



## Coordinated Primary Admission Scheme for 2026/27 academic year

### 1. Background

The law requires Local Authorities (LAs) to establish a co-ordinated admission scheme that will apply to all state funded primary schools in their areas.

The purpose of co-ordinated admission schemes is to establish mechanisms for ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that every parent/carer of a child living in the LA area who has applied for a school place in the 'normal admission round' receives one offer of a school place on the national offer day. The scheme must also cover late applications made after the closing date, but before the start of the school year.

The Local Authority must also provide information in the composite prospectus setting out how applications that are made during the academic year for admissions to age groups other than the normal year of entry, i.e. "In-Year applications", will be dealt with.

The Council is required to inform the Secretary of State of the agreed scheme by **28 February 2025**. The Secretary of State will impose a scheme if the Council fails to notify him of the agreed scheme.

### 2. Co-ordinated scheme for the 'normal admission round'

#### 2.1 Age and entry of admission to reception

The law does not require any child to start school until the start of the term following the fifth birthday. In Blackburn with Darwen a start date in September is used for admission of all children who will become 5 during that school year. All children who were born between **1 September 2021** and **31 August 2022** may start school in the **autumn term 2026**.

#### 2.2 Deferred admission

Parent(s)/carer(s) can delay their child starting school until the term after their fifth birthday. This is known as deferred admission. Parent(s)/carer(s) who are considering deferred admission are strongly advised to still apply for a school place by the closing date. The offer of a reception place will be kept open, even if the child does not take it up until later in the academic year, but it must be taken up before the end of the academic year or it will be withdrawn and the parent/carer will have to apply again for admission. Free nursery places would cease at the end of the term when the child turns five.

Parent(s)/carer(s) of summer born children who wish to delay their child(ren) starting school **until September 2027** should carefully consider the information in the section about Admission outside of normal age group in the published admission arrangements for each/every school at which they wish to seek a place for their child.

If the child is refused admission to the school, then parent(s)/carer(s) have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. Parent(s)/carer(s) should note that “class size prejudice” (i.e. breach of the Infant Class Size limits) where applicable, will be considered at your appeal. Please also note that this right of appeal does not apply if your child is offered a place in another year group at the same school.

The law states that all children must receive a suitable education from the term after their fifth birthday. If parent(s)/carer(s) do not make suitable arrangements, they could be breaking the law and be prosecuted.

### 2.3 Equal preferences

It is a legal requirement on all admission authorities to consider equally all applications for admission to publicly funded infant/junior/primary schools. The rank order of preference, whether a first, second or third preference, will not be taken into consideration at this stage. If the school receives more applications than the published admission number, the relevant oversubscription criteria will be applied by the school's admissions authority to all applicants.

If it is possible to offer admission at more than one of the preferred schools, then the school at which a place will be offered will be the one that is the highest ranked on the common application form (CAF). Offers from lower preference schools will be removed and these places will be offered to other eligible children. This will ensure that each child is only offered a place at one school.

### 2.4 Fraudulent applications

If the Council or a school finds that misleading information has been given, the child may not be given a place at that school. If a place has been offered and the information given turns out to be false, that place may be withdrawn. If the place is withdrawn the application will be considered again, based on the correct information. If the application is refused a right of appeal will be given. If the child is allowed to continue at the school, their sibling(s) may not be given priority under the “sibling” category in the admission policy if they then apply for places at the school in question.

### 2.5 Stage 1 – Common application form

The Council will publish an admission prospectus. This will be available from the Council website [www.blackburn.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/admissions), any Blackburn with Darwen primary school and from the Children's Services Department from **1 September 2025**. Please note that parent(s)/carer(s) are being encouraged to apply on-line and this process will be available from **1 September 2025**.

The online application form or the common application form which is included in the prospectus for admission to all publicly funded infant/junior/primary schools must be completed by parent(s)/carer(s) of Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) children by **15 January 2026** (“the closing date”) and returned to the Council's Schools Admissions Team. Schools are also requested to return completed forms sent to them in error to the Council's Schools Admissions Team.

The online application form / common application form (CAF) will allow parent(s)/ carer(s) to express three preferences in rank order and to state reasons for the preferences. The form will also allow parent(s)/carer(s) to provide denominational reasons in support of their application e.g. baptismal / church membership and attendance / mosque membership.

Some faith aided primary schools may also require parent(s)/carer(s) to complete a supplementary information form (SIF) which is available within the Council's prospectus and should be returned to the school.

Parent(s)/carer(s) who are applying for admission under the faith category for The Olive School must also complete the supplementary information form (SIF) which is available within the Council's prospectus and should be returned to the school.

**Please note that no application will be processed without an online application form or a common application form.**

Parent(s)/carer(s) of Blackburn with Darwen children resident in the borough wishing to apply for admission at schools in neighbouring Councils must include the preference(s) on the Blackburn with Darwen application form.

PLEASE NOTE - Where more than one person with Parental Responsibility for the child submits an application for the same child, then neither application will be considered and the parents/carers will be asked to agree a single application. The local authority will require the parents to resolve matters between themselves, taking legal advice if necessary and inform the local authority which application should be processed. If agreement is not reached or a legal decision is not made before the closing date, this may affect the chances of your child being allocated a place at the preferred school(s).

### 2.6 Stage 2 - Process for considering applications

The Local Authority (LA) will provide admission authorities with details of all children whose parent(s)/carers(s) have indicated the school as a preference on the common application form by **2 February 2026**. The order of preferences will not be included in the details sent to each school.

By **28 February 2026** each admission authority will apply its own published admission criteria and return to the LA a list of all applicants, in rank order, in accordance with the published admissions criteria.

Between **2 March 2026** and **27 March 2026** the Council's Schools Admissions Team will consider the list of children that can be offered and refused admission for all schools. Where a child can be offered admission at more than one school, the LA will offer admission at the school that is the highest ranked preference. Any changes to the list of children to be offered and refused admission will be communicated to the schools.

### 2.7 Stage 3 – Letters offering a school place

The Council's Schools Admissions Team will send letters on **16 April 2026** to all parent(s)/carer(s) of BwD children informing them of the outcome of the application for admission into a primary school.

If admission is refused to any of the preferred schools, a letter will be sent which will inform parent(s)/carer(s) of the alternative school to be offered. The LA's letter will advise parent(s)/carer(s) of their right of appeal and provide details of the appeals process.

All parent(s)/carer(s) will be asked to confirm acceptance/refusal of the school place offered either by using the on-line system or by telephone to the Council's Schools Admissions Team by **30 April 2026**. After this date the LA will inform the relevant Admission Authorities of the children whose parent(s)/carer(s) have not accepted the places offered at their schools.

The Admission Authorities will write to these parent(s)/carer(s), informing them that if the place is not accepted within 7 days (either via the on-line system or by telephone), the place will be withdrawn. If after 7 days if the place has not been accepted, the Admission Authorities will tell the LA which children to withdraw from the offer list. If the school has a reserve list the LA will make further offers and inform the schools of these children. The process will continue until all places have been allocated.

For places offered at community and voluntary controlled schools, the LA (as Admission Authority) will contact parent(s)/carer(s) who have not confirmed acceptance of the place offered at those schools. If after

7 days the place has not been accepted the LA will follow the same process re withdrawing places, as the other Admission Authorities.

### 3. Late applications

#### 3.1 Late applications received between the closing date and the allocation date

The closing date will as far as possible be observed. If there are exceptional reasons for the delay, then provided the application is received before **12 March 2026** (“the cut-off date”), a late application may be considered alongside the applications which were submitted on time. The exceptional reasons may include the following:

- Parent(s)/carer(s) who have moved or are moving into the borough after the closing date
- Parent(s)/carer(s) were abroad for the whole period between the publication of the LA’s admission booklet and the closing date for the application form
- Parental/carer/child illness which required hospitalisation for the major part of the period between the publication of the LA’s admission booklet and the closing date for the application form

If the Admission Authority is not satisfied that there were relevant exceptional circumstances for the delay then any application form received after the closing date, but before places are allocated, will only be considered after all the on-time applications have been considered and allocated places.

Please note that if a late application is received after the cut-off date, it will not be possible for the Admission Authority to consider it alongside the on-time applications even if there are exceptional reasons for the delay.

Parent(s)/carer(s) of Blackburn with Darwen children will be sent letters from the LA informing them of the outcome of the application for admission to borough schools on **16 April 2026**.

#### 3.2. Applications received after the allocation date

The LA will continue to manage the co-ordinated admission arrangements after the allocation date until **31 August 2026**. If an application is made after the **31 August 2026**, the application will be processed in line with the In Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme.

Anyone applying after places have been allocated must still complete the LA common application form. The application form and any relevant documents will be passed on to the appropriate admissions authority for consideration. The LA will retain responsibility for informing parent(s)/carer(s) about the outcome of their application.

If admission is refused to any of the preferred schools, a letter will be sent which will inform parent(s)/carer(s) of the alternative school to be offered. The LA’s letter will advise parent(s)/carer(s) of their right of appeal and provide details of the appeals process.

### 4. Waiting lists & change of preferences

#### 4.1 Waiting list

All admission authorities must maintain a waiting list until 31 December in the academic year of admission for every oversubscribed school. The admission authority must use the existing oversubscription criteria to rank the children. As no distinction will be made on the waiting list between applications received on time and late applications, the waiting list will remain fluid.

The LA will maintain a waiting list for admission to community and controlled schools. Details of children who have not been offered a place at their preferred school(s), including late applicants will automatically be placed on the waiting list using the LA published oversubscription criteria.

#### 4.2 Change of preferences

A change of preference after the closing date (but before the cut-off date) will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. This is likely to be when there is a change of address. Verification must be provided e.g. letter from a solicitor exchanging contracts or a tenancy agreement.

If a parent(s)/carer(s) wishes to change a preference after the cut-off date, then they must follow the process outlined above for Applications received after the allocation date. Since this is effectively a request for admission to a school(s) not previously indicated on the original application form, the parent(s)/carer(s) must complete a fresh application form. Where a place cannot be offered, the child's details will be placed on the waiting list and an alternative place will be offered.

#### 4.3 In year admissions

The LA has formulated a scheme for the co-ordination of all in year admissions.

# Coordinated Primary Admission Scheme 2026/27

## TIMETABLE

<b>1 September 2025</b>	<b>Round opens for primary school applications</b>	Admission prospectus and common application forms published. Parent(s)/carer(s) can apply for a school place.
<b>15 January 2026</b>	<b>Closing date for primary school applications</b>	Parent(s)/carer(s) complete online application form / return common application form to the Local Authority. Applications must be submitted to the local authority by this date to be considered as 'on time' along with all supporting evidence.
<b>Between 16 January 2026 and 1 February 2026</b>	<b>The Local Authority populates primary admissions database</b>	Checks and resolves double bookings and liaises with other admission authorities and neighbouring local authorities.
<b>2 February 2026</b>	<b>LA to provide AAs with details of children who have indicated their school as a preference</b>	All preferences to be circulated between admission authorities.
<b>2 March 2026</b>	<b>Deadline for admission authorities to apply its own admissions criteria</b>	Each admission authority applies its own admissions criteria and must inform the Local Authority of the outcome of all <b>on-time</b> applications.
<b>12 March 2026</b>	<b>Cut-off date for notification of exceptional change in circumstances</b>	If there are exceptional reasons for the delay, then provided the application is received before "the cut-off date", a late application may be considered alongside the applications which were submitted on time. <i>Any information received after this date cannot be included in the initial allocation of school places, however it will be considered later in the process following 16 April 2026.</i>
<b>Between 2 March 2026 and 27 March 2026</b>	<b>LA's Schools Admissions Team will consider the list of children that can be offered and refused admission for all schools</b>	The Local Authority checks all proposed offers against the primary school preferences which parent(s)/carer(s) provided on their application and ensures that an alternative offer is made where necessary.
<b>15 April 2026</b>	<b>The Local Authority confirms offers with all maintained primary schools</b>	All maintained primary schools will be able to view all confirmed offers on the School Access Module (SAM) which includes confirmation of any alternative offers.
<b>16 April 2026</b>	<b>National Primary Offer Day</b>	Offers made to parent(s)/carer(s) by the Local Authority. Parent(s)/carer(s) who applied online can view their offer on the online parent portal. Letters notifying parent(s)/carer(s) of the school at which a place has been offered will be emailed out to those who applied online or sent by post to parent(s)/carer(s) who applied using the paper application form.
<b>30 April 2026</b>	<b>Deadline for parent(s)/carer(s) to accept or decline their offer of a place</b>	Parent(s)/carer(s) who applied online will need to log onto the online parent portal to accept their offer of a school place. Those who applied by post will need to call the School Admissions Team.
<b>15 May 2026</b>	<b>Closing date for appeals</b>	Closing Date for receipt of appeal forms for appeals to be heard in June or July 2026.
<b>June, July 2026</b>	<b>Appeals</b>	Appeals considered by an independent appeal panel.