

Westmorland and Furness General Admissions Policy 2026/2027 - Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

Where there are more applications than places available at a community or voluntary controlled school for entry to all year groups except Year 12, applications will be prioritised using the criteria below. They will be applied in conjunction with explanatory notes 1 – 8 which form part of the policy.

1. Children looked after, i.e. in public care, giving priority, if necessary, to the youngest child(ren); children who were previously looked after; and children who were previously looked after outside of England.
2. Children living in the catchment area who have brothers or sisters in the school (or associated infant or junior school) at the time of admission.
3. Children living outside the catchment area who, at the time of their admission, have brothers or sisters in the school (or associated infant or junior school) who were allocated a place at that school by the Local Authority either (a) in the absence of a place being available in the catchment area school due to oversubscription and the school was identified by the Local Authority as the next nearest with a place available or (b) the school is named in the sibling's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
4. Other children living in the catchment area giving priority to those living closest to the school, measured by a straight-line measurement between the centre of the pupil's home address and a common point on the school site as determined by the Local Authority.
5. Children living outside the catchment area who have brothers or sisters in the school (or associated infant or junior school) at the time of their admission.
6. Children living outside the catchment area, giving priority to those who live closest to the school, measured by a straight-line measurement between the centre of the pupil's home address and a common point on the school site as determined by the Local Authority.

Applications will be prioritised on the above basis. An exception will be made under the Local Authority's policy for the education of children with special educational needs where a child holds an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), that names the school.

Explanatory notes

These notes are part of the policy.

Note 1

A child looked after is a child in public care, who is looked after by a local authority within the meaning of Section 22 of the Children Act 1989. Children previously looked after are children who were looked after, but have ceased to be so because they were adopted (under the terms of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) or became subject to a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order (Children Act 1989).

Advice issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in July 2021 states that a child previously looked after outside of England is one that was looked after, outside England, by a public authority, a religious organisation or another provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society.

For a previously looked after child to be considered under criteria 1, the parent or carer must provide appropriate written evidence to support the application. Without this evidence it **will not** be possible to consider the application under category 1 of the LA General Admissions Policy.

Note 2

In criteria 2, 3 and 5, priority will be given to those children living closest to the school, measured by a straight-line measurement between the centre of the pupil's home address and a common point on the school site as determined by the Local Authority

Note 3

Brothers and sisters are those living at the same address and includes step and foster children. Priority will only be given where it is known at the time of allocating places that a sibling will be attending the school (excluding a nursery class – see note 4) at the time of admission.

Note 4

Where reference is made to 'associated' infant and junior schools this is to describe those situations where infant and junior schools share the same catchment area.

Note 5

Brothers and sisters in the school at the time of admission does not include a brother or sister who will be attending a nursery class that is attached to the school.

Note 6

If a parent or carer believes that they qualify for consideration under criterion 3, they should indicate this on their preference form in the place provided for this purpose.

Note 7

Distance measurements will be undertaken using the Local Authority's computerised Geographical Information System [GIS]. This measures a straight-line measurement between the centre of the pupil's home address and a common point on the school site as determined by the Local Authority.

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Note 8

Random allocation will be used as a tie-break in categories 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to decide who has the highest priority for admission if the distance between the children's home address and the school is the same. This process will be independently verified.

Information about applying for an infant or primary school place

What is the Coordinated Admissions Scheme?

The scheme explains how the Local Authority coordinates (manages) admissions with other neighbouring authorities and schools that are their own admission authority (foundation and voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies). The purpose of the scheme is to ensure that each pupil living within the Local Authority receives only one offer of a school place, whether that is at a school within the county or one maintained by a neighbouring authority.

What are the different types of school?

The type of school you apply for affects the way decisions are made. For all types of school you must apply to the Westmorland and Furness council's School Admissions and Appeals Team for a place.

For **community** and **voluntary controlled schools** Westmorland and Furness council is the admission authority – it decides the admissions policy and makes decisions about the allocation of places.

For **voluntary aided** and **foundation schools**, each school's governing body is responsible for the admissions policy and decisions about the allocation of places.

For **academies** and **free schools**, the academy trust is responsible for the admissions policy and decisions about the allocation of places.

The Local Authority is not responsible for allocation decisions made by voluntary aided, foundation or free schools or academies.

You can find out more about individual schools and what type on the schools information pages.

How are places allocated?

The School Admissions and Appeals Team collate all applications for school places from parents and carers of children living in the Local Authority of Westmorland and Furness. We then start a process of liaising with foundation and voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, and with neighbouring local authorities where necessary (for example if a family live close to the county boundary and want their child to attend a school in the neighbouring county). This process is called **coordination**.

Each admission authority (in the case of community and voluntary controlled schools this is the Local Authority) then looks at **all** applications for their school, whether they have been named as a first, second or third preference. This is because all **preferences** must be treated equally.

This is known as the **equal preference scheme** and means that each of your preferences is treated as a separate application.

Each school has a **Published Admission Number (PAN)** which is the number of places that a school has available to offer. The allocation process is straightforward when a school is not oversubscribed – you are likely to get a place at your first preference school. Unfortunately, schools are sometimes oversubscribed and in this case admissions authorities need to work out who has highest priority for the places in a fair and consistent way. They do this by using the oversubscription criteria contained in their admissions policy to rank all the applicants in order of priority.

If it is possible to offer a place at more than one of your preference schools, we will offer a place at whichever of those schools that you ranked the highest.

If it is not possible to offer you a place at any of your preferred schools, you will be offered a place at the nearest school with a place available. We will decide which is the nearest by measuring the shortest walking route by road using the Local Authority GIS mapping system.

How likely am I to get my first preference?

In Westmorland and Furness Local Authority you are very likely to get your first preference. Last year almost 98% of parents were offered their first preference. You cannot however assume you will be offered your first preference of school. There are always schools that are very popular for many different reasons and those schools tend to have more applications than there are places available. This is why it is important to put the names of three different schools on your application form. If we cannot offer you any of your preferred schools, we will offer an alternative school so naming three preferences means that you have a better chance of being offered a school you have selected yourself. The law says that we must only do this after all applications from parents who have included the school as one of their preferences have been considered. This means that if you name only one school and we cannot offer a place, you will not be considered for a school place at an alternative school until places have been identified for other parents.

It is unlikely that you will not get any of your three preferences but nevertheless this has happened for a very small number of families in recent years. There is no advantage in listing fewer than three schools or including the same school more than once. This does not increase your chances of admission to a particular school. In fact, you are wasting one or more of your preferences and are more likely to be offered a place at a school some distance away from your home.

Information about the number of applications received and the number of places allocated at infant and primary schools last year is available within each school's information pages. Please be aware, however, that this does change from year to year, and just because a school has been undersubscribed one year does not mean that it will be the next year.

Is the admissions policy for each school important?

Yes. Deciding which school to give as your first preference is not just about which school you would prefer your child to attend. You also need to consider your chances of being offered a place at that school. This is very important if you are considering naming popular schools as your preferences and these are not your catchment school.

You should check the admissions policy for the schools you are considering to see what level of priority you would have. If a school has been consistently oversubscribed in the past and you would have a low priority under the oversubscription criteria, you should think seriously about whether you want to apply for this school. Think carefully about naming popular schools for all three preferences, particularly if you have a low priority under the admissions policy. Other applicants that rank more highly using the school's admissions policy may be allocated all the available places.

How could this affect me?

If you don't get a place at any of your preferred schools and these do not include your catchment school, you may then be disadvantaged in getting a place at your catchment school. All the places may already have been allocated to children whose parents have named the school as a preference.

What are catchment areas?

The Local Authority's Admissions Policy for community and voluntary controlled schools and the admissions policies for many voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies make reference to catchment areas. A catchment area is a defined geographical area, which gives priority for admission to families who live within its boundary. Catchment areas defined by the Local Authority are also used in deciding on school transport entitlement. In some limited cases, foundation and voluntary aided schools and academies have a different catchment area defined for admission purposes from that which the Local Authority has defined for transport purposes. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the School Admissions and Appeals Team.

Where an area does not form part of a catchment area the "catchment" school will be the nearest school, measuring the shortest walking route by road using the Local Authority GIS mapping system.

How do I find out which is my catchment school?

You can check with the School Admissions and Appeals Team by telephone or email. You can also ask for a map of the catchment area (for academies, voluntary aided, foundation and free schools, you will need to contact the school directly). Please be aware that children from your area may be attending a school which is not the catchment school. **You should not make assumptions** so it is advisable to check with the School Admissions and Appeals Team.

Do I need to send anything with my application?

You should check with the schools you are intending to state as a preference, to see whether any supporting evidence should be sent with your application or a supplementary form completed. For example, it may be that the policy gives priority to families of a particular faith and asks for evidence of this. **If you do not send the evidence this may affect the priority your child is given in the process.** Make sure that any supporting evidence or supplementary forms are submitted by the closing date of 15 January 2026.

What do I need to do if my child was previously looked after by a Local Authority/ or children who were previously looked after outside of England?

If you are applying for a foundation or voluntary aided school, or an academy or free school and you want your application to be considered on the basis that they were previously looked after, please contact the school to find out what evidence you will need to provide. Information about what to do if you are applying for a community or voluntary controlled school can be found below.

Is school transport something I should consider?

Yes. The transport policy is explained below under 'Home to school transport'. If home to school transport is a factor in deciding on your preferred schools, you should give this very careful consideration.

What happens to applications received after the closing date?

It is vital to get your application in on time. There is less chance of getting a place at your preferred school if your application is late.

At the initial offer stage of the admissions process, we do not consider applications which are either submitted or changed after the closing date of 15 January 2026 until we have dealt with all applications received on time, unless there are exceptional reasons that prevented you from submitting the form on time and you provide independent proof to confirm your circumstances. We will deal with these applications differently depending on the date we receive them. If you submit an application after 15 January 2026 but before 9 February 2026 and you feel there are exceptional reasons, **you must supply independent evidence/ documentation** at the time of submission. Otherwise your application will be classed as late.

We may write to you and ask for more details, for example to request some independent evidence. If you cannot provide the information required, or it is not received until after 9 February 2026, we will not be able to take into account your circumstances during the initial allocation process. However, we will be able to use it at a later stage, such as reallocation day. More information about **reallocation day** can be found below. If you have plans which mean

you may not need a school place, you should apply anyway and withdraw your application when your plans are confirmed.

Even if there are exceptional reasons for a late application or a change of preference, it will not be possible to consider any applications received after 9 February 2026 until places have been allocated for all timely applications. If your application is late (i.e. received after 15 January 2026) and is not considered as exceptional (as above), your application will not be dealt with until after the initial allocation of places. Your application will be dealt with after reallocation day (7 May 2026) and we will inform you of the outcome of your application after this date.

If your application is late and any of the schools you express a preference for are oversubscribed from the applications that we received on time, it is highly unlikely that you will be offered a place at those schools. This will be the case even if you live in the catchment area and/or have older children already attending the school.

What happens if I move house?

If you are planning to move house, you must still make an application by the closing date of 15 January 2026, even though you may need to ask to change your preferences later because of your change of address.

If you move house after applying, you must notify us. It is your responsibility to make sure you do this – if you do not it could affect the offer of a place at one of your preferred schools.

If you live outside the local authority area of Westmorland and Furness, you must make your application for a school place on the application form for the Local Authority where you live. You should contact the Local Authority for your area and ask for their information pack and application form.

How do I apply from outside Westmorland and Furness Local Authority?

If you live outside the local authority area of Westmorland and Furness, you must make your application for a school place on the application form for the Local Authority where you live. You should contact the Local Authority for your area and ask for their information pack and application form.

How do I apply to another Local Authority?

One or more of the schools you apply for could be in the area of a neighbouring Local Authority. If your home address is in the local authority area of Westmorland and Furness, you should name your preferred schools on form your application in exactly the same way as a Westmorland and Furness Local Authority school. School Admissions will then work with the relevant Local Authority regarding your application. If you live near the Local Authority border you may want to

contact a neighbouring Local Authority for information about its schools. Details on neighbouring Authorities are provided below.

What happens if both parents/carers cannot agree about where they would like their child to go to school?

Sometimes, separated parents or carers submit separate application forms for their children naming different preference schools. We are unable to process both applications, because the law says that only one offer per child can be made. It would not be appropriate for the School Admissions and Appeals Team to become involved in these situations. If we receive applications in these circumstances we will write to both applicants to explain the situation.

It is best if parents/carers can resolve issues between themselves and inform us, in writing, which application should be used. However, we do know that sometimes agreement cannot be reached and the School Admissions and Appeals Team then need to make a decision as to which form to use. When this happens we will try to establish the child's permanent address, using the address of the parent/ carer who claims child benefit and process that parent/ carer's application. If child benefit is not being claimed other acceptable documentation may be required.

As with all applications, the School Admissions and Appeals Team will only discuss the content or progress of any application with the applicant themselves.

What can I do if I am not happy with the school that I am offered?

Usually your child will be offered a place at one of your preferred schools. Last year over 99% of applicants for an infant or primary school place in the Local Authority were offered one of their three preferences. If you are not offered a place in your preferred school or if you are unhappy with the school place allocated for whatever reason, you have the right of appeal to an independent admission appeal panel. Information about admission appeals can be found below.

What happens if my child doesn't get a place and then one becomes available?

If you have not been offered a place at one of your preferred schools on 16 April 2026 because the school was oversubscribed, your child will be considered for any places which become available. The Local Authority will reallocate any available places after 7 May 2026. This is known as reallocation day. All outstanding applications will be considered, including any late applications and changes of preference, using the school's oversubscription criteria to prioritise.

Can my child's name go on a waiting list?

After reallocation day, it is up to the admission authority for the school or academy to maintain their waiting list. For oversubscribed schools, the admission authority must maintain a waiting list until at least the 31 December in the academic year of admission. More information about waiting lists for community and voluntary controlled schools can be found below.

How do I apply for a school place at another time (i.e. in year)?

From the first day of the school term all applications received will be treated as in-year admissions.

You can contact the School Admissions team to make an application and for more information about admission to school.

You can also contact your preferred school directly, and in most cases it will be able to deal with your request. If you are offered a place, you can arrange an admission date with the school. If your request is refused, you will receive a letter with the reason for refusal, and your right of appeal.

Some schools may also refer you to the School Admissions and Appeals team to handle your application (i.e. community and voluntary controlled schools, where the LA is the admissions authority).

What is the infant class size limit?

There is a statutory limit on class sizes for children who are in Reception and Years 1 and 2. This is called the infant class size limit. Except in certain very limited circumstances, no infant class with one teacher may contain more than 30 pupils. In some schools, this means that the admission of one more child would mean that the school could not comply with the infant class size limit without, for example, providing an extra teacher. This is called taking 'relevant measures'.

Admissions over and above 30 per class can therefore be refused because taking relevant measures would cause prejudice to the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.

How could this affect me?

If you are refused admission to your preferred school on infant class size grounds this will be explained to you along with your right of appeal. However, where the decision to refuse is on this basis, an appeal panel's powers to intervene are limited. The panel can only allow your appeal in very specific circumstances and you should give very careful consideration as to whether or not you should appeal. Please see page below for more information.

Children of UK Service Personnel (UK Armed Forces and Crown Servants)

If you are a UK service personnel (UK Armed Forces) family with a confirmed posting to Westmorland and Furness Local Authority, or a Crown Servant family returning from overseas to live within the Westmorland and Furness Local Authority area, we will offer places in advance of the move provided the application is accompanied by:

- An assignment order that declares a relocation date and a unit postal address or quartering area address for UK service personnel
- An official letter declaring a relocation date for crown servants. Evidence of a future address may also be required

Information about admission to community and voluntary controlled schools

How do I find out if my preferred school is a community or voluntary controlled school?

You can find out if a school is community or voluntary controlled in the individual schools information below.

How are places allocated at community and voluntary controlled schools?

If a community or voluntary controlled school is oversubscribed, places will be allocated using the oversubscription criteria contained in the Local Authority's Admissions Policy, detailed below.

Are children attending a school's nursery given a higher priority for admission?

No, attendance at a school's nursery is not a factor in allocating places at community and voluntary controlled schools.

What do I need to do if my child was previously looked after by a Local Authority, or children who were previously looked after outside of England?

If your child was previously looked after, and you wish to be considered under category 1 of the Local Authority Admissions Policy below, you will need to provide some evidence with your application. If your child was adopted, this will be a copy of the Adoption Order. If your child became subject to a Residence/Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order, you will need to provide copies of these. If you are unsure of what you need to do, or whether your child can be considered under this category, please contact the School Admissions and Appeals Team.

Will younger brothers and sisters be able to go to the same school?

Siblings of children attending their catchment area school have a higher priority for admission when places are allocated at oversubscribed community and voluntary controlled schools. If you choose a school other than your catchment area school, places may not be available for your younger children as catchment children will have higher priority.

Which address will be used in determining my child's priority for admission?

If a school is oversubscribed, the address where the child normally lives will be used in the allocation process. It is not possible to use an alternative address such as the address of your child's grandparents or child minder. In some cases, for example where shared parental living arrangements are in place, the address where a child normally lives may be difficult to decide. In these circumstances, the address used for child benefit purposes, (i.e. the address for the parent claiming the child benefit), or the address that the child has registered at their GP will be used. Residency at a particular address is a key factor in allocating places at oversubscribed schools. If we offer a school place and then discover that the offer was made on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information (for example, a false claim to be living at an address), we may withdraw the place.

What happens if I am moving house?

If you are about to move house or think you may do so in the near future, you must contact us and tell us the address that you will be moving to. For your application to be considered on the basis of your new address you will need to be able to provide evidence of your move as soon possible – stating an intention to move to an area will not be enough.

Examples of evidence we will request are signed tenancy agreements, evidence of exchange of contracts relating to a purchase and HM Land Registry certificates. Whatever evidence you provide, we will need to be satisfied that you will be resident at this new address at the time your child is offered a school place and also at the point that your child takes up this place, in September 2026. We may have to ask you for further evidence such as utility bills. If you cannot provide the evidence required, or we do not feel that your evidence is sufficient, or it is not received until after 9 February 2026 then we will not be able to consider you for a school place based on your new address during the initial allocation process. However, we may be able to use it at a later stage (for example, on reallocation day).

A temporary move (for example, to stay with family) could be considered, but the Local Authority would have to be satisfied that there is a long-term intention to remain at a particular address.

You should always keep the School Admissions and Appeals Team informed of the progress with your move.

This is your responsibility; it could affect the offer of a place at one of your preferred schools.

What happens if I provide false information?

Unfortunately, a small number of parents try to secure a place for their child by either providing false information or withholding relevant information.

Every place secured on the basis of false information potentially deprives another child of their rightful place, and the Local Authority takes allegations of falsified addresses very seriously. All allegations will be investigated. Offers made for places in oversubscribed schools on the basis of false or misleading information will be withdrawn, as they have been in previous years.

The Local Authority will, as necessary, seek verification of your child's address, or of any other information provided on the application form. Local Authority officers may visit the address given as the child's residence in order to verify that he/she lives at that address.

This process may happen before or after places have been allocated.

Can my child's name go on a waiting list if they are not offered a place?

If your child does not get a place in the main allocation or reallocation process detailed, they will continue to be considered for any places which may become available until the end of the Autumn term 2026. If you still want your child to be considered for any vacancies in community or voluntary controlled schools from the start of the spring term onwards, you should contact the School Admissions and Appeals Team to put your child's name on a waiting list by 5 January 2027.

From 5 January 2027, only children on the waiting list will be considered. Vacancies will always be allocated by applying the Admissions Policy. Length of time on the waiting list will not be a factor.