



Birmingham
City Council

HOW TO START YOUR **CHILD** AT **SCHOOL** FAQ'S



RESET



RESHAPE



RESTART

The school admissions process

The school admissions process can be complex to navigate, especially for parent/carers applying for their child to start primary school for the first time.

This short guide has been created by Birmingham's School Admissions Service to support parent/carers with the process.



We strongly recommend that you visit the council website for further information and guidance here or scan the QR Code:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/schooladmissions



When can children start school?

Children are eligible to start school (Reception) in the September following their **fourth birthday**.



Compulsory School Age

In Birmingham, most children start school in the September after their fourth birthday. However, a child does not have to legally start school until they reach **Compulsory School Age (CSA)** or the term following their 5th birthday. Depending on when your child was born this will be one of the following set dates - **31st December; 31st March or 31st August**.

YOUR CHILD'S BIRTHDAY	WHEN YOUR CHILD CAN START SCHOOL	WHEN YOUR CHILD MUST START SCHOOL (CSA)
1 September - 31 December	September aged 4	January Aged 5
1 January - 31 March	September aged 4	April aged 5
1 April to 31 August (Also known as a 'Summer Born' Child)	September aged 4	September aged 5 (Starting from Year 1)

Can I delay my child's start date?

Yes, there is the option to delay a child's start date if you feel your child is not ready to start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. **You still need to apply for a reception place in their normal age group**, however you should discuss delayed admission and part-time admission with the schools you are applying to as soon as possible.

'Summer-born children' are those born between **1st April and 31st August**.

It's generally agreed it's best for children to be educated in their normal age group. However, parents of summer-born children can request that their child start Reception in the September following their **fifth birthday**, rather than going straight into Year One with children of the same age group. It is important to note that the decision to admit a child outside of their normal age group is only made in specific circumstances, for example where there is supporting evidence from professionals.

Please visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission

When can I apply?

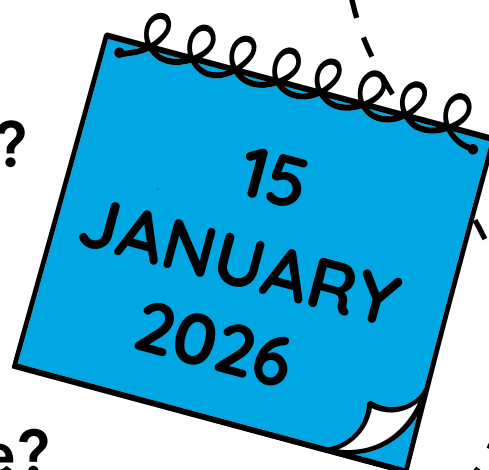
Your local authority (who you pay your Council Tax to) sets the date from when you can start applying for primary school places. In Birmingham this is **1 October 2025**.

Find your Local Authority here:

www.gov.uk/apply-for-primary-school-place

What is the deadline?

The deadline for applications is **15 January 2026**.



What happens if I apply late?

Late applications received after the deadline will still be considered but not until places have been offered to parents who applied on time. This means there is less chance of getting a place at one of your preferred schools.



When will I receive my child's offer?

Primary Schools National Offer Day takes place on **16 April each year** (or the next working day if the 16th is a weekend or bank holiday).

What is the process?

Every Local Authority should publish an online prospectus or booklet which explains their application process and lists all their schools and their admission policies. It is also a good idea to do some research before you apply for a school place to help you understand if your child is eligible for the schools that you want to apply to.



We recommend that you:

- Read the Schools Admissions Criteria.
- Attend Open Days/Evenings.
- Look at Ofsted Reports.

How many schools can I apply for?

You can name up to three schools in order of preference.

Listing three schools means that if your first school cannot offer a place, you have other options.

Can I apply for schools outside of Birmingham?

Yes, Birmingham local authority runs a co-ordinated admissions scheme. This means you can list non-Birmingham schools on your form. We strongly recommend that you contact the local authority in which the school is based for further information.



How are places offered?

Your child will be added to a list for each of the schools you've named on your application. The list for each school is then ranked by whether children meet the admission criteria for that school. This will then determine if a place can be offered.

All applicants **must be offered** a place if the school is **not oversubscribed**.

If a **school is oversubscribed**, (i.e. when more parents applied for a place than there are places available), then the school must use its over-subscription criteria to decide which places are offered.

If a child is not offered a place at any of the schools a parent has named on their form, the Local Authority will offer a place at one of the nearest schools with an available space at that time.

Your child will only receive one offer of a school place, unless they can receive an improved offer from a waiting list, or you submit a change of preferences for a school with availability. We therefore strongly encourage you not to refuse the place offered, as this will not affect your child's right to stay on your preferred school's waiting lists or to appeal.

It is important to be honest about the information you provide on your application form. Birmingham local authority has a statutory duty to ensure all places are offered fairly and in accordance with school's over-subscription criteria. This means a place can be withdrawn if it's later found that you have submitted a fraudulent application.

School admissions criteria

The admission authority for each school decides on their over-subscription criteria - the criteria to be used to allocate places if the school receives more applications than there are places available. However, all schools must give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children – i.e., children who are, or have been, in the care of the local authority such as foster care.

Other examples of criteria that are often used are:

- Children with a sister or brother already attending the school.
- The distance children live from the school (you can find this out by contacting your local authority).

Equal preference system

Admission authorities are legally required to operate an 'equal preference system'. This means that places are purely allocated according to the **admissions criteria**, not where the school was listed on your application.

This means that even if a parent puts a school as a second choice, their child could still be offered a place ahead of another child whose parents had put the school down as a first choice. It is all comes down to which child meets the over-subscription criteria best.

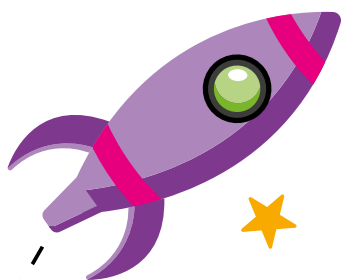


Infant class size

Reception classes, as well as Year One and Year Two, are known as **infant classes**. The government has set a legal limit for class sizes in infant classes of **30 children** per teacher. The legal class size limit has a few exceptions to allow some schools to have classes above the maximum in certain permitted circumstances, such as where an extra place is required to accommodate twins, or a looked-after child.

Waiting lists

A child's name can be added to the waiting list for any school that you've applied for but have not been offered a place at. It is important to note that children can move down or up the list if there are other children who are added to the list and have greater priority in accordance with the over-subscription criteria.



Appeals

In Birmingham, most children are offered one of their preferences. If you were not offered your chosen school, this is usually because the school is full and there were other children who more closely met the school's over-subscription criteria.

However, if you are unhappy with the school place you have been offered, you can appeal for any of the schools you named in your application by a set deadline which will be communicated with your offer.

At an appeal you would have the opportunity to explain to an independent panel why you believe your child should be offered a place at a school that is full. You should be aware that due to infant class size legislation, there are limited grounds on which an appeal for a Reception school place can be upheld.

Special Educational Needs and / or disabilities (SEND)



If your child has special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) you should still apply for a place through the normal process. If your child has been issued with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you should visit the website below:

www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/education-health-and-care-plan/senar/

Where can I find more support?



Visit our website

www.birmingham.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Or speak to your child's nursery or your local primary school or library.