

# West Northamptonshire Council Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for 2023

## Section 1

### Timetable for Secondary Co-ordinated Admissions for September 2023

Date	Event
9 September 2022	Online applications open and information to parents/carers
7 October 2022	Generic reminder letters sent via schools for parents of Primary and Junior school children, advising them of the need to apply for a Year 7 place. Email sent to schools for them to remind parents of the need to apply
31 October 2022	<b>Closing date for applications</b> (statutory). Late applications, i.e. those received after midnight on 31 October 2022, will not be processed until additional rounds of allocation (see below)
25 November 2022	West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) sends applications to other Local Authorities (LAs) and Own Admission Authority (OAA) schools
12 January 2023	Own Admission Authority schools send ranked lists to WNC
10 February 2023	WNC applies agreed Scheme for West Northamptonshire schools, informing other LAs of offers to be made to their residents
15 February 2023	EHC teams must have informed School Admissions by this date about children who have an EHC Plan with named school (statutory)
27 February 2023	Secondary schools informed by WNC of the final allocations, which may include offers made to pupils living in other LAs
1 March 2023	<b>National Offer Day</b> - offers made to parents/carers by WNC and Secondary schools informed via S2S (Statutory)
By 3 March 2023	Schools emailed and final allocation lists (ATFs) uploaded onto the S2S secure site
13 March 2023	Start to share late applications received with Own Admission Authority schools and other LAs, with a weekly update of the number of late applications received
31 March 2023	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in first round of reallocations
29 March 2023	The deadline by which all appeal forms must have been submitted
12 May 2023	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in second round of reallocations
23 June 2023	Cut-off date for consideration for inclusion in third round of reallocations
15 June 2023	Appeals lodged before the deadline of 29 March 2023 (5pm) will be heard by this date
13 April, 1 June and 4 July 2023	Additional rounds of allocations will start on these dates
14 July 2023	Places allocated to children living in the West Northamptonshire Council area, currently in Primary school and who have not submitted an application for a place in Year 7. Letters sent to parents to advise of the places offered
1 August 2023	In-year co-ordination commences

## Section 2

### Elements of the Scheme

#### 2.1 Regulations

The School Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008 require local authorities (LAs) to have a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools in its area (excluding special schools). The purpose of a co-ordinated scheme is to establish mechanisms for ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that every parent of a child living within the LA who has applied for a school place in the normal admission round, receives an offer of a single school place on National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day). All schools must comply with the agreed scheme.

#### 2.2 Applying for a place in a Secondary school

The normal point of entry to Secondary school is Year 7 and the local authority co-ordinates the process of allocating places at these schools in this year group.

#### 2.3 Application forms

The Common Application Form (CAF)(paper or online) must allow parents to apply for a Year 7 place in any Secondary school and to give reasons for their preferences. If parents apply directly to a school, the governing body/academy trust must inform the local authority. All applications are co-ordinated by the local authority (WNC) up to and including 31 July.

#### 2.4 Residence in another local authority

Parents resident in one local authority who wish to apply for a place in Year 7 at a Secondary school maintained by a different local authority must apply using the Common Application Form (online or paper), for the local authority in which they live (i.e. their home local authority).

#### 2.5 Exchange of information

Local authorities and admission authorities in the area must exchange information on applications received and potential offers to be made by the dates specified in the scheme (see Section 1). A maintaining local authority must inform the home local authority if it intends to offer a place at one of its schools to an applicant living in a different local authority area. Local authorities should exchange information on applications across their borders and seek to eliminate multiple offers across local authority borders wherever possible. The exchange of data must, where possible, be carried out using secure data protection systems.

#### 2.6 Information for parents

Please note that throughout this scheme the term "parent" refers to both individual parents as well as those with parental responsibility for the child, e.g. carers.

Parents who live within the West Northamptonshire Council area are encouraged to apply online.

The benefits of using the online process are as follows:

1. Parents are less likely to make errors as the system guides them through the whole process;

2. Parents are able to change or amend preferences up until midnight on the closing date;
3. On National Offer Day, parents will be able to log on to the system to find out which school has been allocated (a letter naming the allocated school will be posted on National Offer Day to all parents who applied using the paper application form);
4. Parents will receive an email with details of the school offered;
5. Parents will be helping to reduce paper usage.

The 'Applying for a Secondary School Place in West Northamptonshire 2023-24' composite prospectus will be available on the School Admissions pages of WNC's website from September 2022. Paper copies of the composite prospectus can be obtained by request from:

School Admissions  
 West Northamptonshire Council  
 1 Angel Square  
 Angel Street  
 Northampton  
 NN1 1ED

The prospectus contains information about:

- How to apply online
- Secondary schools in each area of West Northamptonshire
- How to complete a common application form
- The Published Admission Number (PAN) for each school
- Each school's oversubscription criteria
- Whether individual schools were oversubscribed in September 2022
- Key dates for the application and allocation process
- Children with special educational needs
- Home-to-school transport
- The process for late applications
- Contact details for the WNC School Admissions Team

## **2.7 Parents living in the West Northamptonshire Council area wanting to complete a paper application form**

Requests for paper application forms and composite prospectuses (for those who do not have access to the internet) should be made to the WNC School Admissions Team.

## **2.8 The Common Application Form**

Parents are encouraged to apply online wherever possible. It is the responsibility of all those making an application to ensure they: a) submit the application on time / receive a submission confirmation email every time a change is made to the application or the application is checked, or b) request confirmation of a paper application by emailing School Admissions. It is **not** the responsibility of the School Admissions Team to send reminders to parents.

The application form (either online or paper) will ask the parent to provide:

- A list of up to three preferred schools in rank order (if the applicant is resident in a neighbouring authority where more than 3 preferences can be expressed, any preferences for West Northamptonshire schools will be treated in line with the child's home local authority)
- Details of siblings (if relevant) who attend the preferred school/s
- Details of the child for whom the application is being made (address, date of birth, any relevant medical information or special social circumstances)
- Confirmation that the child has an EHC Plan (if applicable)
- Reasons for their preferences

- The name of their child's current school
- Details about the person completing the application (name, address, relationship to the child, contact details)

Parents who are using the paper application form will be required to return the completed application form to the School Admissions Team at West Northamptonshire Council by midnight on **31 October 2022**. Applications received after this date will be considered as late applications and will not be processed until after the on-time applications have been dealt with, i.e. after National Offer Day. It is strongly recommended that parents should use recorded delivery and obtain a receipt when posting their application forms. West Northamptonshire Council does not accept responsibility for applications received after the closing date due to parents using insufficient postage.

If applying online, parents can submit any additional paperwork (e.g. proof of a house move or evidence of a medical / social need) electronically, or post this to the School Admissions Team at West Northamptonshire Council, clearly stating the following: name of child, date of birth and the name(s) of the school (s) the parent is applying for. If a house move takes place after the closing date, the school allocation will be based on the address we hold at the closing date.

## **2.9 Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)**

If additional information is required by the admission authority of a Foundation, Voluntary Aided or Free school or Academy in order to apply its oversubscription criteria, this will be detailed in their admission arrangements and in the specific section about that school in the LA's composite prospectus. Links to Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs) for schools which require them will be available on the WNC website from September 2022. Alternatively, contact details for each school are included in the LA's prospectus so parents may contact schools directly to obtain a SIF. **Supplementary Information Forms must be returned directly to the preferred school by 31 October 2022 unless otherwise stated in the schools' admission arrangements.**

## **2.10 Applications for Foundation, Voluntary Aided or Free Schools and Academies (known as OAA schools)**

The School Admissions Team will ensure that parents' preferences are logged on the School Admissions database. The School Admissions Team will send a list of all applications received, including any additional information, to the relevant OAA schools and UTCs.

Applications will be sent to OAA schools by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1 and schools will be asked to rank applicants as described in 2.13. Any parent who has not submitted a common application form to the LA will not be considered in the ranking lists with on-time applicants. The LA will check all OAA lists to ensure that this procedure is followed.

## **2.11 Applications for schools outside the LA and for West Northamptonshire schools from families living in other LAs**

Applications from residents in the West Northamptonshire Council area for schools in other LAs will be logged on the Admissions database and information relating to those preferences and any additional information will be electronically forwarded to the relevant maintaining local authority by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1.

Similarly, the School Admissions Team will receive applications forwarded from other LAs for schools in West Northamptonshire. These will be recorded and passed on to OAA schools as appropriate. If the application is for a Community or Voluntary Controlled school, the School Admissions Team will process applications along with all other applications for WNC schools.

## **2.12 Multiple applications**

If more than one application is made for a child prior to the closing date, only the latest dated application form will be processed. Any previously submitted application forms will not be processed.

If an offer of a school place has already been made by the LA and the applicant has chosen to submit further applications, the latest-dated application will take priority over any previous applications.

If it is possible to offer a place at one of the preferences on the latest-dated application, an offer will be made and the previous offer will be withdrawn without further reference to the applicant.

Applicants must place any requests to withdraw applications in writing to the School Admissions Team (by letter or email) prior to the reallocation round.

Where there may be multiple applications from parents who are separated, parents will need to refer to section 2.21 of this scheme for further guidance.

## **2.13 How the co-ordination process produces the offer of a single school place**

All schools have a Published Admissions Number (PAN). This is the number of places available at the normal point of entry. Admission authorities (Local Authorities and OAA schools) must consider all the applications they receive and, if there are more applications than places available, they must apply their oversubscription criteria to all applicants. This process can be carried out by the School Admissions Team on behalf of OAA schools as part of a Service Level Agreement (SLA). Any school wishing to use this service should inform the School Admissions team by 1 August in the year prior to the year of admission. School Admissions will always confirm any offer made with the school in question.

The local authority must allocate a place at the highest preference school where the child can be offered a place.

- If a child qualifies for a place at all 3 preference schools, the LA will offer a place at the school that is ranked highest on the CAF. The child's name will then be removed from the ranked list(s) at the lower preference schools where they qualified for a place so that other children may be offered a place at these schools.
- If a child can be offered a place at only one of their preference schools, they will be offered a place at that school regardless of the preference order on the common application form;
- If a child cannot be offered a place within the PAN of any of their preferred schools, the LA will offer a place at the nearest school with a place available (i.e. the nearest school which has not reached their PAN and therefore has a place/places available at the time);
- If a child is offered a place at a school which wasn't their first preference, they can request to be added to the waiting list for any of the schools which was a higher preference than the school offered.
- Parents have the right to appeal against refusal of a place at any school for which they have applied, unless a higher preference has been allocated. Information about how to make an appeal is published on the local authority's website.

All OAA schools are responsible for returning a ranked list of all applicants to the local authority by the date stated in the scheme timetable. Some schools will be oversubscribed, others undersubscribed. The surplus places at undersubscribed schools will be allocated to children who were unable to obtain places at their preferred schools.

The local authority will publish details of how places at all schools were allocated on its website.

Schools using random allocation as a tie-breaker, or as part of their oversubscription criteria, must send lists which include the names of all applicants in ranked order to the School Admissions Team. The ranked list must include all children (in the individual bands if applicable) and not just those ranked up to the school's PAN. This procedure will enable the School Admissions Team to identify why a place has been refused.

All schools which are their own admission authority must return the ranked allocation lists to the School Admissions Team by the date shown in the scheme timetable in Section 1.

For local authority schools (Community and Voluntary Controlled schools), the School Admissions Team will be responsible for applying the oversubscription criteria if the number of applications exceeds the Published Admission Number (PAN) of the school.

If a pupil is eligible for a place at more than one school, the applicant's order of preference will be considered and the highest preference will be offered.

Where it is not possible to offer a place at any of the preferred schools, a place will be allocated at the school closest to the home address where places are available at the time of allocation. Some pupils in this situation will be eligible for assistance with transport costs. Parents will be referred to the school travel assistance information on WNC's website.

A single place will be identified for each child by the end of this co-ordination process. When schools have more applications than places available, places will only be allocated up to the limit of the school's PAN. The admission authorities of OAA schools **must** notify their local authority of their intention to increase the school's PAN and reference to the change should be made on the school's website. Where further capacity is required to provide every child with a school place, the local authority will consult relevant schools to reach an agreement.

## **2.14 Protocol for children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**

Reviews of EHC Plans, discussions with parents about preference and placement enquiry procedures, will all be undertaken by the EHC team at WNC. Placement decisions will be made by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1. The admission of children with EHC plans, where the school is named in the plan, will take priority over all other children.

The EHC Team will inform parents of the school allocated for their child on or around the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1. There may be circumstances where pupils have not been informed of the school allocated by this date. In these cases, schools may be required to admit children over PAN.

The offer of a school place will be made by the EHC Team who will also amend the EHC plan accordingly.

## **2.15 Notification of offers to all schools or other local authorities**

As part of the co-ordination process, other LAs will be informed electronically by the date shown on the scheme timetable in Section 1 of any offers of school places that WNC is able to make to their residents. All schools, including OAA schools, will be informed of the final offers, which may include offers made to pupils living in other LAs, by the date shown in the scheme timetable in Section 1. Schools **must not** communicate with parents until *after* the offer from WNC has been sent.

## **2.16 Late applications**

Every effort will be made to encourage parents to complete application forms by the closing date of **31 October 2022**. If an application form is received *after* 31 October 2022, it will not be possible to consider it until all the on-time applications have been processed. Late applicants will

not receive an offer of a school place on National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day). Late applications will be considered from the relevant reallocation date published in the 'Applying for a Secondary School Place in West Northamptonshire 2023-24' composite prospectus and in the scheme timetable in Section 1).

In the co-ordinated scheme in West Northamptonshire, parents will not be allowed to have more than three live primary or secondary preferences at any point in time, prior to the offer date. Parents will not be allowed to change the order of schools listed as preferences after the closing date. After this date, changes to preferences must be made on a late application form which will be processed in the further rounds of allocation (see Section 1).

For OAA schools, WNC will forward any late applications directly to the schools for their consideration (by the agreed timelines). If places are not available at the preferred school, the School Admissions Team must be informed by the school so that a place can be offered at an alternative school with places available. If the alternative school is its own admission authority, details of the applicant will be sent to the school before an allocation is made by the local authority.

NB: The co-ordinated process in West Northamptonshire continues up to and including 31 July of each year. From 1 August, the in-year process commences.

## 2.17 Right to appeal

Parents have the right to appeal against refusal of a place at any school for which they have applied. When an admission authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse a place, it **must** include the reason why admission was refused; information about the right to appeal; the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. Parents **must** be informed that, if they wish to appeal, they **must** set out their grounds for appeal in writing. Admission authorities **must not** limit the grounds on which appeals can be made.

The admission authority **must** establish an independent appeals panel to hear the appeal. The panel will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal. Where a panel upholds the appeal the school is required to admit the child.

## 2.18 Waiting lists

Parents who have been refused a place at a school (this could either be after National Offer Day, after an unsuccessful appeal or after making a late application) may wish to place their child's name on a waiting list. Parents must contact the School Admissions Team in order to request that their child's name is added to the waiting list. Following Secondary National Offer Day, there will be no distinction drawn on school waiting lists between on time and late applications: all applications will be ranked in accordance with schools' oversubscription criteria.

For OAA schools, parents need to contact the individual schools directly to ask for information on the waiting list policy for the school.

If a place becomes available, the school's oversubscription criteria will be applied to the waiting list to determine who should be allocated the available place. Any places that become available after the initial allocation will be reallocated in rounds of reallocation (see Section 1) by the School Admissions Team. The local authority continues to co-ordinate the allocation of places at all schools up to and including 31 July. This requires all schools which are their own admission authority to ensure clear and up-to-date communications with the School Admissions Team regarding the ranking lists for each round of allocations. No allocation will be made by the School Admission Team without prior agreement with the individual admission authority.

For every over-subscribed Community and Voluntary Controlled school, the School Admissions Team will retain a waiting list until the end of the 2023 Autumn term (31 December). Following

this date, waiting lists will be ended. If parents still wish their child's name to remain on the new waiting lists which will be established for the following term, they will need to request this in writing (via email) to the WNC School Admissions Team. Waiting lists will be restarted every term, so if a parent wishes to remain on a waiting list for a whole academic year, they would make a request in writing to the School Admissions Team at the start of January and following the Easter break (March/April).

## **2.19 National Offer Day**

The School Admissions Team will notify all on-time applicants of their school offer on National Offer Day (1 March or the next working day) by email (for all online applicants) or by post (a first class letter will be sent to all applicants who submitted a paper application). The communication will include information about how to find out how school places have been allocated in the West Northamptonshire Council area and, if necessary, information about how to appeal. In addition, breakdowns of how places were allocated in accordance with each school's oversubscription criteria will be published on the WNC website. Links to this page will be provided on all offer emails and letters.

The School Admissions Team will assume that the place has been accepted unless communication from the parent is received to advise to the contrary.

## **2.20 Rejection of a school place**

Parents will be required to notify the relevant admission authority and the School Admissions Team in writing (by email or letter) if they **do not** propose to accept the school place offered. These places will then be reallocated following the process as set out above in 2.13. Places will not be removed until the School Admissions Team has been advised by the parent that they have secured an alternative school place for their child.

Schools which are their own admissions authority must inform the School Admissions Team as soon as a place is rejected so that the School Admissions Team has an accurate picture of the available school places prior to the reallocation dates.

## **2.21 Definition of a sibling and sibling link for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools**

Some schools give priority to children whose brother(s) or sister(s) are already on roll at a preferred school (this is called a sibling link). A sibling is defined as a child's brother or sister. WNC's definition of 'sibling' for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools states that a sibling must be living at the same permanent address and as part of the same family unit (one or two parents plus children) to qualify for a sibling link and includes:

- half-brothers and half-sisters
- step-brothers and step-sisters
- adopted children
- children in foster care
- children living in the same family unit, even if they are not biological brothers and sisters – for example when the parents are not married/in a civil relationship.

Cousins are not regarded as siblings.

The sibling link will only be valid if the sibling will be attending when the child applying starts school. This means that it will not count as a sibling link if a child wants a place in a Primary school, but their brother is in Year 6 and will therefore have left the school when the child applying starts at the school.



Some admission authorities have different definitions of a sibling and sibling link. Parents are advised to check the information in the LA's composite prospectus or in the school's admission arrangements available on their website to see what their definition is.

## **2.22 Parents who do not live together**

WNC's definition of a child's address states that when parents live separately and the child spends time with each parent, the home address will be treated as the place where the child sleeps for most of the school week (i.e. Sunday night – Thursday night inclusive).

If the child spends equal amounts of time at two addresses, the parents must agree which address they wish to be the child's main address.

Other admission authorities may have different definitions of a child's home address. Parents are advised to check the school's individual admission arrangements on their website or in the LA's composite prospectus.

Documentary evidence of ownership or rental agreement may be required together with proof of actual permanent residence at the property concerned.

The LA can only process one application. Where more than one adult shares parental responsibility and if the adults live at different addresses, it is important that an agreement be reached on which schools to apply for, prior to making the application.

If multiple applications are received for the same child with conflicting address and/or preferences, or the School Admissions Team is made aware of a dispute between two parents, all applications will be placed on hold and will **not** be processed until:

- a new single application is made, signed by all parties; or
- written agreement is provided from both parents indicating which application they have agreed on; or
- a court order is provided confirming which parent's application carries precedence.

If no agreement can be made, parents are recommended to seek legal advice. If an agreement cannot be reached before the closing date, this may affect the chances of a child being allocated a place at their preferred school/s.

Further information on parental responsibility can be found on the [DfE website](#):

## **2.23 Children who are part of a multiple birth group**

Under paragraph 2.16 (g) of The School Admissions Code (2021), infant class size restrictions may be exceeded where a child who is part of a multiple birth group is allocated as the 30<sup>th</sup> pupil. For Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, the admission number will be exceeded to accommodate the other children from this birth group. These children will remain as 'excepted pupils' for the time they are in an infant class (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) or until class numbers fall back to the current infant class limit. Own admission schools may have another policy in place.

## **2.24 Random allocation**

Random allocation, when used as a tie-breaker within an oversubscription criterion for a Community or Voluntary Controlled school, will be observed by an independent person (not employed by the local authority or with a connection to the school). This is to ensure that the process is administered correctly.

If a place is allocated from the waiting list after the initial round of allocations, and the tie-breaker is used, a new round of random allocation will be performed but not observed.

## **2.25 Definition of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children ('Children in Care')**

The highest priority in the oversubscription criteria for all schools must be given to 'looked after children' and 'previously looked after children'. A 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school.

'Previously looked after children' are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order). This includes children who appear, to the admission authority, to have been in state care outside England prior to adoption.

## **2.26 Admission of children out of their normal year group (out of cohort)**

West Northamptonshire Council's policy is for children to be educated within their correct chronological year group where possible, with the curriculum differentiated as necessary to meet the needs of individual children. This is in line with DfE guidance which states that "in general, children should be educated in their normal age group".

Parents/carers may however seek a place for their child out of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. They must put their request in writing to the School Admissions Team (for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools) and directly to the school for schools who are their own admission authority, at the time of application.

The Admission Authority of the school will consider the request and make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of:

- the parent's/carer's views;
- information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
- where relevant, the child's medical history and the views of a medical professional;
- whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group;
- whether the child may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely;
- the views of the Head teacher of the school concerned.

The Admission Authority of the school MUST set out clearly for parents the reasons for their decision about the year group a child should be admitted to.

Parents/carers do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

Schools for which the local authority is not the admission authority may have a different process. Please check individual schools' admission arrangements directly with the schools or on their websites to ensure you are following the correct procedure.

Please see further information in the School Admissions Code (2021) about the admission of children outside their normal age group.

## **2.27 Sharing information with schools**

When sharing information regarding the co-ordinated scheme with schools, the local authority (WNC) will:

- Supply information about what is required in the co-ordination process;
- Provide useful tips to schools;

- Be clear about the dates when information should/must be returned to the LA.

If schools already have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the School Admissions Team, the team will carry out the agreed work and will share with the school the outcome of applications made to the school by sending out lists of successful applicants.

Schools wishing to establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the co-ordination process should contact the School Admissions Team as soon as possible to discuss their requirements.

## **2.28 Relevant Area**

The relevant area for schools in West Northamptonshire is the area comprising West Northamptonshire and all adjoining local authorities.