

# **IN-YEAR COORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEME FOR SCHOOLS LOCATED IN LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM**

## **Introduction**

The Admissions Code removed the duty on Local Authorities to co-ordinate in-year admissions with effect from September 2013. Hammersmith & Fulham Council has been coordinating in-year admission as **maintaining LA** since September 2013. This scheme sets out the proposed arrangements for coordinating in-year admissions for school located in the borough.

Co-ordination is the most effective way of ensuring that children out of school are tracked and monitored and placed as quickly as possible. This safeguarding element has been a particular strength of in-year coordination since its introduction. Prior to the coordinated scheme, applicants submitted application to individual school of preference. This carried the significant risk of young people 'slipping through the net'.

Hammersmith & Fulham Council proposes to continue coordinating in-year admissions as a maintaining Local Authority for all community schools and any Own Admission Authority (OAA) schools that agree to participate (i.e. academies, Free Schools and voluntary aided schools).

Full details of the coordinated in-year scheme are included in this document but key features are as follows:

- Applicants wanting to apply for schools and academies located in the borough that have signed up to participate in the coordinated scheme must apply on the respective Primary or Secondary Common Application Form. Applicants can name up to six schools.
- Guidance for parents will be provided and the details of all schools located in the borough and their level participation, or not. The coordinated scheme will be made available on the borough's website. These details are subject to change at any point, i.e. if a community school converts to an Academy and will become its own admission authority.
- Residents of the borough wishing to apply for schools located in other boroughs must apply through that borough's in-year arrangements.
- The formal notification of an application made on the In-Year application form would be made by the School Admissions team (referred to in this document as 'the team').

- The team will maintain the waiting lists for all community schools located in the borough.
- OAA schools would continue to administer their own waiting lists and determine whether a place can be offered. Voluntary Aided (VA) schools will retain a supplementary form (for applicants applying for a place on faith grounds).
- It is crucial that the team hold up-to-date information about school vacancies so that correct advice can be provided to parents. Toward this end, schools are required to regularly update roll data on the School Access Module (SAM) to feed into the Local Admissions System (Synergy). The Admissions team will liaise with its schools on a regular basis to ensure this is being done, ensuring correct roll data is held for schools. This initiative is further supported by New Children Missing Education (CME) Regulations that requires **all** school to provide their maintaining LA with new starters and leavers within in 5 school days of a child starting or leaving a school.
- Applications will not be processed until the child is living at the address that will be registered with the school (with the exception of Service families and Crown Servants). School cannot reserve a school place in advance of it being required, unless it is for a limited time to allow for tests or exams to be completed at the current school.
- Applications that meet the Fair Access threshold will be referred in accordance with the Primary Fair Access Protocol or Secondary Far Access Protocol. Each Protocol can be accessed on the Council Website.

As with secondary transfer and primary school reception year entry, unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. Admission authority schools must make arrangements for hearings to take place. Such schools must provide applicants access to an appeal form and arrange with the local authority's Committee Coordinator at the Committee Services on 020 8753 5758 for an appeal hearing.

Appeals for community schools will be coordinated by the School Admissions team.

## **The In-Year Coordinated Scheme** **2020-21**

### **Applications**

1. Applications for children applying for school located in the three boroughs that have signed up to participate in the coordination of in-year admissions will be made on the In-Year Application Form. An online interactive form is available on the Council's website. A form is available for primary and secondary in-year applications.
2. The In-Year form will provide space to name up to six preferences for primary schools or secondary schools located in the borough area in rank order. Parents/carers can add further preferences at any time.
3. The team will notify the Home LA of all in-year applications submitted that are not borough residents and if the child is without a school place. This procedure is to ensure the Home LA has an overview of children without a school place in order to comply with its safeguarding responsibilities.
4. Any preferences made for own admission authority schools located in the borough will be passed to the respective school(s) within 5 school days using a secure means of exchange (usually on a Friday).
5. Where an own admission authority school located in the borough receives a supplementary form, it will advise the parent/carer to complete the Council's In-Year form to formally register their application if the school(s) requested participate in the coordinated scheme.
6. Were an application for a school located in the borough is named on the In-Year form, but does not participate in the coordinated scheme, the applicant will be notified by the team and advised on the application procedure for that school.
7. The team undertakes to carry out address verification for each application submitted. Where it has not been possible to validate an address of an applicant, the team will request evidence of residence and occupancy as appropriate.
8. To prevent fraud, the team will liaise with other Council Services or Government agencies if there is suspicion or evidence that an address is being used that is not the main residence of the child being applied for. Please refer to the School Admissions web page for our Privacy Statement.

9. The team will confirm the status of any resident child for whom it receives an In-Year form stating s/he is a child looked after, became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order, and will notify the Home LA if the child is not resident in the borough.

## **Processing**

8. To determine the availability of places, all maintained school will be required to provide the team, on request, their roll number, vacancies and waiting list numbers for each year group.
9. The team will carry out the following functions to process applications for its schools:
  - i) Where an application is not fully completed, the applicant will be notified the application is invalid until all the information is received.
  - ii) The Team will refer to internal systems and liaise with other council services, where necessary and as appropriate, to validate any current school the child may attend, if the application is a 'School to School' transfer request, or current/most recent education provision has not been provided.
  - iii) The Team will use a secure means to exchange data with its schools and other LAs.

## **Notification of outcome**

10. The Team will aim to notify the outcome of an application made for one of its schools within **10 school days**. If the applicant is a resident of in the borough, and it has not been possible to offer a place at the school(s) applied to, the applicant will be informed as soon as possible and provided with details of alternative schools available, the opportunity to be added to a waiting list and details of their right of appeal. If it has not been possible to make a decision within **10 school days**, the parent/carer will be kept informed of progress.
11. Where an application has been made, and it has not been possible to offer a place for a child resident outside of the borough, the parent will be notified of the outcome of their application, the opportunity to be added to a waiting list and details of their right of appeal. The contact details for the Home LA will be provided in the notification letter.
12. The team will use a formal notification letter to inform of the outcome of the application and indicate, where applicable, that the decision is on behalf of the governing body (for VA schools and academies).

13. Where an offer can be made for a child currently on roll of a school located in the borough, the child's current school will be informed once the parent has indicated that they will be accepting the offer.
14. Where it is evident that more than one school place can be offered, the Team will eliminate all but the highest ranked offer where an applicant has ranked schools in order of preference on the In-Year Form. Any lower preferences will be withdrawn at this point but can be reapplied for at any time.
15. Where it is evident that more than one school place can be offered as a result of liaison with applications made to school(s) in other LAs, the team will contact the parent/carer to establish which offer will be accepted and free up any potential multiple offers.
16. The team will inform the applicant's Home LA of the outcome of the application.

### **Post-offer**

17. The team will request that parents accept or decline the offer of a place within **10 working days** of an offer being made.
18. Where a parent/carer does not respond within this timeframe, the team will make every reasonable effort to contact the parent to find out whether or not they wish to accept the place, and where appropriate liaise with the offered school. Only where the parent fails to respond, the team can demonstrate that every reasonable effort has been made to contact the parent, the offer of a place will be withdrawn.
19. The team will refer the details of any child that is resident in the borough, and any additional information, to the ACE Team (*Attendance (statutory), Child employment and children in entertainment, Elective home education and children missing education*) where an offer of a school place has been rejected or an offer has not been taken up within 4 weeks and it is evident that no alternative provision has been arranged for the child by the parent/carer.
20. The team will refer the details, and any additional information, of any child not resident in the borough to their Home LA in cases where an offer of a school place has been rejected and it is evident that no alternative provision has been arranged for the child by the parent/carer.

### **Waiting Lists**

21. The waiting lists for all the **community** schools located in the borough will be held and administered by the team for all year groups and will be ordered in accordance with the published admission criteria for the respective school. Parents/carers that approach community schools direct, that want to be added to a waiting list, will be required to complete the In-Year form.
22. The majority of **own admission authority schools** located in the borough will maintain their own waiting lists. When a place can be offered, the school will provide the team with the details of the child that they have determined as the next eligible child on the list in accordance with their published admission criteria. The parent/carer will be notified of the offer by the team and on behalf of the governing body. The team administers the waiting for some academies on their behalf and these will be indicated in the guidance notes that accompany the In-Year form.
23. For children not in receipt of education, delay in a straightforward admission of a child to a school where a vacancy has been identified should be avoided. Where possible and the Admissions team will work closely with its schools to place the child on roll as soon as reasonably practical.
24. Children who are subject of a direction by a local authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol must take precedence over those on a waiting list.