. Information requested on the supplementary form should be returned by the parent to the individual school by the due date specified by the school.

16. Where a school receives a supplementary form, it will not be regarded as a valid application unless the parent has also completed either the Stockton on Tees on-line application / CAF or, if resident in another area which has a CAF, their home area's common application form, and the school is nominated on it. Where supplementary forms are received directly by VA schools / Academy, the school must inform the LA immediately so it can verify whether a CAF or neighbouring area's CAF has been received from the parent and, if not, contact the parent and ask them to complete one. In these circumstances, the school should also send the LA a copy of the supplementary form if so requested. Under the requirements of the scheme, parents will not be under any obligation to complete an individual school's supplementary form where this is not strictly required for the governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria.

17. Very few Voluntary Aided schools / Academies governing bodies have opted out of the co-ordinated admissions scheme for in year transfers, a list of these schools will be made available for parents by September 2022 on the Stockton website. Parents are still required to complete an application form from the LA and schools need to inform the parents and the LA of the outcome of the request.

Processing of CAFs

18. Completed CAFs (online or paper) should be returned to the LA:

- (a) For secondary schools by the **31 October 2022***. The LA will enter information for all the schools within the Borough onto their system and forward information for applications to VA schools and other LAs during the week commencing the **14 November 2022**.
- (b) Primary schools by the **15 January 2023***. The LA will enter information for all the schools within the Borough onto their system and forward information for applications to VA schools and other LAs during the week commencing **23 January 2023**.
- (c) Online applications – the facility to apply for a school place on-line will be open during the time for application – **12 September 2022** to midnight on the **31 October 2022** for secondary and for primary **7 November 2022** to midnight on the **15 January 2023**.

**If the closing date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, any applications received through the post, which includes the post box in the Municipal Buildings, on the Monday morning after that date, will be classed as on time. Any others received after this will be classed as late.*

Allocation of places

19. Places will be allocated using the Equal Ranking Scheme* for Primary and Secondary by all admission authorities within Stockton on Tees.

**Equal Ranking means that all the preferences written on the CAF or on-line form will be considered as a separate application for each school.*

SECONDARY ADMISSIONS - Determining offers in response to the CAF

20. The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the CAFs. The LA will only make any decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the CAF where:
- (a) It is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority, or.
 - (b) An applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or.
 - (c) An applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.
21. The LAs system for online applications will become 'live' from the **12 September 2022** to midnight on the **31 October 2022** with the closing date for return of CAFs also the **31 October 2022**.
22. **During the week commencing 14 November 2022** the LA will notify the admission authority for each of the schools of every application that has been made for that school. Where parents have requested a place at a school outside of the LA area, the information will be forwarded to the relevant admission authority/authorities. VA schools and Academies to plan to gather information required from parents and set up admission committees for allocation of places.
23. Week commencing **2 January 2023** - VA schools, other LAs and Academies, inform LA of allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.
24. The LA compares lists and considers all preferences from the parent and if first preference is refused then will look to see where 2nd, 3rd or 4th preferences can be accommodated. The lists will be sent back to the VA schools and Academies for their approval before finalising allocations. Liaison will take place with VAs, other LAs and Academies until the allocation of places is resolved for each application, as required.
25. **By the 31 January 2023** - the LA will match ranked lists for all schools and:
- (a) Where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated schools, that school will be allocated to the child.
 - (b) Where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference.
 - (c) Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, they will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy or asked to contact School Admissions for an alternative school.
26. **On 1 March 2023 (or the next working day)** the LA will post letters (2nd class post) to parents to let them know which school has been allocated to their child. If they have applied on-line, they will receive an email on the 1 March or the next working day. The letter will also tell them of their statutory right to appeal if they have been refused a place at their preferred school.

Parents will need to request an appeal form and return to Appeals Administrator, Corporate Administration Service, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, PO Box 11, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1LD within **20 school days upon** receipt of the form.

PRIMARY ADMISSIONS - Determining offers in response to the CAF

27. The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the CAFs. The LA will only make any decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the CAF where:
- (a) It is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority, or.
 - (b) An applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or.
 - (c) An applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parents have nominated.

28. The LAs system for online applications will become 'live' from the **7 November 2022** to midnight on the **15 January 2023 with the closing date for return of CAFs also the 15 January 2023**. Packs for admission to Primary School will be distributed to all parents. Applications are to be made on common application form and all applications returned to LA.

29. **During the week commencing the 30 January 2023** – the LA will notify the admission authority for each of the schools of every application that has been made for that school. Where parents have requested a place at a school outside of the LA area, the information will be forwarded to the relevant Local Authority. After this date all VA schools and Academies plan to gather information required from parents and set up admission committees for allocation of places.

30. **During the week ending the 3 March 2023** VA schools, Academies and other LAs inform the home LA of allocation of places for all applications received in the priority order of their admission policy. Any applications which are refused also need to be listed in order of priority.

The LA compares lists and considers all preferences from the parent and if first preference is refused, look to see where 2nd or 3rd preferences can be accommodated. The lists will be sent back to the VA schools and Academies for their approval before finalising allocations.

Liaison will take place with VA, Academies and other LAs schools until the allocation of places is resolved for each application, as required.

31. **By week commencing the 20 March 2022** - the LA will match ranked lists for all schools and:

- (a) Where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the nominated schools, that school will be allocated to the child.
- (b) Where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the nominated schools, they will be allocated a place at whichever of these is the highest ranked preference.
- (c) Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, they will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy or asked to contact School Admissions for an alternative school.

32. **On the 16 April 2023 (or the next working day)** the LA will post (2nd class) out a letter to parents informing them of their child's allocated school. If they have applied on-line, they will receive an email on the 16 April or next working day. The letter will tell them which school has been allocated and their statutory right to appeal if they have been refused a place at their preferred school.

Parents will need to request an appeal form and return to Appeals Administrator, Corporate Administration Service, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, PO Box 11, Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1LD **within 20 school days upon receipt of the form**.

Secondary & Primary Co-ordinated Admissions timetable 2023/24

SECONDARY	
w/c 12 September 2022	Online applications become live and CAFs and other information to parents.
31 October 2022	Closing date for online applications and for return of CAFs.
w/c 14 November 2022	Lists of applications sent to VA schools, Academies & Free School(s) and other LAs.
w/c 2 January 2023	VA schools, Academies & Free School(s) return full list of applications ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. Other LAs inform LA of preferences they can allocate. Liaison between admission authorities to resolve offers.
31 January 2023	Finalise allocations and further liaison as necessary.
1 March 2023	Or next working day - allocation letters sent out from LA to all parents via 2 nd class post offering places and giving reasons for refusals and right of appeal. Email sent to parents who applied on-line.
May/June 2023	Appeal hearings held.

PRIMARY	
w/c 7 November 2022	Online applications become live and CAFs and other information to parents.
15 January 2023	Closing date for online applications and for return of CAFs.
w/c 23 January 2023	Lists of applications sent to VA schools, Academies & Free School(s) and other LAs.
w/e 3 March 2023	VA schools, Academies & Free School(s) return full list of applications ranked according to their oversubscription criteria. Other LAs inform LA of preferences they can allocate. Liaison between admission authorities to resolve offers.
w/c 20 March 2023	Finalise allocations and further liaison as necessary.
16 April 2023	Or next working day - allocation letters sent out from LA to all parents via 2 nd class post offering places and giving reasons for refusals and right of appeal. Email sent to parents who applied on-line.
June/July 2023	Appeal hearings held

No CAF received by the LA

33. Where no CAF is submitted for primary or secondary school, the child will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy or will receive a letter from the LA requesting that they make contact to discuss further.

Late applications

34. CAFs received after the closing date will be dealt with after all the other applications have been looked at unless there is a good reason, e.g., if a family moves into the area. If that is the case, the application can be considered along with all of those that came in on time if the allocations have not been started.

The LA will continue to co-ordinate applications for admission in September 2023 for any late applications for primary or secondary, received e.g., after the closing date and post offer date up until the start of that school year.

Waiting lists

35. The LA will maintain a waiting list for all oversubscribed maintained Stockton on Tees Schools. The waiting list will be open for all Primary and Secondary schools for the duration of the next academic term (1st September 2023 to 31st December 2023). Places will be allocated, if they become available, in accordance with the LAs published oversubscription criteria.

VA schools, Academies and Free Schools are required to keep a waiting list for at least the Autumn Term of 2023, if places become available at their school, the governing body will allocate places from their own oversubscription criteria and inform the LA. The LA will write to parents informing them of the decision.

36. Where the LA can offer a place to a non-Stockton-on-Tees child from the Waiting List, we will liaise with the home LA, who will write to the parent to confirm the place.

In Year admission to primary & secondary schools

37. Applications for either a primary or a secondary school place outside the normal admissions round are treated as 'in-year' admissions.

38. Requests are regularly received from parents to transfer their child to an alternative school, and it can be for a variety of reasons. In certain cases, it does not always benefit the child or the school and so the Local Authority has laid out procedures which are followed upon receipt of such a request.

39. If you pay your Council Tax to Stockton Borough Council and you want to change your child's school you will need to complete an 'In-Year Application for a school place or a change of school place' form for each child who you want to transfer.

(a) If you are moving away from Stockton to another Local Authority you still need to complete a Stockton transfer form and we will liaise with the other authority. Once they have considered your application, we will contact you with the decision.

(b) If you are moving into the Stockton area you will need to contact your Local Authority for their application form unless you are moving from abroad where, if you contact School Admissions on 01642 526605 or email school.admissions@stockton.gov.uk then a form can be posted or emailed to you.

40. School transfers can take between 5 and 10 school days to complete (were possible) but if there are any issues with the request this can make the process longer.

(a) We will send your transfer form and any other information that you send us to both your current school and your preferred school.

(b) If we receive more than one application on the same day for the same school (that is still maintained by the LA) and year group, we will apply our own over-subscription criteria.

(c) It may be if you have not discussed any concerns with your current school that the Head Teacher requests you attend a meeting before we can process your application any further, as it is not always in your child's best interest to change schools. It is your responsibility to ensure that your child attends their current school until a new school place has been agreed.

41. If you are applying for a Voluntary Aided school or an Academy then their Governing Body or Academy Admissions panel will consider your application and let us know the decision. They may apply their own Admissions Policy to any applications that they have received. We will contact you on their behalf.
42. The School Admissions Code (1 September 2021) added that all 'admission authorities must inform the LA whether they intend to be part of the LA in-year co-ordination scheme. Almost all schools in Stockton have chosen to this.
43. The LA will, on request provide information to prospective parents about the places still available in all schools within the borough.
44. The Code also states that, apart from designated grammar schools, all maintained schools, and academies, including schools designated with a religious character, that have places available **must** offer a place to every child who has applied for one, without condition or the use of any oversubscription criteria, unless admitting the child would prejudice the efficient provision of education or use of resources. For example, admission authorities **must not** refuse to admit a child solely because:
 - (a) they have applied later than other applicants.
 - (b) they are not of the faith of the school in the case of a school designated with a religious character.
 - (c) they have followed a different curriculum at their previous school; or
 - (d) information has not been received from their previous school.
45. Where an applicant is offered a school place following an in-year application, and the offer is accepted, arrangements should be made for the child to start school as soon as possible, particularly where the child is out of school.