



Starting School 2024

Information for parents and carers of children applying for a Reception Year place

Children born between 01/09/19 and 31/08/20 are due to start school in September 2024. You need to make an application to us by 15 January 2024, even if your child attends a nursery/pre-school on the school site. All the information you will need regarding your Starting School 2024 application is available on our website.

Making your application

Legislation requires you to apply through your home local authority. If you live outside of Central Bedfordshire, you must contact the local authority you live in and apply to them.

We recommend that you apply online as it is quick, simple and safe. However, you can alternatively make a paper application; the forms can be downloaded from our website https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions/496/apply_for_a_new_lower_or_primary_school_place, are available from all Central Bedfordshire schools or you can request a form to be sent to you by emailing admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

In 2023, 96.8% of parents/carers applied online.

Do not make both a paper and online application, if you do only your latest application (submitted before the closing date) will be processed and your first application will be discarded.

How to make your application

You can either apply:

- online at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions or
- complete a paper application; this can be downloaded from our website https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions/496/apply_for_a_new_lower_or_primary_school_place ; you can get a copy from any Central Bedfordshire lower/primary school, or you can
- Email admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to request one.

You must include proof of your child's date of birth with your application. Please upload a copy of your child's passport or short birth certificate when submitting your application.

Contact the School Admissions Team ...

by email: admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions





Starting School 2024 application closing date - 15 January 2024

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

The arrangements for admitting a child or young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) are different to those for children/young people who do not. Admissions to school for children and young people with an EHC Plan are dealt with by the SEND Team, and **not** by School Admissions. During the summer term of the penultimate year at the current school, the school will invite you to a review meeting called a 'Transfer Review'. This will be held during the second half of the Autumn Term of the final year if in an Early Years setting. At this meeting, the school that you would like your child to transfer to will be discussed and the request will be processed by the SEND Team. You will be notified by the SEND Team of your child's confirmed school by 15 February 2024 for pre-16 placements. Further information relating to this process can be found online within Central Bedfordshire's Local Offer: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/children/sen-disability/education/annual-reviews.aspx>

Your child's current school will also be able to provide you with an information booklet regarding this process.

If you have any further queries or concerns about this process, please contact the SEND Team on 0300 300 8356. If you prefer to email you can do so at Statass@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

[Special Educational Needs and Disability - Local Offer | Central Bedfordshire Council](#)

Applying from outside Central Bedfordshire

If you **live outside of Central Bedfordshire**, you need to make an application through your home Local Authority (where you pay your council tax). If you are applying for schools in Central Bedfordshire, they will forward your application onto us. They will write to you on the offer day with the outcome of your application.

You also need to check with them about school transport as you will not be eligible for free transport from Central Bedfordshire Council and cannot assume you will be offered a concessionary bus pass.

For families living in our neighbouring authorities, we have included below the web address for their School Admissions webpages, which should include details about how to make your application:

Bedford Borough Council
www.bedford.gov.uk/admissions

Buckinghamshire County Council
www.buckscc.gov.uk/apply-for-a-school-place

Cambridgeshire County Council
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions

Hertfordshire County Council



Things to consider before applying

Can my child attend our catchment or nearest school?

You need to make your application on-time in order to be considered for your preferred school(s). Living in the catchment area may give your child priority however it does not automatically guarantee a place at your catchment school. If there are more applications than places available, the admissions criteria for the school will be applied. Should you not get your preferred school(s), we will ensure that your child is offered a place at the next nearest school with places available.

Do I have to apply for my catchment or local school?

No. You have the right to express a preference for up to 3 schools/academies which provide education suitable for your child’s age. You may wish to apply for your catchment school as this will usually mean that if a place is not available at your preferred school, you may still have priority for a place at your catchment school. **If you do not ask for a place at your catchment school or nearest school, it could result in your child attending a school some distance from your home. You may be responsible for transporting your child to that school. (If your preference school(s) is unsuccessful there is no guarantee you will get a place at your catchment school if you do not apply for it).**

Are places offered on a ‘first come, first served’ basis?

All applications received by 15 January 2024 are considered at the same time and priority is not given to those who put the school as a first preference. Decisions about who to offer places to are made solely using the oversubscription criteria for the school, no other information is taken into consideration. The council and schools must also comply with the legislation on infant class sizes which limits the number of children in a class to 30 for 5-, 6- and 7-year-olds. Your application might be refused on those grounds.

Will having a sibling at the school guarantee my child a place?

Your child will have a higher priority of a place at the school if they have an older sibling already attending there, however it is not always possible for us to allocate siblings at the same school. If you do not live within the school’s catchment area and have an older child at the school, it is possible that they will not be offered a place at the same school.

A sibling refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, step brother or sister, adopted brother or sister or fostered brother or sister where foster care has been arranged by a Local Authority or the child of the parent / carer’s partner, and in every case, the child should be living at the same address. The sibling must be in the school at the time of application and be likely to remain in the school at the proposed date of admission.

Do I have to apply for three schools?

place. You may be asked to supply additional information to explain why you are not able to use your permanent address.

Conflicting Applications

We will only accept one application per child. If you share parental responsibility, all those who share responsibility must be in agreement about the preferences and information submitted. We expect separated parents to agree on school places before an application is made. The local authority is not in a position to intervene in disputes between parents over a school application and will request that these are resolved privately.

Where different applications are received or we are made aware of a dispute between two parents, all applications will be placed on hold and will not be processed until

- **one joint application is made, signed by all parties: or**
- **a written agreement is provided from both parents; or**
- **a court order is obtained confirming which parents' application carries precedence**

Whilst we appreciate differences between parents can be a difficult time for all involved, including possible court action, without a court order, the School Admissions Team must remain neutral and treat both parties equally.

Conflicting applications that are not resolved by the closing date (15 January 2024) will be placed on hold until resolved and therefore will not be considered until the late allocation.

Change of circumstances

Applications are processed in the on-time allocation as they are on 15 January 2024. A change in your circumstances could have an effect on the criterion your application is processed under and therefore whether you are successful in being offered a place at your preferred school. Changes in circumstances which may affect the criterion your application is processed under can include moving to another address, no longer receiving Child Benefit, an older sibling starting at your preferred school, your child starting at a named feeder school etc.

If your circumstances change it is your responsibility to inform us in writing of the change and when this took place. If we are not notified of the change then your application may be processed inaccurately.

- If the change of circumstances takes place before or on 15 January 2024 and we are notified by this date, then we will add the information to your application, and it will be considered in the on-time allocation.
- If the change of circumstances takes place after 15 January 2024, or we are notified after this date, then the information will not be added to your application until after the on-time allocation.
- If you notify us of a change in your circumstances and it will not have an impact on the criterion your application is processed under, we will let you know.

Changing your mind

If you would like to change the school preferences on your application, or the order you have listed them, you need to complete a **change of preference form** which is available on our website



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https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions/496/apply_for_a_new_lower_or_primary_school_place/7

Changes received by the School Admissions Team before or on the 15 January 2024 will be processed as on-time, your application will be amended to reflect the changes, and these will be considered in the allocation.

If you make a change to your application from 16 January 2024, these changes will not be processed until the late allocation round. Your original application will be processed in the on-time allocation as normal; we will write to you with the results of the original allocation on offer day, and the application will not be amended until after this time. The late changes of preference will be processed in the late allocation rounds.

Making a change of preference means:

- any previous preferences (this does not include the offer of a school place) will be discarded on submission of the form
- if a place can be offered at any of the new preference schools, the original offer will be automatically withdrawn
- if you want your child to stay on the waiting list(s) for school(s) at which you have been declined for, you need to include this as higher preferences on the form

Which address to use on your application?

Applications are processed based on your child’s address (including overseas address) as of the closing date of 15 January 2024.

We verify addresses as part of the allocation process. If we find that you have moved address prior to 15 January 2024 and have not notified us of the move, then we will amend your application accordingly and your application will be processed on your new address.

Below are some situations that may be applicable to you but if you have any other type of house move, please contact us for specific advice.

If you move house after submitting your application, it is your responsibility to inform us in writing of your new address and the exact date you moved address.

Child living between two addresses (such as due to parents being separated/divorced)

An application can only be processed using one address. If a child lives at more than one address (for example due to a separation) the address used will be the one where the child lives for the majority of the time. If a child lives at two addresses equally, parents/carers should make a single joint application naming one address.

If a child’s permanent residence is disputed, parents/carers should provide one of the following:

- Court documentation to evidence the address that should be used for admission allocation purposes.
- Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit if applicable
- The address being used for GP registration purposes



If two applications are received, with different addresses and/or different preferences, neither will be processed until the address issue is reconciled.

Please note

- We can only process one application per child, therefore it is important that agreement is reached between parents as to which school is being applied for.
- the address provided on the application submitted by separated parents will be subject to the same address verification checks as all other applications.
- In addition, we will consider information such as the principal address held by the current school, and the address previously used to apply for any school places for your child or any siblings under the same care arrangements. This to ensure there is consistency in the address being used to apply for school places, and that separated parents do not gain an advantage for admission to a preferred school based on distance by using different addresses.

If your child is subject to a court order or Specific Issue Order which states, the school and or address your child lives the majority of the school week, please submit details and relevant documentation with your application form.

Moving within Central Bedfordshire or from within the United Kingdom

If you want us to consider a new address in the on-time allocation, you must have exchanged contracts or have a signed tenancy agreement and provided us with a copy by the 15 January 2024

It is not sufficient to put details of pending moves in the additional details section on your application form/online account.

If you have not yet exchanged contracts or have a signed tenancy agreement by 15 January 2024 for a property within Central Bedfordshire, then you need to apply to the local authority (where you pay council tax) by 15 January 2024. If you have listed Central Bedfordshire schools on your application, they will send your application to us for consideration in our allocation.

Changes of address which take place after the closing date will be processed using the original address. We will post your application outcome to your new address; however, it will not be updated on our system until the late allocation round

Currently living abroad, but moving back to a Central Bedfordshire property

If you own a property in Central Bedfordshire but you live abroad (for example, you're working abroad), we will use your Central Bedfordshire address if you can provide us with a copy of your current Council Tax Bill and your child's current GP registration letter.

If you are unable to provide a copy of your Council Tax Bill and current GP registration letter, in these instances, your application will be processed using the address at which you and your child are living as at the closing date. We will only consider this address to be your home address at the point in which you and your child are living in the property.

You will need to complete a paper application form using your non UK address and provide your child's travelling document showing their return date.

If you own a property in Central Bedfordshire but you live abroad, and the property is empty then your application will be processed using this address at which you and your child are living as at the closing date.

If your child is living abroad, but the family are based in the United Kingdom



Further information and a delayed request form can be found on our website
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions/496/apply_for_a_new_lower_or_primary_school_place/12

How are school places allocated?

All our schools operate an equal preference system for allocating places; this is in accordance with legislation. This means that there are two stages in the allocation process.

Equal Preference System

Admission authorities are legally required to operate an 'equal preference system'. This means that places are purely allocated according to the published admissions criteria for a school and not on the basis of where the school was listed on the parent's application (e.g. 1st, and or 2nd and or 3rd preference).

Therefore, even if a parent puts a school as their second preference, their child could still be offered a place ahead of another child whose parents had put the school down as their first preference. It is all about the extent to which the child meets the oversubscription criteria.

Your child will be added to the waiting list for each of the schools you've named on your application form. The waiting list for each school is then ranked in accordance with the published admission criteria for that school, and this will determine if a place can be offered.

If a child is not offered a place at any of the schools a parent has named on their form, the Local Authority will offer a place at the nearest school with a space available.

Stage 1:

All first, second and third preference applications are considered equally against the schools' admissions criteria; at this stage, there is no distinction between first, second and third preference applications. For example, if the school has 30 places and there are 45 first, second and third preference applications, all applications are ranked in the order of the academy/school's criteria it meets.

Stage 2:

If the child qualifies for a place at more than one school, the school ranked higher by the parent (i.e. first preference) will be offered and any lower ranking offers will be disregarded. For example, a parent's first and third preferences might both qualify for a place, in which case the parent would be offered their first preference, leaving the place at the third preference school available for another pupil.

Will I have a better chance of getting my first preference than someone who lists it as a second or lower preference?

Not necessarily. All on-time applications submitted receive equal consideration and are ranked against the schools/academies admission criteria. The preference order will only be used when it is possible for more than one school to offer you a place; this is why it is important that you list the schools in your exact order of preference.

Places can be allocated to second or third preference applicants ahead of first preference applicants. For example, child A may be allocated a place at their catchment school which was a second preference as a place could not be allocated at their first preference as they live outside the catchment area and the school was oversubscribed with applications.

All applications received between 5 September 2023 and 15 January 2024 will be considered at the same time.



We will only use your order of preference (rank) if it's possible to offer your child a place at more than one of your preferred schools. If this is the case, we'll offer you a place at the highest ranked school possible.

If a school receives fewer applications than places available, then all applicants will be offered a place at the school, regardless of where they live.

If a school has more applications than places available, then all applicants will be ranked using the school's oversubscription criteria. The oversubscription criteria for all schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire is available on our website.

Where applicants have the same criteria, they will then be ranked using straight line distance with those living closer to the school having higher priority. Home to school distances for admission allocation purposes will be measured along a straight line between a child's address and the relevant school/academy. The measurement is taken from the NLPG (National Land and Property Gazetteer) address point of the child's house to the designated measuring point of the school. Address point data is a nationally recognised method of identifying individual residences. This is an objective method of measuring home to school distances consistently when applying admission criteria. It does not take into account the actual or expected route a child will travel to school. The distance is measured using the local authority's computerised measuring system (Synergy Admissions database). Other mapping tools (such as Google maps) are not used in the allocation of school places.

What if I am not offered a place at my preferred school(s)?

Those not offered a place will be added to the school's waiting list and applicants will have the right of appeal.

If a place cannot be offered at any of the schools listed on the application, and the child lives within Central Bedfordshire, then we will allocate a place at the nearest school which has a place available following the allocation. More information on this will be sent to these applicants with their decision letter.

Late applications

All applications received by the School Admissions Team after 15 January 2024 will be classed as late and not processed until the late allocation round, which will take place after the national offer day for on-time applications. Late applications are not dealt with until after all the on-time applications have been considered. Places are not reserved at schools in the on-time allocation for late catchment children or any other circumstances.

If a place becomes available for your child at your preferred school during the late allocation your original offer will be withdrawn and reallocated to another child if necessary. **It is therefore essential that you inform us in writing by 1 May 2024 for your Starting School preferences, if you do not want to remain on the waiting list so that your original offer is not withdrawn.**

If a place can be offered to your child from the waiting list during the late allocation, then you will be notified on 1 June 2024 (late allocation offer day for Starting School). If a place is still not available at your preferred school(s) you will not be contacted by the School Admissions Team on the late allocation offer day however you can call or email the team from 1 June 2024 and they will let you know your child's position on the waiting list following the late allocation.

Submitting a late application significantly reduces your child's chance of an offer of a place at one of your preferred schools.



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Late applications which are made for schools in another local authority will be sent over to the relevant authority **within a week** after the national offer day for the transfer round applied for. The application will be processed by the relevant authority in accordance with their coordinated scheme, which may not correlate with that of Central Bedfordshire Council.

We will write to you with the outcome once we have received this from the relevant authority. This may not be in line with the dates published above as it will depend on the timetable of the relevant authority.

Starting School 2024 application closing date - 15 January 2024

Starting School 2024 Important dates

Date	Event
September 2023	Online Starting School 2024 system opens for parents/carers to apply Paper application forms will also be available on our website, from schools and by contacting the School Admissions Team by emailing admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
15 January 2024	National closing date for applications to be received by the School Admissions Team
16 January 2024 - 1 May 2024	Late applications received during these dates will be processed in the late allocation round in June
16 April 2024	National offer day for on-time applications All online applicants and those who have supplied an email address with their paper application will receive an email by the close of business on the offer day with the outcome of their application. Parents who have not provided an email address with their paper application form will have their decision letter posted to them
1 May 2024	Parents/carers who are declining the place offered or wish to change their on-time preferences need to have completed a change of preference form. This must be received by the School Admission Team by this date to be considered in the late allocation round.
1 June 2024	Late allocation round offer day. All online applicants and those who have supplied an email address with their paper application will receive an email by the close of business on the late round offer day with the outcome of their application. Parents who have not provided an email address with their paper application form will have their decision letter posted to them.
During June 2024	Late applications received after 1 May 2024 will be processed



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When will my child start school?

Children born between 01/09/19 and 31/08/20 should apply for a Reception Year place in the Starting School 2024 round. Schools must offer your child a full-time place in September following your child's fourth birthday if that is your wish. However, your child does not have to attend school full time until he or she is of statutory age i.e. 5 years old.

Contact the School Admissions Team...

by email: admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/admissions

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Please Note: Parents are requested to consider how a child would be transported to school, as transport entitlement is only considered if a student is attending their nearest or catchment school and meets all the other qualifying criteria set by the School Transport team.

Central Bedfordshire Council currently provides transport assistance to pupils who meet certain criteria as set out in the Council's current Home to School Transport Policy, full details of which can be found on the Council's website, www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/school-transport

We have enclosed a guide to help you see if your child is eligible for assistance with transport to a school. If you think your child may be eligible and you would like to apply for a place on council-organised transport, you will need to apply using the application form that can be found on our website at:

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/school-transport

If your child is not eligible and you would like to know about other ways of getting to and from school, please speak to your child's school or visit [traveline sw - welcome](#)

Deadlines for applications

To help us ensure we are able to put transport in place for the start of the academic year you will need to have completed your application via our website by the following dates:

Upper and secondary schools **31st March 2024**

Primary, Lower and middle schools **15th May 2024**

When applications are received after these deadlines, we cannot guarantee transport will be in place until the October half term.

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Travel for non-eligible students

When you are considering an offer of a school place for your child, you should think seriously about how he/she will travel to and from school, as the Council will only be able to offer transport assistance to qualifying schools as mentioned above. **If you accept a place for your child at a non-qualifying school, you will be responsible for ensuring that suitable transport arrangements are in place**

When there is a Council operated school bus with spare seats available after all entitled pupils have been offered places, the Council may sell these as concessions to non-eligible pupils. They are sold on a first, first served basis, one term at a time and being accepted for a place for one term does not guarantee a place for the next term.

Further information

If you have any queries about entitlement or changes in your child's transport, please contact the School Transport Team at <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/xfp/form/344> or 0300 300 8339.



Is my child entitled to School Transport Assistance?



