

School Admission - First and Primary School Applications Frequently Asked Questions for September 2026

Q1. At what age can my child start school?

The law requires all children to start full-time education by the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Children who have reached their fourth birthday are entitled to attend full-time in a reception class from the September after their fourth birthday. The Reception academic year group from: 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027 is for children who were born between 01 September 2021 to 31 August 2022.

Parents must apply for a school place by the closing date 15 January 2026 for admissions in the school year 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027.

Parents are entitled to send their child to school part-time until the child reaches compulsory school age. You will need to check with the school you would like your child to attend, to see what their induction arrangements are.

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 parents have a legal responsibility to provide their child with an education either by regular school attendance or otherwise. Under this duty parents can decide to take personal, including financial, responsibility for their child's education and this is known as Elective Home Education (EHE). Information on Elective Home Education is made available through the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service by telephoning: 01905 768153.

Q2. Can I keep my child out of school until s/he is 5?

Parents may request that their child's entry to a reception class be deferred until later in the same reception academic year group. Parents cannot defer entry until the following academic year. Parents wishing to consider a deferment should discuss the situation with the Headteacher at the school. Parents must apply for a school place in the normal way at the usual time. By law children must start school at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday.

Summer Born Children

Children with a date of birth in the summer term wishing to start school in the September after their fifth birthday would start in Year 1 and consequently miss the entire reception year. To apply for a place in Year 1 and not Reception please refer to the In-Year Admissions page. Please be aware that there may not be a vacancy in Year 1 at that time.

Parents can also request that their child enter the reception class in the September after their fifth birthday, effectively in the year group below their chronological age group, delayed entry. The admissions authority of the school must make the decision based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. In the case of a Community or Voluntary Controlled School the Local Authority will request the Headteacher of the school to take account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely in order to reach a decision as to whether or not it is appropriate for the individual child to delay their entry into school and be taught permanently behind their chronological age group. The reasons for the decision must be clearly set out.

This process must be completed in advance of the closing date of 15 January 2026, in the event that the delayed entry is not approved, parents will need to make an application in time for the 2026 reception intake. Should the delayed entry be approved, you will receive details of how to proceed with an application for the following year.

Even if it is agreed that your summer born child can start school in the September following their fifth birthday in the reception class, the normal admission arrangements apply and there is no guarantee of a place. You should therefore give careful consideration to requesting delayed entry. If this is something you wish to discuss further then please contact 01905 822700.

Q3. What if my child is 4 between 1 September 2026 and 31 December 2027?

The local authority is not responsible for providing a school place for your child until the September following their fourth birthday. If your child is 4 between 1 September 2026 and 31 December 2027 s/he cannot therefore start school until September 2027.

Q4. Which school can your child attend?

The law says that the local authority must give parents the chance to state their preference for the school they wish their child to attend. The law does not give parents/carers an absolute right to "choose" the school for their child. It is important to find out the name of the catchment area school for the home address.

You may apply for other schools, including Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided Schools, important considerations for you to note:

- If your child is admitted to a first school or primary school of your preference, your child may not have the highest priority for transfer to the related middle school or high school. If the related middle school or high school is oversubscribed at the time of transfer, your child might then have to move in a different direction from other children attending the same first or primary school.
- Having gained admission to a first or primary school of your preference does not mean that younger siblings will automatically gain admission to the same school. Should the school be oversubscribed at the time of application of a younger sibling, other children have a higher priority on the oversubscription criteria.
- Applications where a preference is expressed on time will take precedence in relation to the school over where a preference is expressed after the closing date, including late changes to preferences. In all of these instances they will have precedence over those where no preference is expressed.
- You should give careful consideration to the means by which your child will travel to school (see the School Transport pages for further information).

Q5. How do you apply for a place at a First/Primary School?

The parents of ALL pupils resident in Worcestershire, including parents whose preference is for the catchment area school for the child's home address, seeking a place at any First/Primary School, including any Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided School, and any School outside Worcestershire, must complete a [Worcestershire on-line application](#) by the closing date – **15 January 2026**. (It is important that you apply by the closing date as applications received after the deadline will be classed as late and you are unlikely to be successful, even if you have a child there already or live very close to the school). If you are unable to apply on-line contact School Admissions on 01905 822700 for assistance.

Worcestershire parents are invited to state three preferences on the Common Application. All preferences are treated as equal initially, and the oversubscription criteria applied to each preference. If it is possible to make a potential offer at more than one school, then the final offer will be the school ranked highest on the application.

Please be aware that different LAs, Academies, Foundation, Free and Voluntary Aided Schools may have different admissions criteria, and therefore it is strongly advised that you ensure that you have understood the information that is available from each LA/School, before stating a preference on an application. (The Admissions Criteria for Worcestershire Academy, Foundation, Free and Voluntary Aided Schools are included under the Policies section on this website).

Please make contact with the School Admissions Team or any of the relevant LAs, if further information is required. (The contact details for neighbouring LAs can be found in the relevant 2026/27 Information for Parents Book).

Parents seeking a place at an Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided School or schools outside Worcestershire must:

- obtain from the school an admissions pack, including a prospectus which will explain if you need to provide/complete supplementary information/forms.
- complete and submit a [Worcestershire on-line application](#) naming your school preferences.

It is very important that applications are received no later than the closing date 15 January 2026.

Late applications are always considered, though it may not be possible to allocate a place in the school you prefer, if it is oversubscribed, even if the school is the catchment area school for your child's home address – (See the answer to question 9 regarding late applications).

You should inform the Headteacher of the allocated school, and School Admissions if you are withdrawing your application for any reason. School Admissions and the Headteacher must be notified immediately of any change in the child's home address.

If your child currently lives outside Worcestershire, please see answer provided to question 7 on how to apply for school places.

Q6. Why do I have to put three preferences on the application form?

You are not required to use all three preferences; however, you should consider all schools in an area in case your application for your higher preference schools is unsuccessful. If the local authority cannot offer your child a place at your preferred schools, you will be offered the nearest school to your home address that has a place available. By including three preferences, it helps the local authority consider schools that you would find acceptable for your child. **If you do not apply for your catchment school on time however, you may not be eligible for school transport.**

Q7. My child currently lives outside Worcestershire and would like a Worcestershire school place, what should I do?

You should apply to your child's home Local Authority, regardless of which schools you are placing as a preference. If you would like to express a preference for a Worcestershire school, you will need to add it as a preference on the Common Application for your child's home Local Authority. Please refer to the website of your home Local Authority for information on their School Admission process and timescales.

Q8. When should you apply?

Places in reception classes are allocated on the basis of applications received on or before the closing date of: **15 January 2026** for admissions in the school year September 2026 to August 2027. Parents who do not wish their children to start until they have reached compulsory school age must discuss their intentions with the school and must also apply for a school place by 15 January 2026, so that their application can be considered.

- Proof of application – It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure a receipt is obtained when making an application. Please retain any receipt as proof of application.
- Applications made online would have been sent a return receipt via email once the application had been submitted. Please retain as proof of submission.

Q9. How do I make an application after the closing date?

After the closing date, from 16 January 2025 until July 2026, parents and carers will be able to submit a [Worcestershire on-line application](#). If you are unable to apply on-line, a late application form (PA1) form is available on request by telephoning 01905 822700.

Q10. What if your application is late or you want to change your application after the closing date?

To make an application after the closing date of **15 January 2026**, an application must be completed and submitted to School Admissions.

Between 16 January 2026 and 28 February 2026, it is likely that a number of late applications (this includes all requests to amend applications previously submitted) will be received. The Council has agreed in its' co-ordinated scheme to accept late applications, or changes to on time applications, for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools within Worcestershire, within this timeframe, and treat them as being on time, only in the following circumstances:

- a) where a family have just moved address, (refer to the relevant Information for Parents Book); or
- b) where it is agreed, on behalf of the admission authority, that individual circumstances apply, and the delay was reasonable given the circumstances of the case.

In each case, independent supporting documentary evidence will need to be submitted with the application. In all other circumstances, or if the application is not received until after 28 February 2026, late applications will receive a lower priority and will only be considered after the applications received (or deemed to be) on time.

NB. If the late application is for an Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided School, or a school outside Worcestershire, it will be necessary to refer to the late application policy of the school or the LA in whose area the school is located.

All applications received after 28 February 2026 for the intake year, must be sent to School Admissions, and will be processed as soon as possible. An offer, or refusal of a school place, will be given by the local authority, on behalf of the relevant admission authority.

Q11. What if I am moving house?

If you are in the process of moving at the time of your application, you **MUST** provide School Admissions with some firm independent evidence of when you will actually begin to live there. This evidence must be provided before the relevant closing date for applications. This is also applicable if you are moving property and wish to have your application considered from your new property. The late application policy above applies even if your application was on submitted on time and you have simply moved property. Please read the relevant Information for Parents Book 2026/27 for full details.

Q12. Who has responsibility for the allocation of places?

If a school is oversubscribed (has more applications than places), it will use admission criteria to decide who to offer places to. Read them carefully for the schools you are interested in.

For Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, decisions are made by School Admissions. For Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided Schools decisions are made by the governing bodies of the individual schools. See published admissions policies.

Q13. How are places allocated?

School Admissions will send details to its Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided Schools of all applications received for that school, irrespective of ranking, for initial consideration, and also to neighbouring LAs, who will then apply their own oversubscription criteria.

School Admissions will then receive the outcome of these initial considerations and will compare against lists of potential offers at other schools nominated on the application, to identify any pupils, who may potentially be offered more than one place. If this is the case, then the single offer will be the higher ranked school on the application form.

If no place is available at your second or third preference schools as well, or if you have not expressed additional preferences, the Home Local Authority will name an alternative school with places available. This will normally be the nearest school to where you live with available places.

Q14. When are decisions made?

Online offers will be emailed on the **16 April 2026**. Offer letters for those who applied on a paper form will be posted on 16 April 2026 via second class postage, if you did not provide us with an email. They will be sent direct to parents, by School Admissions, even if it is on behalf of the governing body of an Academy, Foundation, Free or Voluntary Aided School, or a school in a neighbouring LA.

In the few cases where it may not be possible to offer a place at any of the preferences nominated on the application form, a place will be offered at the nearest school with available places for pupils who live in Worcestershire.

For pupils not resident in Worcestershire, the offer or refusal letters will be sent direct to parents by the home LA, even if it is for a school in Worcestershire.

Q15. What happens if you are moving into a new area?

Where families with children of school age are moving into a new area, parents should at the earliest opportunity either enquire at schools in the area or contact the Local Authority School Admissions Section in the area. You will be required to provide independent documentary evidence as proof of move to support any application you may make. If your move falls outside of the normal admissions round, then please refer to the In-Year Applications section on our website.

In the case of an In-Year Admission, please be aware that we are unable to reserve places in the event that further applications may be received, this means we will not be able to process your application more than 6 weeks in advance of the date you require the place. Please be aware that some schools may well already be full at the time of your application.

Q16. How many children may be admitted to each school?

The County Council has a duty to ensure the provision of efficient education and the efficient use of resources. Schools cannot be permitted to become overcrowded. The number of pupils that may be admitted to a school in the relevant year group (Reception intake in the case of First/Primary Schools) is known as the Published Admission Number (PAN). NB Please be aware that this number is not necessarily for other year groups in the school.

Details for each school are given in the relevant 2026/27 Information for Parents Book.

Q17. How can my child be placed on a waiting list for a particular school if the year group is full?

If your application for your preferred school is unsuccessful, you will be automatically added to the schools waiting list, which will be kept until 31 December 2026. If you wish to be considered for the waiting list for any school you had not applied for originally, you will need to make a new application for that school.

You should be aware that a school waiting list is an active document. As parents request for their children to be included on the list the position of an individual child already on the list can change. A waiting list does not give priority based simply on the date an application was added to the list, priority is based on the oversubscription policy of the school.

Waiting lists for Academy, Foundation, Free and Voluntary Aided Schools, are maintained by the individual schools and parents will need to contact the school directly, to establish the waiting list procedure in place at those schools. We will notify the schools to automatically add your child to their waiting list if you are refused a place on the national offer day, you must however check with the school to see if they require any further actions from you. Please be assured that no vacancies will be reallocated until such time that all requests/additional applications for the waiting list have been processed. If you apply late or are refused a place after that point you will need to contact the school directly in relation to the waiting list.

Waiting lists for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, are maintained by the School Admissions Team, and parents will automatically be added to the waiting list, which will be maintained until 31 December 2026. After 31 December 2026, if you still wish to be considered for any vacancies at a school, parents will need to apply, in order to be included. You can do this by emailing your request and child's details to schooladmissions@worcestershire.gov.uk