FINAL

Essex County Council

Essex County Council

Co-ordinated Scheme for

Infant and Primary Admissions

Academic Year 2026-2027

Incorporating admission to Reception Year (Infant & Primary schools and academies) and

Primary In-Year Admissions

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1. Introduction:

The School Admissions Regulations (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) require LAs to formulate a 'qualifying scheme' each year to co-ordinate admissions to all infant and primary schools and academies in their area for the following academic year.

The LA is required to adopt a scheme for admissions in the academic year 2026-2027 by no later than 28 February 2025. If a scheme is not secured by that date, the Secretary of State can impose a scheme.

For the purposes of this document going forward, where the word ‘school’ or ‘schools’ is used it refers to both maintained schools and Academies.

2. Statutory requirements of the Scheme:

A ‘qualifying scheme’ shall

2.1 Ensure that in relation to any application made during the normal admission round, so far as is reasonably practicable, each parent in the area of an LA shall receive a single offer of a school place;

2.2 Communicate on 16 April each year a single offer of a school place by an LA to the parent of every child in their area. Where that day is not a working day, the prescribed day shall be the next working day;

2.3 Provide a common application form enabling a parent in an authority's area to apply for not less than three primary/infant schools whether in the LA's area or not, to give reasons for that application, and to rank each application relative to others;

2.4 Specify criteria by which the authority shall determine whether a child is to be granted or refused admission to an infant or primary school in their area in any case where it appears that the child is eligible to be granted admission to more than one preferred school, or is not eligible to be granted admission to any school for which an application has been made;

2.5 Stipulate a timetable of events;

2.6 Set out a procedure for determining any application made otherwise than during a normal admission round, or where it is for admission to a relevant age group, is submitted to the authority later than the date stipulated by the scheme;

2.7 Specify whether, in determining if a child is to be granted or refused admission to a school in their area, the home LA will have regard to any information provided by the maintaining authority as to whether the child is to be granted a place at a school in that authority's area.

3. Timetable – September 2026 co-ordinated Reception Year admissions:

Key Action	Scheme Date
Publication of information (composite prospectus/admissions booklet) on ECC website	**By 12 September 2025**
Reference to start of application process sent to all Essex infant and primary schools and early year providers	**By 10 November 2025**
Primary school applications open for Essex County Council residents – online application systems opens	**10 November 2025**
LA notifies schools of all preference expressed for the school at that point in the process	**5 December 2025**
National closing date for all applications. *The online application system is closed after this date*	**15 January 2026**
Inter-LA data exchange of applications undertaken	**February 2026**
Lists for ranking lists provided to all infant/primary schools (including all application detail) for prioritising ALL applications against their over-subscription criteria and necessary checks, etc. *subject to completion of data exchange*	**By 6 February 2026**
Admission authorities will apply their own admission criteria and rank all preferences received	**6 – 20 February 2026**
LA to receive completed lists of applications ranked in accordance with admissions criteria from ALL admission authorities	**No later than 5pm on 20 February 2026**
LA to process applications with reference to allocation lists and parental preference to establish 'best fit' of offers. Inter-LA data exchange of offers undertaken	**March 2026**
LA to send 'final' allocation lists to all infant and primary schools in Essex *subject to completion of data exchange*	**By 9 April 2026**
National Offer Day Offer notification sent to ECC residents	**16 April 2026**
LA maintains waiting lists for all schools and fills places that become vacant	**April 2026 until 31 August 2026**
Waiting lists cease to be held by the LA. Waiting lists sent to Academies, Foundation and VA schools	**From 1 September 2026**

4. Terms of Reference:

4.1 ***Applications:***

The common application form, available as an online or paper form, is the only acceptable form of application.

The availability of the application forms will be publicised on the Council's website for parents of all Essex resident children expecting to commence education in Reception Year during the academic year 2026-2027.

Parents/Carers will be able to apply online.

The form will collect the basic data (pupil name, date of birth, address[1], telephone number, parent/carer details, whether the child is cared for by a local authority (or is a previously looked after child), reasons for the preferences, any sibling link including their age cohort and whether the application is being made on grounds of exceptional medical circumstances).

4.2 ***Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs):***

Some admissions authorities (e.g. selective schools and faith schools) may have to ask parents to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) to gain additional information to enable them to fully apply their admission criteria.

NB: A SIF is not an application form and must be completed <u>in addition to</u> the common application form (referred to above).

Schools will generally send SIFs to parents/carers when notified by the LA of a preference for the school from a parent/carer. A SIF must not request details of a parent/carer's preferences for any other school(s).

In the event of a school needing to use a SIF, a copy of the form must be sent to all statutory consultees as part of the normal consultation on admissions arrangements.

5. Scope of the Scheme:

5.1 The overall scheme for applies to all admissions to maintained infant and primary schools (and Academies) within Essex County Council LA for pupils born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 (inclusive).

[1] proof of address may be requested – ideally a **copy of** a driving licence or council tax bill, otherwise two recent utility bills will be accepted.

6. Key Features of the Scheme:

6.1 A common application form, available online and printed in the *Primary Education in Essex booklet* (also available online), enabling parents/carers to apply for up to four schools in preference order.

6.2 An online application to be submitted (or a paper application to be returned) to the LA no later than the closing dated specified in the table above.

6.3 Parents/carers will express a single preference for each school they wish to apply for. If schools require a SIF to be completed to fully apply its criteria, parents/carers must complete this in addition to the LA's application.

6.4 Every eligible Essex resident who applies, as far as practicable, will be offered a single school place on the offer date specified in the table above.

6.5 Essex LA will send offers of places to all Essex resident parents who have applied irrespective of which LA area the school is located (where a place is being offered).

6.6 Foundation, voluntary aided (VA) schools and Academies will continue to be their own admission authorities and will apply their own admission criteria to all applicants. They will also continue to be responsible for organising and presenting admission appeals.

6.7 Essex LA will continue to co-ordinate admissions and hold waiting lists for those parents/carers unsuccessful in gaining places at any school ranked higher than the place offered until the dated specified in the table above.
Schools that are their own admission authority and wish to make offers from a waiting list before this time will need to notify the LA so that the offer can be sent on their behalf.

6.5 The Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme will be reviewed annually.

7. Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Reception Year in Essex Infant and Primary Schools 2026-2027:

7.1 ***Application Form:***

7.1.1 The responsibility for applying for a primary/infant school place rest with parents/carers.

The availability of the common application form, available online, will be publicised on the Council's website. The form will also be available in paper form on request from the LA.

Parents/carers will be able to make applications online and refer to the Council's website of admission policy information published in the relevant area directories (published online).

The common application form, completed either online or on paper, will be the only acceptable forms of application.

7.1.2 The application form will allow parents/carers to express a preference for up to four infant and/or primary schools in order of preference (including any non-Essex schools).

7.1.3 The *Primary Education in Essex* booklet will include notes of guidance explaining the operation of the co-ordinated scheme, including a timetable, and advice on completing the application form. Individual school's admissions policies will be detailed in the *Primary Schools Admission Policy Directory* for the relevant area.

7.1.4 An online application must be submitted, or a paper application form returned, to the LA by the closing date of 15 January 2026.

7.1.5 The ranked order of parental preference will remain confidential between the parent/carer and the LA (unless disclosed by parental comment in their application), and other LAs where relevant, unless the applicant decides to make an appeal (see 8.2).

7.2 ***Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs):***

7.2.1 Admission authorities will only have a SIF if they need to collect any further information from a parent which is required to enable them to apply the school's admissions policy.

Admission authorities (the governing body for foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies and the LA for community and VC schools) will be responsible for sending this form to parents/carers as required, generally when they receive details of the application from the LA.

These forms must be returned directly to the relevant school. A SIF must not request details of the parent/carer's ranking of the school in relation to other preferences.

7.2.2 Schools that require a parent to complete a SIF will be identified in the relevant *Primary Schools Admission Policy Directory*.

7.2.3 A SIF alone does not constitute an application for a school place. Applications can only be made on the common application form (online or paper).

7.3 ***Processing Applications:***

7.3.1 All application forms (online or paper) must be received by the LA by the closing date of 15 January 2026.

If a Governing Body receives applications directly, they must send them directly to the LA.

7.3.2 The LA will co-ordinate applications and the offer of places for all Essex schools, acting as a clearing house for other admissions authorities (the governing bodies of foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies) and as the admission authority for community and VC schools.

7.3.3 The LA will notify schools of every preference expressed for that school together with all the applicants details (apart from the ranking of the preference unless this is required – see 7.1.5) by use of electronic lists, which will be provided to schools

once between the start of the application process in November and the closing date for applications.

7.3.4 Schools are permitted to remind parents who have not submitted a formal application but who appear on their own expression of interest register.

7.3.5 A full and final list of all on time applicants for a school will be sent to that school by 6 February 2026 (subject to completion of data exchanges).

The list will set out all pupil information and include details of the number of first, second, third and fourth preferences. Schools will not be advised what preference they are named for any individual applicant (see 7.1.5)

Where VA, foundation schools and Academies use straight line distance as a criterion, the LA will supply this information using a computerised GIS system.

Regular updates of late applications will also be provided.

7.3.6 VA, foundation schools and Academies must provide the LA with their lists of applications, ranked in accordance with their admission policy, by 20 February 2026. This list **must rank all applications** received.

7.3.7 The LA, using preference rankings and the ranked offer data supplied by foundation, VA schools and Academies (and offer data supplied by other LAs) will match the provisional allocations of places against each parent's ranking. The following will then apply:

Where a parent's first preference can be met:
A place will be allocated at the first preference school and the LA will then not consider any applications for schools at second preference or below.

Where a parent's first preference cannot be met but the second preference can be met:
A place will be allocated at the second preference school. The application for the first preference school will be placed on the waiting list. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at third preference or below.

Where a parent's first and second preference cannot be met but the third preference can be met:
A place will be allocated at the third preference school. The application for the first and second preference schools will be placed on the waiting lists. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at fourth preference or below.

This process will continue until all preferences are exhausted.

Where none of the parent's preferences can be met:
A place will be offered at the nearest school with spaces available.

The right of a statutory appeal will be given for all preferences which have not been offered.

7.4 ***Exchange of data with other LAs:***

7.4.1 Where Essex LA is made aware that a place is to be offered by another LA for a school with a higher ranked preference, any application for a lower ranked preference will not be actioned. If this information is not available multiple offers may occur.

The LA will use the Pan-London Co-ordinated Admissions System (PLR) to securely exchange information with other LAs, which is made up of 38 authorities in and neighbouring London, or the School to School site (S2S) to exchange information with LAs that are outside of the PLR system.

7.5 ***Late Applications and changes of preferences***

7.5.1 Applications received after the closing date will be accepted but may be treated as late applications. This means they will be considered after all on time applications have been processed.

However, if a late application is received on or before 30 January 2026 and the LA considers the circumstances for late submission to be exceptional, the applications will be considered as on time.

7.5.2 Other applications submitted after the closing date will be accepted but treated as late applications. Admission authorities will be asked to rank the applicant in line with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days.

Late applications will only be considered after all on time applications have been considered and the initial allocation of places has been made.

7.5.3 A new on time preference cannot be added after the closing date, to an application form received on time, unless in accordance with 7.5.1, the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional.

Any new application form/preference received after 30 January 2026 will be held and not considered until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2026.

7.5.4 Changes in the order of preferences already expressed will not be accepted after the closing date, unless the reason is for a change of address. No such changes shall be permitted after 30 January 2026 until after the first round of offers has been made on 16 April 2026.

7.5.5 After 16 April 2026 the details of any applications received from parents who move into the area will be sent to schools as and when they are received.

Schools will be required to rank them in accordance with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days.

Names will be added to waiting lists in accordance with the admission criteria where appropriate.

7.6 ***Allocation of Places:***

7.6.1 The LA will send offers to parents on 16 April 2026 offering a place at the allocated school. Parents/carers should confirm rejection of a place within two weeks only if they do not wish to accept the place offered. Non confirmation of a rejection will be deemed to be an acceptance of the offer made.

For those that have had an application refused, parents will have a right of appeal to an independent panel.

Parents/carers who submitted their applications online will be able to access the outcome of their applications via the internet from 16 April 2026 and should receive an email informing them of the outcome of their application.

7.6.2 If an offer of a place is declined the LA will reallocate the place from the waiting list, in accordance with the parental rankings and the school's admission policy.

7.6.3 For pupils who, through the allocation process, have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools the LA will allocate and offer a place at the nearest school that has places available.

7.6.4 The LA will inform schools and other LAs where necessary, of the allocations made.

7.7 ***Co-ordinated arrangements between the national offer date and September 2026:***

7.7.1 Where necessary the LA will hold waiting lists for all schools until the end of August 2026 and continue to allocate places from the waiting lists if spaces become available.

After this point, the LA will hand over the waiting lists for foundation, VA schools and Academies to individual schools. The LA will continue to hold the waiting lists for community and VC schools until the end of the autumn term (31 December 2026) and offer places as appropriate from these lists. Thereafter, parents will have the opportunity to register their continued interest in a place.

7.7.2 From the national offer day (16 April 2026) up to the end of August 2026 the LA will continue to co-ordinate admission arrangements for potential Year R pupils and make all offers to Essex residents on behalf of Essex infant and primary schools. All new applications will continue to be made on the common application form. The online system will be unavailable for new applications following the closing date of 15 January 2026.

7.7.3 The offer of a revised school place will continue to be made by the LA on behalf of the school. If schools are contacted directly by a parent, then it should be made clear to the parent that offers can only come from the LA. Schools must not make offers directly.

8. ***Appeals:***

8.1 Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at a school that they had put as a preference and for which they had not been allocated a place, even where that preference was of a lower rank than the place offered.

8.2 The appeal would be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school. The LA will provide the admission authority at that time with details of the preference expressed by parents.

9. Co-ordination of pupil admissions to Year 3 of Essex junior schools 2026-2027

9.1 A separate specific scheme is published for admissions into Year 3 of junior schools in Essex for September 2026. This is available to view on the website at www.essex.gov.uk/admissions.

10. Applications for School Places Received In-Year (mid year):

For the purposes of primary and junior school admissions an in-year (otherwise known as mid-year or casual) application is defined as any application for a place in Year Groups 1-6, or an application for a Year R (infant and primary schools) or Year 3 (junior schools) made on or after 1 September in the academic year in which the child is to be admitted to the school.

The arrangements detailed below shall therefore apply to applications submitted on or after 1 September 2026 for children to be admitted into Year Groups R-6 during the school year September 2026 to July 2027.

10.1 Introduction:

10.1.1 The School Admissions Code 2021 stipulates that there is no requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in year applications for places outside the normal admissions round (i.e. applications other than for the start of Reception in infant and primary schools or Year 3 in junior schools).

10.1.2 The County Council, however, will co-ordinate all in-year applications for infant, primary and junior school places at community and voluntary controlled schools, for whom the Council is the admission authority. The arrangements below will therefore, apply with effect from 1 September 2026.

10.2 Key operational requirements

10.2.1 There will be a common application form, produced by the LA which will be available on the Essex County Council website and on demand from the LA's School Admissions Team, enabling parents to apply for up to four community or voluntary controlled Essex infant/primary/junior schools in preference order.

10.2.2 Essex LA will send all offers of places for community and voluntary controlled schools to parents who have applied for a school place, where that place is for a school in the Essex LA area.

10.2.3 Academies, foundation and VA schools will continue to be their own admission authority and responsible for handling in-year applications and will also continue to be responsible for all admission decisions, organising and presenting admission appeals.

10.2.4 These arrangements will be reviewed annually.

10.3 Scope of the arrangements

10.3.1 The overall arrangements apply to all applications made by parents/carers for an in-year place at any community or voluntary controlled infant, primary or junior school in the Essex LA area.

11. Scheme for the co-ordination of 'in-year' pupil admissions to community and voluntary controlled schools only in Essex for the academic year 2026-2027

11.1 *Application Form*

11.1.1 There will be a single common application form for all in-year applications for infant/primary/junior schools. The form will be available on the ECC website.

The common application form will be the only acceptable form of application.

11.1.2 The form will allow parents/carers to express a preference for up to four infant/primary junior schools in order of preference. In the event that parents/carers are applying for more than one school; the order of parental preferences will remain confidential to the LA. Preference ranks will be shared with other LA's where relevant or if the applicant decides to make an appeal (see 11.6.2)

11.1.3 Parents wishing to apply for a place at a school in the area of another LA will need to follow the application procedures set down in that LA. Likewise parents from other LA wishing to apply for Essex schools will need to apply directly to Essex using the Essex application form.

11.2 *Processing Applications*

11.2.1 The LA will co-ordinate applications and the offer of places for all community and voluntary controlled schools in Essex for whom the Council is the admission authority

11.2.2 Upon receiving a completed common application form, the LA will contact the relevant school(s) to confirm their current numbers on roll. Schools must respond to the LA within 2 school days of receiving the request.

11.2.3 Following receipt of number on roll information, if the school(s) indicate(s) that the number on roll in the relevant year group is lower than the admissions number, the LA will consider a place available at that school, unless otherwise indicated.

11.2.4 In the case of multiple applications, the LA, using preference rankings will match the allocation of places against the applicant's ranking upon receipt of number on roll information. The following will then apply:

Where a parent's first preference can be met:

A place will be allocated at the first preference school and the LA will then not consider any applications for schools at second preference or below.

Where a parent's first preference cannot be met but the second preference can be met:
A place will be allocated at the second preference school. The application for the first preference school will be formally refused and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal. The LA will not consider an application to a third preference school where one exists.

Where a parent's first and second preference cannot be met but the third preference can be met:
A place will be allocated at the third preference school. The LA will not consider an application to a fourth preference school where one exists. The application for the first and second preference schools will be formally refused, and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal.

Where none of the parent's preferences can be met:
The applications for all preferred schools will be formally refused and the parent advised of their right of statutory appeal. See point 11.3.4 below.

11.2.5 In the event of a parent applying for multiple schools where more than one school has a place available in the relevant year group, the LA will offer a place at the highest ranked school with a place available and send a copy of the offer notification to the school.

*11.3 **Allocation of places***

11.3.1 The LA will contact all parents who have submitted an in-year application form, no later than 15 school days from the receipt of the application confirming the offer and/or refusal of a place. Non rejection of the offer will be deemed to be an acceptance of the offer made.

11.3.2 In the case of more complex applications, it may not be possible to comply with the above timescales in all instances.

11.3.3 If an offer of a place is declined the LA will inform the school concerned.

11.3.4 For pupils who have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools, in the case of pupils without a school place, the LA will offer a place at the nearest school with a place available.

11.3.5 The LA will inform other LAs where necessary, of the allocations made.

11.5 Appeals

11.6.1 Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at any school that they apply for where they are refused a place.

11.6.2 Any appeal lodged will be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school within Essex.