Milton Keynes City Council

Proposed school admission arrangements September 2028

For admission to all community and voluntary controlled schools

Introduction

Milton Keynes City Council has the duty to consult upon and determine its admission arrangements for 2028 for those schools for which it is the admission authority. The council is the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools, but not for all other types of schools (voluntary aided, foundation, academy, free school).

This means that the council is the admission authority for 36% of primary schools but none of the secondary schools in Milton Keynes.

This policy intends to clearly and transparently lay out the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled primary schools in Milton Keynes with effect from admissions in September 2028. It applies to all those wishing to secure a place in a community or voluntary controlled school in the area at any time.

Although not responsible for determining all schools' admission arrangements, the council is responsible for coordinating the annual scheme for applications to all primary and secondary schools, regardless of type.



Simon Sims
Head of Children's Sufficiency and Access to Education, Employment, and Training

Milton Keynes City Council

Contents **Page**

Normal entry	3
In-year admissions	3
Admission arrangements	4
Children starting school for the first time	4
Infant class sizes	4
Oversubscription for community and voluntary controlled schools	5
Published admission numbers (PAN) and catchment areas	7
Admission of a child into a year group other than normally associated with their age	8
Reserved places	8
Children of UK service personnel (UK Armed Forces)	8
Children with challenging behaviour	9
Children who have been permanently excluded twice	9
Children with an Education Health Care plan	9
Children with special educational needs with no Education Health Care plan	10
Accepting the offer of a place	10
Withdrawing offers of places	10
Waiting lists	10
Right of appeal	11
The role of the headteacher and other school staff in school admissions	11
Contact us	11

1 Background

There are two ways to apply for a place at a school in Milton Keynes:

1.1 Normal entry

This is for children starting school for the first time in the September following a child's 4th birthday or starting junior school for the first time in September following a child's 7th birthday.

Applications to start a community or voluntary controlled school at the normal point of entry must be submitted to the council by the deadline date and will be processed in accordance with the 'Co-ordinated Scheme for Primary Schools' to ensure that across the country, children starting school for the first time or transferring from an infant or junior/primary school on to the next phase of their education are offered a school place on the same day, National Offer Day.

1.2 In-year admissions

This is for children joining a school at any other time. When applying in-year for a place at one of our schools, a primary in-year application must be completed for each child. This should be made through the online portal, or through a paper application where no online access is available.

Parents/carers living in the UK can apply for a school place whether or not they are resident in Milton Keynes, although they should ensure the place can be accessed within six school weeks of making the application (see sections 'Reserved places' and 'Withdrawing offers of places').

Families that are moving from overseas and wish to apply for a state school place should visit https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office for further information. Parents are are advised to obtain advice from an immigration professional or the UK Home Office to establish if their child(ren) have a right, under their visa entry conditions, to study at a state funded school. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that visa entry conditions are checked.

Applications will be processed in date receipt order. For Community and Voluntary Controlled schools the council will aim to process applications within 15 school working days. For schools which are their Own Admission Authority it may take longer to process. Application processing times may be longer at peak service times, particularly at the start of each new school term. Where possible, correspondence will be sent by email to ensure timely receipt of information. Correspondence will be sent by second class mail where an email address has not been provided.

It is not always possible to secure a place at a preference school. Schools are required to admit up to their published admission number (PAN) if they receive sufficient applications, even if people are applying from outside of the catchment area. This means that popular schools often fill up at the beginning, even if there were not that many people living in the catchment area at the time. National legislation does not allow for places to be reserved for people yet to move into an area.

Parents/carers declined a school of preference will be offered the right of appeal and asked if they wish their child's name to be added to the waiting list. (see section 'Waiting Lists').

Proof of residency or documentary evidence of a house move will be required to determine the priority ranking on the school's waiting list.

2 Admission Arrangements

2.1 Children starting school for the first time

By law, a child must have started primary school at the beginning of the term after their fifth birthday, this is the start of compulsory school age.

The council's policy is to enable the admission of pupils at the beginning of the academic year in which their fifth birthday falls, meaning that children may be admitted below compulsory school age. Pupils who were born between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024 may start school in September 2028.

When applying for a school place for the first time the council's policy is that:

- Attendance at a school's nursery class does not guarantee admission to that school, nor give any preference over other applicants
- Parents/carers can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which it was made.
- Where the parents/carers wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

If a child is starting school for the first time the application must be made via the council's co-ordinated scheme. The closing date for receipt of an application for children due to start school in September 2028 is 15 January 2028. For further details about how this scheme operates and the timeline which applies, please refer to the council's co-ordinated scheme for primary admissions.

2.2 Infant class sizes

Infant classes (i.e. those where the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6, or 7 during the school year) must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single, qualified school teacher. The council must therefore, refuse admission to a school if admission of an additional child to an infant class would result in the class being in breach of infant class size legislation and result in the school having to take 'qualifying' measures, e.g. employ another teacher. These arrangements refer to 39 schools in Milton Keynes. Annex A lists all admission numbers for these schools. The published admission number is the minimum number of school places that the council, as the admission authority, must offer up to in each year group before any application can be refused.

The infant class size legislation makes allowance for the entry of an additional child in very limited circumstances. These pupils will remain an 'excepted pupil' for the time they are in an infant class or until the numbers fall back to the current infant class size limit. The 'excepted children' are:

a) Children with Education Health Care Plans who are admitted to the school outside the normal admissions round

b) Looked after children and previously looked after children admitted outside the normal admissions round

c) Children admitted, after initial allocation of places on the offer date, because of a procedural error made by the admission authority or council in the original application process

d) Children admitted after an independent appeals panel upholds an appeal

e) Children who move into the area outside the normal admissions round for whom there is no other available school within reasonable distance

f) Children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round

g) Children whose twin or sibling from a multiple birth is admitted otherwise than as an excepted pupil

h) Children with special educational needs who are normally taught in an special educational needs unit attached to the school, or registered at a special school, who attend some infant classes within the mainstream school.

2.3 Oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools

In the case where a community or voluntary controlled school is oversubscribed (more applications than places available), the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school concerned will not normally be exceeded unless there are exceptional circumstances. The PAN for each school can be found at Annex A to this policy. In order to determine those applications that are successful, the council will use oversubscription criteria in order of priority.

For the purposes of these criteria the following definitions apply:

- *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 child* is a child who has been looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted[1], or became subject to a child arrangements order[2] or special guardianship order[3] and also those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

- *Sibling* is a child of the family, sharing a parent by birth or adoption or living at the same address at the time of application and until and including the date of the offer letter. In the case of same age siblings, where there are insufficient places available to admit the children, the school will be authorised to exceed its Published Admission Number to allow admission of the subsequent child.

- *On roll* at the school at the time of admission means attending the school in national curriculum year groups (R to 6 inclusive) at the time the younger sibling is attending the school.

- *The catchment area* for each community and voluntary controlled school is defined at Annex B of this policy.

- *Place of residence* is determined to be the address of the parent or carer with whom the child spends the majority of time as a child of a family during term-time and proof of the home address, should be a council tax reference number. If clarification is required of a particular catchment area, applicants should contact the council for further details. If the child spends equal time with each parent/carer, the parents/carers must reach agreement as to which address will be classed as the child's place of residence for the application. If agreement cannot be reached, the application received from the parent/carer in receipt of child benefit would be the application to be processed. Proof of receipt of child benefit would need to be provided.

- *Distance* from the school to the place of residence is measured from the school's main entrance to the place of residence in a straight line. This will be measured using the council's geographical information system.

[1] This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children's Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders).
[2] Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by s.12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order.
[3] See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

The oversubscription criteria is:

1. A looked after child or previously looked after child including those children who appear (to the admissions authority) to have been in state care outside of England and cease to be in state care as a result of being adopted

2. Children eligible for the service premium[1]

[1]The service premium is additional funding paid annually to schools under Section 14 of the Education Act 2002 for the purposes of supporting the pastoral needs of the children of Armed Services personnel.

3. Siblings of children who are attending the school at the time allocations are made and are expected to be on roll at the school at the time of the proposed admission and the place of residence is **within the catchment area** of the school

4. The child's place of residence is within the catchment area of the school and there is no sibling

5. Siblings of children who are attending the school at the time allocations are made and are expected to be on roll at the school at the time of the proposed admission and the place of residence is **outside of the catchment area** of the school

6. Children of staff at the school where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and /or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage

7. Distance from the school to the place of residence

   It should be noted that where oversubscription results in the PAN being reached within one of the five priorities, then sub-prioritisation within priority will take place using distance between the child's home address and the school's main entrance, measured in a straight line with those living closest to the school receiving the higher priority. In the event of joint oversubscription, having exhausted distance, random allocation will be used as the ultimate tiebreaker. For applicants living in flats, the distance will be measured from the school's main entrance to the front door of the ground floor flat underneath the applicant's main residence. Where two or more pupils live at the same distance the tie breaker will be random allocation.

2.4 Published Admission Nurmber (PAN) and catchment areas

A full list of the PAN for each community and voluntary controlled school can be found at Annex A. Due to reduced demand in the local area there is a proposed change to the PAN of one school:

School	Current PAN	Proposed PAN
Hanslope Primary School	60 (Year R)	45 (Year R)

Annex A also includes the catchment area of each school. There are no proposed changes to catchment areas.

2.5 Admission of a child into a year group other than that normally associated with their age including summer born children

By law, parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child has experienced problems such as ill health or summer born children. While it may seem helpful in the short term, educating a child outside of their chronological year group can have negative long-term effects on a child's learning, confidence, and future opportunities. Instead, children's needs can be supported through individual tailored goals and interventions, which are designed to help them succeed within their chronological year group. This means the council will only admit children outside of their normal (age) year group after careful consideration and in the best interests of the child.

Should a parent or carer wish to submit a request for admission outside of their chronological year group, they will need to make an application and at the same point submit their request in writing to the Education Access Team. The request must include any supporting information regarding their child's academic, social and emotional development including any medical views. The council will liaise with the schools for their professional view.

The decision will be based on the individual circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned.

This includes taking into account the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have been previously educated outside of their normal age group and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. The views of the headteacher of the school concerned will also be taken into account and the parent or carer will be informed of the outcome. Further information can be found on the council's website here.

2.6 Reserved places

The law does not allow admission authorities to reserve places for children who may, or may not, apply for a place later (except for the children of service personnel, please see specific section below). The council will therefore not reserve places in any circumstance. The law also precludes admission authorities from offering places in advance of parents being able to access these places due to a purported move to the area. In order for a place to be offered the place must therefore be accessible from the current address unless evidence has been received that a move is imminent (exchange of contracts or letting agreement will be accepted as evidence of imminence).

2.7 Children of service personnel (UK Armed Forces)

For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, the council will:

- Ensure that the needs of the children of these families are taken into account.
- Allocate a school place in advance of the family arriving in the area, if the application is accompanied by an official government letter (e.g. MOD, FCO or GCHQ) declaring a relocation date, if the applicant would meet the criteria on relocation.

For in year admissions, the place must be taken up no later than the beginning of the term following the offer.

The council will not reserve places for blocks of these children or refuse a place to a child because the family does not currently live in the local authority area.

The council will consider late applications for children of UK service personnel as exceptions and will process as an ontime application wherever possible.

2.8 Children with challenging behaviour

The council will not refuse to admit children through the normal admissions round on the basis of their behaviour elsewhere (unless the child has been permanently excluded twice) or make subjective judgements as to the suitability of certain children for schools.

Outside of the normal admissions round (in-year), applications from children with 'challenging behaviour' may be referred for action under the locally agreed Fair Access Protocol, even if there are places available at the preferred school. Parental preference therefore may not apply in these instances, although parents/carers will be offered the right to appeal if they are declined a place at a preference school.

This process is more clearly detailed in the published Fair Access Protocol. This process does not apply to Looked After Children, or children with an EHCP naming the school in question as these children must be admitted.

2.9 Children who have been permanently excluded twice

Where a child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools, a parent can still express a preference for a school place, but the law provides that the requirement to comply with that preference is removed for a period of two years from the date on which the latest exclusion took place. This does not apply to:

- Children with an Education Health Care Plan
- Children who were below the compulsory school age when excluded
- Children who were reinstated following a permanent exclusion or who would have been had it been practicable to do so. A permanent exclusion is regarded as taking effect from the first school day the Headteacher has informed the parent/carer that the child should not attend school.

2.10 Children with an Education Health Care Plan

All admission authorities are required by section 324 of the Education Act 1996 to admit to a school a child with an Education Health Care Plan that names that school. This is not an oversubscription criterion and the council will therefore admit such children whether the admission number has been reached or not.

2.11 Children with Special Educational Needs with no Education Health Care Plan

Children with special educational needs will be treated as fairly as any other applicant. The law does not permit refusal of admission because it is claimed that the school cannot cater for the child's special educational needs and the council will consider such applications on the basis of the published oversubscription criteria.

2.12 Declining the offer of a place

Following the offer of a place, the council will assume that the parent/carer has accepted the place unless they inform the council otherwise. A school place will not be withdrawn solely because the parent/carer is dissatisfied and declines the offer. The council must have notice from the parent/carer of how the child will receive a suitable full-time education either at a school or otherwise. This is because the council has a duty to ensure that all children are receiving their education entitlement.

2.13 Withdrawing offers of places

Once an offer of a school place has been made, the council will only withdraw that offer in the following circumstances:

- When the place was offered on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application from a parent which effectively denied a place to another child
- When a place was offered under co-ordination in error.

The council will not withdraw a place once a child has started at the school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained. In deciding whether to withdraw the place, the length of time that the child had been at the school will be taken into account, for example, it might be considered appropriate to withdraw the place if the child has been at the school for less than one term. Where a place is withdrawn on the basis of misleading information, the application will be considered afresh and a right of appeal offered if a place is refused.

2.14 Waiting lists

For normal admissions, if the council is not able to offer a place at a preferred community or voluntary controlled school, the child's name will automatically be added to the waiting list for that school. The waiting list will be held until the end of academic year.

For in year admissions, if the council is not able to offer a place at a preferred community or voluntary controlled school, a decline letter will be issued and the parent/carer will be offered an alternative school place if one is not already held.

Parents will be asked to confirm in writing if they would like their child to go onto a waiting list for the remainder of the academic year. The waiting lists will be held until the end of the academic year.

As is required by law, the waiting lists will be ordered in line with the oversubscription criteria and not in the order that the applications were received.

Children may therefore move down the waiting list if a subsequent application meets a higher oversubscription criterion. If a vacancy occurs, the place will be offered to the child at the top of the waiting list. Proof of residency or documentary evidence of a house move will be required to determine the priority ranking on a school's waiting list.

2.15 Right of appeal

In the case where an application is declined due to oversubscription, parents will be informed, by the council, of their right of an appeal against the decision made. All appeals will be heard by an independent panel, operate within legislation and conform to the procedures laid down in the School Admission Appeals Code. Full details are available on the council's website.

3 The role of the Headteacher and other school staff in school admissions

These admission arrangements support the guidance given in paragraph 2.1 of the School Admissions Code 2021 which states:
"While parents may express a preference for any state funded school, regardless of whether it is in the council area in which they live, admission authorities must not give any guarantees that the preference will be met".

Decisions to offer or refuse admission must not be made by one individual in an admission authority. Where the school is its own admission authority, the whole governing body, an admissions committee established by the governing body or the academy trust must make such decisions.

Such principles are applied equally to in-year admissions, in that Headteachers or other school officials must not give parents or carers an expectation that their application will be successful, or tell them that their child has been given a place at the school, before an offer of a place has been made formally by the council. Conversely a school should not seek to dissuade parents or carers from applying for a school place by telling them that there is not a place available.

4 Contact us

For admission to primary school:	primaryadmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk
For admission to secondary school:	secondaryadmissions@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Helpline:	01908 253338
Milton Keynes City Council	Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ