

FAQS

Frequently asked questions about school admissions (entry years) in Northumberland

Q. How do I apply for my child's school place?

A. From 12 September 2020 (Middle, High, Secondary) and 1 November 2020 (Reception) onwards you can apply for your child's school place online at admissions.northumberland.gov.uk If you have any difficulties in applying please note that the Citizen Portal only works with Windows Explorer Version 10 and above, or Chrome, or Firefox or on mobile devices. If you are having difficulties please make sure your device has the most up to date version If you do not have access to a computer you can complete a paper application which is available on the School Admissions website.

Q. How important is it for me to ensure my application is received by the deadline?

A. Very important. If you don't make an on-time application, there is a risk that all available places in your preferred school will be taken and your child will be offered a place at an alternative school. You must tell us why your application is late. We will consider your reasons and if they are exceptional we may consider your application along with those received on time.

Q. Do I have a right to a place at the school of my choice for my child?

A. No. Parents do not have an absolute right to choose the school they want for their child. Parents have a right to state a preference for a school and the Local Authority and other admission authorities have a duty to comply with that preference.

Q. How can I assess the likelihood of securing a place for my child?

A. From the school's admission policy - available in the 'School Admissions Handbook' you will be able to work out how high up the list of admission criteria your child will be. You can find information about the number of children the school can admit in September, as well as the number of children admitted within each admission category last year. However, you must treat the information about previous years with some caution because circumstances can change from year to year. For example, if a new housing development opens in the catchment area of a small First or Primary School, it may affect the number of catchment and out of catchment applicants the school can admit.

Q. Will my child be guaranteed a place in the catchment area school?

A. The Local Authority or admission authority cannot guarantee places in any school. If you apply to your catchment school the chances are usually high that you will be offered a place, but this cannot be guaranteed. Changes in the pattern of parents' preferences and changes in local population may mean that some schools will be oversubscribed from within their catchment area.

Q. How do I find the catchment area school for my address?

A. By logging onto <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Schools/Admissions.aspx#schooladmissionappeals>

Please note that your child's permanent address determines your catchment school and it is this address which must be used on the application form.

Q. Will my child be guaranteed a place in a school that their older sibling already attends?

A. The Local Authority or admission authority cannot guarantee places in any school, especially if you want your child to attend a school that is not your catchment school.

Q. My child lives at different addresses during the week. Which address do I use when applying?

A. When considering your application the admission authority will use the parental home residence of the Parent/Carer who receives the child benefit or child tax credit. If the address on your application form is not your child's normal address, you must provide a child arrangement order issued by a court if you wish that address to be considered. Admission authorities will not accept any other arrangements e.g. where parents delegate parental responsibility to a grandparent or other family member unless you have court documentation that supports their living arrangements.

Q. What if I move house after the deadline?

A. If you move into a particular school's catchment area and do not notify us by 9 January 2021 for Middle and High School applications and 1 March 2021 for First and Primary applications, your new address will not be considered before the 'offer day'. If you move or send evidence after 9 January and 1 March it will not be possible to process your child's application using your new address because the allocation process will have already started. However, please let us know because we can send your allocation letter with the offer of a school place to your new address.

Q. What if I move into rented property?

A. You must have a rental agreement of 12 months or more or ends in the Autumn Term in 2021 (31 December 2021). We will require proof of your new address i.e. rental agreement and copy of the council tax statement. Please note we will not accept tenancy agreements for a sixth month period.

Q. Can the offer of a place be withdrawn?

A. The Admission Authority reserves the right to withdraw places in certain circumstances i.e. where a parent uses fraudulent or intentionally misleading information such as a false address.

Q. Will medical, childcare arrangements or social reasons be considered?

A. Where a school is oversubscribed places are allocated according to the published oversubscription criteria which may not take into account individual reasons.

Q. I live outside of Northumberland and want to apply for a Northumberland school which form do I use?

A. You must apply to your home Local Authority. This is the Authority where you pay your council tax. Your home Local Authority will pass your information to us securely using a government approved secure computer system. We will treat your request in the same way as

applications from Northumberland residents. However, we will not offer you another Northumberland school if we cannot offer you a place in one of your preferred school(s).

Q. What happens if I do not apply?

A. Your child will be allocated a place at your catchment area school if a vacancy exists, or at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy.

Q. What happens if I want to change my school preferences after the deadline?

A. You cannot change your preference(s) without a genuine reason i.e. you have moved address. You should send us a copy of your council tax statement to confirm you are residing at your new address.

Q. What happens if I want to change my preferences after ‘Offer Day?’

A. Parents can have a maximum of 4 preferences including schools in and outside Northumberland. If you are not happy with the school you have been offered and want to apply for a school that was not on your original application you must complete a new application. Amended preferences will overwrite your initial application. Therefore if you wish to retain any of your original preferences they must be included in your new application.

Q. How is the distance measured?

A. In a straight line from a single fixed central point of the home address (including flats) to the central point of the school using the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and the Council’s Geographical Information System (GIS/ONE).

Q. My child has a cousin attending the school I am applying for. Will this be considered as a sibling link?

A. No a sibling link is an older brother or sister residing at the same address (including adoptive siblings, half siblings, step siblings, and long term fostered children).

Q. My child already attends the school nursery, will I be automatically allocated a place in Reception?

A. No, you still need to apply. Being in the nursery does not guarantee a place.