

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for secondary schools in the area of Sunderland Local Authority

Introduction

1. This scheme is made by Sunderland City Council under the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and applies to all Secondary Schools in Sunderland.

The proposed Co-ordinated Admission scheme for Sunderland LA is set out below and complies with the changes introduced in the new School Admissions Code 2021.

A separate scheme exists in relation to primary schools

Interpretation

2. In this Scheme -

"the LA" means Sunderland City Council acting in their capacity as local authority;

"the LA area" means the area in respect of which the LA is the local authority;

"primary education" has the same meaning as in section 2(1) of the Education Act 1996;

"secondary education" has the same meaning as in section 2(2) of the Education Act 1996;

"primary school" has the same meaning as in section 5(1) of the Education Act 1996;

"secondary school" has the same meaning as in section 5(2) of the Education Act 1996;

"school" means a community or voluntary school (but not a special school) which is maintained by the LA;

"voluntary controlled schools" means such of the schools as are voluntary controlled schools, where the LA sets the admissions criteria and offers places;

"VA schools" means such of the schools as are voluntary-aided schools;

"academy" means such of the schools as have academy status;

"admission authority" in relation to a community or voluntary controlled school means the LA and, in relation to a VA or Free school or academy means the governing body of that school;

"the specified year" means the school year beginning at or about the beginning of September 2026;

"admission arrangements" means the arrangements for a particular school or schools which govern the procedures and decision making for the purposes of admitting pupils to the school;

"parent/carer/carer" means any person who holds parental/carer responsibility as defined under the 1989 Children Act and with whom the child normally resides;

"casual admission" means any application for a place in the first year of secondary education that is received after 18 March 2026 including those received during the academic year commencing in September 2026 and applications for a place in any other year group received at any time from the commencement of the Scheme; and

"eligible for a place" means that a child has been placed on a school's ranked list at such a point, which falls within the school's published admission number.

Commencement and extent

This scheme applies in relation to the admission arrangements for the schools for admission year 2026/2027 (the specified year).

The LA will include in its admission arrangements for the specified year the provisions set out in Schedule 1 to this scheme, or provisions having the same effect.

The governing body of each of the VA schools and academies will include in its admission arrangements for the specified year the provisions set out in the Schedule, so far as relevant to that school, or provisions having the same effect.

The Scheme

1. The Scheme shall be determined in accordance with the provisions set out in Schedule 1 and processed in accordance with the timetable set out in Schedule 2.
2. The Scheme shall apply to every secondary school in the LA area as identified in Appendix 1 (except special schools) and shall take effect from 1 August 2026.
3. The Scheme will also include applications from parent/carers seeking admission to Sunderland schools who live within other LAs.
4. We will also co-ordinate our admission process with any other Admission Authorities where relevant.

SCHEDULE 1

PART 1 - THE SCHEME

1. There will be a standard form known as the Application form (AF).
2. The AF will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into the first year of secondary education in the specified year, and for any applications made for a "casual admission" into any year group in the admissions round leading up to, and during, the academic year 2026/2027.
3. The AF must be used as a means of expressing up to 3 preferences for the purposes of section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, by parent/carers resident in the LA area wishing to express a preference for their child-
 - a. to be admitted to a school within the LA area (including VA schools and academies);
 - b. to be admitted to a school located in another LA's area (including VA schools and academies).

4. The AF will •

- a. allow the parent/carer to express up to 3 preferences by completing the form, including, where relevant, any schools outside the LA's area, in rank order of preference,
- b. invite parent/carers to give their reasons for each preference,
- c. specify the closing date and where the application form must be returned, in accordance with paragraph 10.

5. The LA will make appropriate arrangements to ensure:

- a. that the AF is available on request from the LA and it is possible to apply on-line at www.sunderland.gov.uk/admissionsonline and
- b. that the written explanation of the co-ordinated admissions scheme will be available within the Admission to Secondary Schools booklet.

6. The LA will take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- a. every parent/carer resident in the LA area who has a child in their last year of primary education receives a written explanation of how to apply; and
- b. every parent/carer whose application falls within the category of a casual admission receives a copy of the AF (and written explanation), on request, and understands the process.

Parent/carers will be advised that they will receive no more than one offer of a school place and that:

- (i) a place will be offered at the highest ranking nominated school for which they are eligible for a place under the admission criteria; and
- (ii) explain that, if more than one school is nominated and no order of ranking is stated, the parent/carer will be regarded as having ranked the schools in the order appearing on the form (the first-mentioned being ranked the highest)

7. All preferences expressed on the AF are valid applications. The governing body of a VA school or Trust Board/Governing Body of an Academy can require parent/carers who wish to nominate, or have nominated, their school on the AF, to provide additional information on a supplementary form only where the additional information is required for the governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria to the application. Where a supplementary form is required, it will be sent to parent/carers by the governing body for completion and returned to the school.

8. Where a school receives a supplementary form from a Sunderland resident it will **not** be regarded as a valid application unless the parent/carer has also completed an AF and the school is nominated on it. Where supplementary forms are received directly by VA schools or academy, the school must inform the LA immediately so it can verify whether a AF has been received from the parent/carer and, if not, the LA will contact the parent/carer and ask them to complete a AF. Under the requirements of the scheme, parent/carers will not be under any obligation to complete an individual school's supplementary form where this is not strictly required for the VA school or Academy governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria.

9. Any school which operates criteria for selection by ability or aptitude must ensure that its arrangements for assessing ability or aptitude, to enable decisions to be made on nominations, conform with the timing requirements of the scheme as set out in Schedule 2.

Processing of AFs

10. Completed AFs are to be submitted to the LA by **Friday 31 October 2025**. It will be the responsibility of parent/carers to ensure that AFs are returned directly or via primary schools to the LA, in a paper format or on-line by the closing date.

Determining offers in response to the AF

11. The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the AFs. The LA will only make any decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the AF where-

- (a) it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority, or
- (b) an applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or

(c) an applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent/carer has nominated.

The LA will allocate places in accordance with the provisions set out in paragraph 18 of this Schedule.

12. Completed applications are to be submitted to the LA by the due date.

13. Completed applications that are received after the closing date will be considered on an individual basis, but the procedure must not prevent the proper processing, under the Scheme, of applications received on time.

14. The LA will process all applications. Any completed applications must be treated as a confidential communication between the parent/carer and the LA. All applications received by the closing date will be considered before any applications received after this closing date unless exceptional circumstances apply.

15. **By 28 November 2025** the LA will notify the admission authority for each of the schools of every nomination that has been made for that school, including all relevant details and any supplementary information received by this date which schools require in order to apply their oversubscription criteria. Where parent/carers have nominated a school outside the LA area, the LA will also similarly notify the relevant authority/authorities by **14 November 2025**.

16. **By 12 January 2026** the admission authority for each school will consider all applications for their school and apply the school's oversubscription criteria (if appropriate) and provide the LA with a list of all potential applicants sorted (if appropriate) according to the school's oversubscription criteria.

17. **By 19 January 2026** the admission authority for neighbouring LAs schools will provide a list of potential applicants and waiting lists (if appropriate).

18. **By 11 February 2026** the LA will match these lists against the ranked lists of the other schools nominated and:

- Where the child is eligible for a place at the parent/carers' first nominated school, that school will be allocated to the child.
- Where the child is not eligible for a place at the parent/carer first nominated school, they will be allocated a place at the school, which is the next highest ranked nominated school where the child is eligible for a place.
- Where none of the preferences can be met, the child will be offered a place at the nearest school with a vacancy. Places will be offered on the basis of distance from the centre of the home address to the main entrance of the school with priority being given to those living closest to the school. Distance is measured by the shortest safest walking distance, using a geographical information system (GIS). This uses Ordnance Survey maps and Land & Property Gazetteer (LLPG), which provides co-ordinates for every dwelling.

19. **13 February 2026** -The LA informs its secondary schools of the pupils to be offered places at their schools, and informs other LAs of places in Sunderland schools to be offered to their residents.

20. On 2 March 2026 parent/carers will be notified whether they are being offered a place. The following information will be provided:

- The name of the school at which a place is offered;
- The reasons why the child is not being offered a place at any of the other higher ranked schools nominated on the AF;
- Information about their statutory right of appeal against the decisions to refuse places at the other nominated schools;
- Explain that the child will be considered for any places that might become available in schools they ranked higher than the school they are offered, in the re- allocation process after 30 March 2026.
- Contact details for the schools (in the case of nominated VA schools and academies where they were not offered a place) and all relevant LAs, so that they can lodge an appeal.

The letter will not inform parent/carers of places still available at other schools.

21. 30 March 2026: the deadline for parent/carers to accept the place offered. If they do not respond by this date it will be assumed that they have accepted the place, however the LA will continue to pursue parent/carers for written confirmation of acceptance for oversubscribed schools.

Re-allocation Lists (Waiting lists)

22. Children will be considered under the reallocation process for any places if they become available, after 2 March 2026 but before 30 March 2026, at any school they have ranked higher on their AF than the school they were offered. For example, where a parent/carer has originally been allocated a place at their second preference school, they may be considered for their first preference but not their third and so on. Where a parent/carer has been offered a place at a school, which they did not nominate on their AF, they may be considered for all the schools they did nominate on their AF.

Where a parent/carer receives a place at their highest ranked school, they will not normally be considered for re-allocation, nor will they be offered a place at any other school simply because it has places available.

Where there are more applicants than places available, than the priorities used within the school's admission criteria will be applied to all applicants according to ranking.

23. 30 March 2026: The LA re-allocates any places that may have become vacant since 2 March and in accordance with the school admission criteria, which will include the following:

- those who have not been offered any school place, for example, late applications from parent/carers who have just moved into the area and have not been offered a school place;
- those who have subsequently expressed a preference for a new school not originally expressed on the AF, which will be ranked lower than any other previous preferences ranked on the AF.

PART 2 - LATE APPLICATIONS

24. The closing date for applications in the normal admissions round is **31 October 2025**. As far as is reasonably practicable applications for places in the normal admissions round that are received late *for a good reason* will be accepted provided they are received **before 12 January 2026**, the date the allocation procedures begin. Examples of what will be considered as good reason include: when a lone parent/carer has been ill for some time, or has been dealing with the death of a close relative; a family has just moved into the area or is returning from abroad (proof of ownership or tenancy of a Sunderland property will be required in these cases). Other circumstances will be considered and each case decided on its own merits.

LATE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AFTER 12 JANUARY 2026

25. Applications received after 12 January 2026 (which are not deemed as exceptional) will be considered as late and will not be processed until after 2 March 2026.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AFTER 2 MARCH 2026 BUT BEFORE 30 MARCH 2026

26. Applications made direct to any school on the AF must be forwarded to the LA immediately. Where only the supplementary form is received the school must inform the LA immediately so it can verify whether an AF has been received from the parent/carer and, if not, contact the parent/carer and ask them to complete an AF. The LA will enter the details onto its central database and, after consultation with the relevant admission authority, offer a place at the school highest in the parent/carer's order of preference that has a vacancy or if this is not possible, at the nearest appropriate school with a vacancy.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AFTER 30 MARCH 2026

27. Applications received after 30 March 2026, and for places in year groups other than the normal year of entry to secondary school, will be treated as casual admissions. These applications should be made on the AF and sent to the LA, which maintains the school, which will

- determine any application for a community or controlled school for which it is the admission authority; and
- if the application is for a voluntary aided school or academy refer the application to the governing body of the school, which will make a determination and notify both the parent/carer and the LA. Parent/carers who are refused admission must be offered a right of appeal.

28. If any parent/carers approach voluntary aided schools or academies directly about a casual admission, the governing body must ensure that the parent/carer completes an AF (if they have not already done so). The AF should be sent to the maintaining LA as soon as practically possible, along with the governing body's decision on the application. The governing body will notify the LA of its decision in advance of notifying the parent/carers and, if the parent/carer is refused a place, the right of appeal must be offered.

29. The LA will keep track of any pupils who apply for casual admissions, and intervene as appropriate to ensure that they are placed in a school without undue delay, particularly in respect of looked after children.

WAITING LISTS FOR NORMAL YEAR OF ENTRY

30. Waiting lists will be kept until **31 December 2026** for Community Schools. Academies and Aided & Free schools may hold their waiting list for up to one academic year but this will be confirmed within their admission criteria.

SCHEDULE 2

Timetable of co-ordinated scheme

31 October 2025:	Applications, together with any supplementary forms (as required) to be returned to the LA.
14 November 2025:	Details of applications to be sent to other LAs.
28 November 2025:	Details of applications to be sent to VA schools and academies.
12 January 2026:	VA schools and academies provide the LA with lists of potential applicants.
11 February 2026:	The LA will match the ranked lists of all the schools and allocate places in accordance with paragraph 18 of Schedule 1.
13 February 2026:	By this date the LA will notify schools, which parent/carers have been offered places at their schools, and other LAs will be notified of places in Sunderland schools that will be offered to their residents.
2 March 2026:	Notifications sent to parent/carers.
20 March 2026:	Last date for offers to be accepted by parent/carers.
30 March 2026:	Any places that have become available will start to be allocated to parent/carers in priority order in accordance with paragraph 23 of Schedule 1.

CO-ORDINATED ADMISSIONS SCHEME -SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Admission Authorities in the Area of Sunderland to which the Scheme applies

The Scheme applies to the Governing Body as the Admission Authority for the following Academies:

Academy 360	Portsmouth Road Sunderland SR4 9BA
Biddick Academy	Biddick Lane Washington NE38 8AL
Castle View Enterprise Academy	Cartwright Road Sunderland SR5 3DX
Christ's College	Nookside Sunderland SR4 8PG
Farrington Community Academy	Allendale Road Sunderland SR3 3EL
Hetton Academy	North Road Hetton-le-Hole DH5 9JZ
Kepier	Dairy Lane Houghton-le-Spring DH4 5BH
Monkwearmouth Academy	Torver Crescent Sunderland SR6 8LQ
Oxclose Community Academy	Dilston Close Washington NE38 0LN
Red House Academy	Rutherglen Road Sunderland SR5 5LN
Sandhill View Academy	Grindon Lane Sunderland SR3 4EN
Southmoor Academy	Ryhope Road Sunderland SR2 7TF
St Aidan's Catholic School	Willow Bank Road Sunderland SR2 7HJ
St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy	Thornhill Terrace Sunderland SR2 7JN
St Robert of Newminster Catholic School	Biddick Lane Washington NE38 8AF

Thornhill Academy

Thornholme Road
Sunderland SR2 7NA

Venerable Bede CE Academy

Tunstall Bank
Sunderland SR2 0SX

Washington Academy

Spout Lane
Washington NE37 2AA