



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you



**Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council
Secondary Schools for the 2024/2025 academic year.**

For September 2024 entry

Determined on 18 January 2023

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Introduction

Reading Borough Council delivers its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). BFfC is an independent, not-for-profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading.

The Reading coordinated scheme was last consulted on between 17 October 2018 and 10 December 2018. There have been no significant changes since that consultation took place, therefore no requirement for a public consultation.

This Scheme is made under section 84 of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of admissions arrangements (England) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this coordinated scheme for secondary school admissions is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child **resident in Reading Borough**, who has applied, receives **one offer** of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. At its heart is clear communication between Reading school admissions, other local authorities, community, and all state schools in Reading.

Parents/carers who live in the Borough of Reading **must** apply to Reading school admissions if they require a place for their child in any state school as part of a routine admissions round, including schools in other local authorities, academies and free schools. Applications cannot be submitted to a school or to the local authority in which the school is situated. Parents/carers living within any other local authority areas must apply through their own local authority admissions service.

Coordination with Reading school admissions does not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements. Admission authorities for Reading schools will need to comply with the timetable set out below. As all schools in Reading are foundation, voluntary aided or academies, the governing body of each school will consult (if necessary) and determine their own admission arrangements for September 2024.

These arrangements deal mainly with a child's admission to secondary school during the school year from September 2024 to August 2025. The children concerned are typically those born between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013. The place offered is a full-time place from September 2024.

National Offer Day for Secondary Admissions is 1 March 2024

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Applications

Reading Borough Council will put in place procedures to, where possible, ensure all parents/carers living in the Borough of Reading (with a child eligible to start secondary school in September 2024) will be aware of the application process. Eligible children living in Reading will receive information about the process in early September 2023. Children who attend Reading schools, but who are not resident in Reading, will be advised to apply to their home local authority.

Parents/carers are encouraged to apply online via the Reading Parent Portal. The site will be open from **8 September 2023 until 31 October 2023**.

Parents/carers will be invited to list four preferred schools and rank them in priority order. Parents/carers may also give reasons for their preferences. Parents/carers may list any state schools, including those outside the local authority; this includes academies, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools.

The Reading common application form (and the online terms and conditions) will include a statement requiring parents to confirm they have read the *Guide for Parents and Carers* and accept the policies and procedures in that document.

Parents/carers should return their completed forms directly to the school admissions team at BFFC.

Parents/carers will complete the common application form online by the agreed deadline. The school admissions team will validate the application address. Validation, where possible, will be by reference to Council Tax data held by the local authority. Where this is not possible, proof of residence will be required in the form of ownership documents or tenancy agreement.

Where, as part of its admission arrangements, a school requires additional information, parents/carers may also choose to complete a supplementary form to support their application. This should be submitted separately to the school. The *Guide for Parents and Carers* will identify those Reading schools for which a supplementary form may be necessary. These forms will be available from the BFFC website. Supplementary forms are not applications and parent/carers must apply to Reading school admissions either on the common application form or online.

National Closing Date is **31 October 2023**.

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Late Applications

Applications received after the closing date will be treated as 'late' applications. However, if the late submission of the application is caused by extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) the application may be accepted as "on time". The reason for late submission must be supported with documentary evidence received before **1 January 2024**.

Where no evidence is provided, it will be assumed that the application could reasonably have been submitted by the closing date. In such cases, the application will be treated as late and considered after all on time applications have been allocated.

All applications received from the 1 January 2024 are considered late and will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading (or to the appropriate local authority) approximately two weeks after national offer day.

In these cases, parents/carers will be informed about the outcome of their application as per the timetable below, after National Offer Day. Unsuccessful applications for oversubscribed schools will be added to the waiting lists of those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Late applications will be processed approximately two weeks after national offer day. The first round of post-National Offer Day allocations will be May 2024. After this date, late application will be processed regularly. In each case, the cut-off date for consideration in each round of allocations will be 1 week prior to the allocation date.

Changes of preference

Where the parent/carer wishes to change their preferences, they must submit a new application form (paper or online). If this is received by the school admissions team before **31 October 2023** it will be accepted as on time and will replace any previous application. Any preferences to be retained from a previous application must be listed on any subsequent application.

Changes of preference received after **31 October 2023** will be treated as late applications in the way described above. However, applications for late change of preference where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) may be treated as on time, provided written evidence is supplied to support the late submission. This should be received by the school admissions team before **1 January 2024**. If no evidence is provided, the application will be treated as late. Any application for change of preference(s) received after **1 January 2024** will replace any previous application and be marked as late.

Please think very carefully about applying after this date, particularly if you have already submitted an on-time application.

Approximately two weeks after national offer day, late changes of preferences will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading or to the appropriate local authority to be considered.

Change of Address

As required by the School Admissions Code 2021, changes of address made after **31 October 2023 and before 1 January 2024**, may be considered as on time. If an applicant changes address after the **1 January 2024**, they will need to submit a new application based on the new address. The new application will be marked as 'late' and their previous application may be withdrawn. Documentary evidence of the change of address will be required.

Processing Applications

Exchange of information

As per the timetable below, the Reading school admissions team will forward applications to other local authorities and admission authorities in Reading. At the same time, other local authorities will forward applications to Reading for their residents to be considered for Reading schools.

Depending on the arrangements agreed with the governing body of each school, the school admissions team will provide the school with relevant information to enable them to rank applicants using their oversubscription criteria, as per the timetable. Reading school admissions will not pass on the details of the parent/carer preference ranking to the school, and no school will be told about other schools a parent has listed.

As per the timetable, each admission authority in Reading will rank applications according to their published oversubscription criteria and return ranked lists to the school admissions team.

Resolving multiple offers

As per the timetable, Reading school admissions will inform other local authorities of places offered in Reading schools to their residents. During the exchange of information, Reading school admissions will consider all cases where a child can be offered more than one of their preferences. In such cases, a place offered will be at the school a parent/carer listed highest in preference.

If a place cannot be offered at one of the preferred schools listed by the parent/carer, a place will normally be offered at the catchment school (if that school has spaces remaining) or the nearest Reading school with a place available. If the offered school is one where Reading Borough Council is not the admission authority, this will be in consultation with the governing

body of the school in question. If the nearest school with places is a faith school, parents/carers will be offered this as an option. Should the parent/carer be unhappy with a faith school being offered, they will be informed of other schools with available spaces (which may be further from their home).

Where no places are available at any Reading schools, alternative schools (outside Reading Borough) may be offered. Such an offer will depend on availability and the agreement of the appropriate admission authority. This will not preclude parents/carers from requesting an alternative school, nor from lodging an appeal for their preferred school with the admission authority.

Informing schools

As per the timetable, the school admissions team will send each Reading Secondary school a list of pupils to be offered a place at their school. This will be confidential to the school and must not be passed on to parents/carers.

Informing Parents

On **National Offer Day**, parents/carers who submitted an online application will receive an email with a formal offer and may view their offer online.

Parents/carers who submitted a paper application will receive a letter (posted 2nd Class) containing their child's offer of a secondary school place. The formal offer will identify whether the offer is made on behalf of the governing body of a school or another local authority. The letter will:

- Inform parents/carers of their child's offered school.
- Inform parents/carers how to accept a school place and the deadline for accepting.
- Provide information on school transport.

If the offered school is not their first preference, parents/carers will also be supplied with the following information:

- Where they can find information showing how places were allocated at oversubscribed schools in Reading.
- How to submit an appeal.
- If the place offered is not their highest preference school(s), the child's name will be added to the waiting list(s) of any school(s) they listed higher in preference. Parents/carers are required to advise Reading school admissions if they do not wish their child's name to remain on a waiting list.
- Contact information for other local authorities.

Waiting Lists

Two weeks after National Offer Day, 'waiting lists' will be administered for schools with more applicants than places available. A child's position on a waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria of the school. When a place becomes available, it will be offered to the child who is top of the waiting list. A child's position on a waiting list may go up or down for a number of reasons (e.g. pupil withdrawals or new and revised Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the 2024/2025 academic year).

applications). When a place is allocated from the waiting list, the child's current allocation (for a lower preference school) will be removed and allocated to another student, if appropriate. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school admissions team if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list of a school. It will be assumed that a child is to remain on the waiting list of all schools listed higher in preference to one offered (unless the parent/carer indicates otherwise).

Waiting lists for all schools in Reading Borough will be kept until the end of **31 December 2024**. After this date, the policy of the individual school(s) will be followed. When the coordinated admissions round ends, on **31 August 2024**, waiting lists will continue to be managed as part of the In-Year admissions process and follow t.

Withdrawing a place

If the offered place is not accepted within four weeks of national offer day, Reading school admissions will send a reminder and allow a further seven days for a reply. If there is still no response, the offer may be withdrawn. If it arises that a school offer was based on fraudulent, or intentionally misleading, information (which denied the place to another child), the place will be withdrawn.

Requests for admission outside the normal age group

In exceptional circumstances, applications may be received for children who are not currently studying in the school year appropriate to their age. Where this arises, the schools requested will consider the circumstances of each case. Applications for these children will normally be processed with all other children, and these children will be permitted to enter their allocated secondary school.

Applicants should apply using the common application form by **31 October 2023**. Parents must outline their reasons for the request and supply supporting documents (e.g. information from their child's education setting or medical evidence). They should also provide confirmation from their current school that their child is studying outside their normal year group, in Year 6. The school admissions team will forward this information to the listed schools for consideration. Each case will be carefully considered by the admissions authority and parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing, before National Offer Day, setting out clearly the reasons for the decision. One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group.

Requests for schools outside Reading will be referred to the council in whose area the school is located for consideration under that council's scheme.

Transgender Students

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Where a transgender pupil wishes to apply for a single-sex school, they must do so in the normal way (outlined in this policy) by completing the Common Application Form. Reading school admissions will coordinate these admissions; however, it is for the admissions authority of the school(s) listed on the application to decide on the case. Where a place is refused, parents will be notified of their right to appeal.

Disputes between Parents

Anyone with parental responsibility may apply for their child's school place and list up to four preferred schools. However, the child's address on the application should be recorded as the place they spend most of the week as set out in our definition of 'Home Address'

When completing application forms, parents/carers must tick to confirm they have parental responsibility for the child and that their application is made with the agreement of all parties having parental responsibility.

Where parents disagree over which school preferences should be named, we recommend starting the following process as early as possible as national closing dates are fixed and cannot be extended under any circumstances:

- We urge parents to work together in the best interests of their child; it is advised that the applicant should inform all other parties who have parental responsibility before submitting the application.
- All parties should agree with the school preferences to be listed. Any disagreements should be resolved before an application is submitted.
- If parents are unable to reach an amicable agreement, they should seek legal advice or recourse through the Family Court.

The local authority will only process one application per child and will only make one offer of a school place.

Where more than one application is received, the local authority (or local authorities if parents submit applications to more than one) will contact both applicants to advise that more than one application has been received and request they complete one application with one set of preferences for their child.

All evidence must be received by published closing dates, at which point a decision will be made as to which application is processed. The local authorities concerned may contact early years or education settings noted in the application, or other professionals working with the child where applicable, to assist in their decision making. Any evidence provided after the closing date which affects the content or processing of the application, may render the application late, and delay an offer of a school place.

We will not mediate between parents where there is a dispute. Only one application will be accepted, and the final decision will rest with the local authority after all submitted evidence has been considered.

In-Year Admissions

The In- Year admissions arrangements for the school year, September 2024- July 2025 will use the determined policies of 2024/2025.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child in Year 7- Year 11 of a secondary school in the Reading Borough should in most cases apply to Reading school admissions. Most secondary schools in the borough have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements. A list of the schools to which a direct application is necessary may be obtained from the BfFC website. Where a school listed is in another local authority, the parent/carer will be advised to apply directly to that local authority and the application for that school will follow the relevant local authority's scheme

Timetable for the Secondary School Admissions Round 2023-24

Action	Date
<i>Guide for Parents and Carers</i> to be placed on BfFC Website.	By 1 September 2023
Parents/carers to receive application information.	By 8 September 2023
Online Reading Parent Portal for admissions site open.	8 September 2023 – 31 October 2023
National Closing date for receipt of applications.	31 October 2023
Late/change of preference applications accepted in extenuating circumstances; written support must be submitted at time of application.	By 31 December 2023
Application details sent to secondary schools in Reading and other local authorities. Own Admissions Authority schools to provide Reading school admissions team with a list of children ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.	During December 2023- January 2024
Coordination between other local authorities of offers that can be made to their residents in Reading schools.	By 12 February 2024
National Offer Day - Offer notifications sent to Reading Residents	1 March 2024
Online applicants can view outcome of application.	1 March 2024
Deadline for parents to accept.	15 March 2024

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Action	Date
Late applications for over-subscribed schools added to the waiting lists/change of preferences processed.	From 18 March 2024
Coordination with other LA's ends.	31 August 2024
Waiting lists held for Reading schools.	Until at least 31 December 2024