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Essex County Council

Essex County Council
Co-ordinated Scheme for

Secondary Admissions

Academic Year 2026-2027

**Incorporating admission to Year 7
(secondary schools and academies) and
Secondary In-Year Admissions**

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Table of Contents

| Section | Item | Page Number |
|---------|---|-------------|
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | Statutory requirements of the Scheme | 3 |
| 3 | Timetable – September 2026 co-ordinated secondary admissions | 4 |
| 4 | Terms of Reference | 5 |
| 5 | Scope of the Scheme | 5 |
| 6 | Key Features of the Scheme | 6 |
| 7 | Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Essex Secondary Schools 2026-2027 | 7-10 |
| 8 | Appeals | 10 |
| 9 | Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy 2026-2027 | 11-12 |
| 10 | Applications for school places received in-year (mid-year) | 12-13 |

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1. Introduction:

The School Admissions Regulations (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) require LAs to formulate a 'qualifying scheme' each year to co-ordinate admissions to all secondary schools and Academies in their area for the following academic year.

The LA is required to adopt a scheme for admissions in the academic year 2026-2027 by no later than 28 February 2025. If a scheme is not secured by that date, the Secretary of State can impose a scheme.

For the purposes of this document going forward, where the word 'school' or 'schools' is used it refers to both maintained schools and Academies.

2. Statutory requirements of the Scheme:

A 'qualifying scheme' shall

- 2.1 Ensure that in relation to any application made during the normal admission round, so far as is reasonably practicable, each parent in the area of an LA shall receive a single offer of a school place;
- 2.2 Communicate on 1 March each year a single offer of a school place by an LA to the parent of every child in their area. Where that day is not a working day, the prescribed day shall be the next working day;
- 2.3 Provide a common application form enabling a parent in an authority's area to apply for not less than three secondary schools whether in the LA's area or not, to give reasons for that application, and to rank each application relative to others;
- 2.4 Specify criteria by which the authority shall determine whether a child is to be granted or refused admission to a secondary school in their area in any case where it appears that the child is eligible to be granted admission to more than one preferred school, or is not eligible to be granted admission to any school for which an application has been made;
- 2.5 Stipulate a timetable of events;
- 2.6 Set out a procedure for determining any application made otherwise than during a normal admission round, or where it is for admission to a relevant age group, is submitted to the authority later than the date stipulated by the scheme;
- 2.7 Specify whether, in determining if a child is to be granted or refused admission to a school in their area, the home LA will have regard to any information provided by the maintaining authority as to whether the child is to be granted a place at a school in that authority's area.

3. Timetable – September 2026 co-ordinated secondary admissions:

| Key Action | Scheme Date |
|---|--|
| Publication of information (composite prospectus/admissions booklet) on ECC website | By 12 September 2025 |
| Secondary school applications open for Essex County Council residents – online application system opens | 12 September 2025 |
| Secondary school opens days/evenings <i>September:</i> <i>Selection tests taken by pupils that have registered for testing for grammar school places and schools testing by aptitude</i> | September / October 2025 |
| LA notifies schools at an appropriate interval of all preferences expressed for the school (not preference order) | |
| National closing date for all secondary applications. <i>The online application system is closed after this date</i> | 31 October 2025 |
| Inter-LA data exchange of applications undertaken | November 2025 |
| Lists for ranking provided to all secondary schools (including all application detail) for prioritising ALL applications against their over-subscription criteria and necessary checks, etc. <i>subject to completion of data exchange</i> | By 4 December 2025 |
| Admission authorities will apply their own admission criteria and rank all preferences received | 4 - 18 December 2025 |
| LA to receive completed lists of applications ranked in accordance with admissions criteria from ALL admission authorities | No later than 5pm on 18 December 2025 |
| LA to receive Order of Merit lists from the CSSE | |
| LA to process applications with reference to allocation lists and parental preference to establish initial 'best fit' of offers. | January 2026 |
| Inter-LA data exchange of offers undertaken | February 2026 |
| LA to send 'final' allocation lists to all secondary schools in Essex and the CSSE <i>subject to completion of data exchange</i> | By 20 February 2026 |
| National Offer Day Offer notification sent to ECC residents | 2 March 2026 |
| LA maintains waiting lists for all schools and fills places that become vacant | March 2026 until 31 August 2026 |

*Applications for admission into Year 10 (September 2026) into a Studio School or University Technology College will be handled in accordance with the above timescales

4. Terms of Reference:

4.1 Applications:

The common application form, available as an online or paper form, is the only acceptable form of application.

The availability of the application forms will be publicised on the Council's website for parents of all Essex resident children commencing education in year 6 in September 2025, including those of the relevant age being home educated according to the Local Authority.

Parents/Carers will be able to apply online.

The form will collect the basic data (pupil name, date of birth, address¹, telephone number, parent/carer details, primary school, whether the child is cared for by a local authority (or is a previously looked after child), reasons for the preferences, any sibling link including their age cohort and whether the application is being made on grounds of exceptional medical circumstances).

4.2 Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs):

Some admissions authorities (e.g. selective schools and faith schools) may have to ask parents to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) to gain additional information to enable them to fully apply their admission criteria.

NB: A SIF is not an application form and must be completed in addition to the common application form (referred to above).

Schools will generally send SIFs to parents/carers when notified by the LA of a preference for the school from a parent/carer. A SIF must not request details of a parent/carer's preferences for any other school(s).

In the event of a school needing to use a SIF, a copy of the form must be sent to all statutory consultees as part of the normal consultation on admissions arrangements.

5. Scope of the Scheme:

- 5.1 The scheme applies to all admissions to maintained secondary schools (and Academies) of statutory school age pupils who are resident in the Essex County Council LA area. It does not include Post-16 (sixth form/college aged) pupils.
- 5.2 The scheme will apply to all known Essex resident pupils in Year 6 in a primary or junior school (or of the relevant age being home educated) at the start of the autumn term 2025, irrespective of whether that is their normal age group.

¹ proof of address may be requested – ideally a **copy of** a driving licence or council tax bill, otherwise two recent utility bills will be accepted.

6. Key Features of the Scheme:

- 6.1 A common application form, available online, enabling parents/carers to apply for up to six schools in preference order. The form will also be available in paper form on request from the LA.
- 6.2 An online application to be submitted (or a paper application to be returned) to the LA no later than the closing date specified in the table above.
- 6.3 Parents/carers will express a single preference for each school they wish to apply for. If schools consider applications under separate criteria (e.g. aptitude in a specialist subject) then the relevant admission authority may have to ask parents/carers to complete a SIF to establish if they wish their child to be considered under that criterion.
- 6.4 Essex LA will send offers of places to all Essex resident parents who have applied irrespective of which LA area the school is located (where a place is being offered).
- 6.5 Essex LA will communicate directly with the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex (CSSE).
- 6.6 Foundation, voluntary aided (VA) schools and Academies will continue to be their own admission authorities and will apply their own admission criteria to all applicants. They will also continue to be responsible for organising and presenting admission appeals.
- 6.7 Essex LA will continue to co-ordinate admissions and hold waiting lists for those parents/carers unsuccessful in gaining places at any school ranked higher than the place offered until the date specified in the table above. Schools that are their own admission authority and wish to make offers from a waiting list before this time will need to notify the LA so that the offer can be sent on their behalf.
- 6.7 The Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme will be reviewed annually.

7. Scheme for the Co-ordination of Pupil Admissions to Essex Secondary Schools 2026-2027:

- 7.1 ***Application Form:***
 - 7.1.1 The responsibility for applying for a secondary school place rests with parents/carers.

The availability of the common application form, available online and printed in the *Secondary Education in Essex* booklet (published online), will be publicised on the Council's website.

Parents/carers will be able to make applications online and refer to the Council's website of admission policy information published in the *Secondary Education in Essex* booklet.

The common application form, completed either online or on paper, will be the only acceptable forms of application.

- 7.1.2 The application form will allow parents/carers to express a preference for up to six secondary schools in order of preference (including any non-Essex schools).
- 7.1.3 The *Secondary Education in Essex* booklet will include notes of guidance explaining the operation of the co-ordinated scheme, including a timetable, and advice on completing the application form.
- 7.1.4 An online application must be submitted, or a paper application form returned, to the LA by the closing dates of 31 October 2025.
- 7.1.5 The ranked order of parental preference will remain confidential between the parent/carer and the LA (unless disclosed by parental comment in their application), and other LAs where relevant, unless the applicant decides to make an appeal (see 8.2).

7.2 **Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs):**

- 7.2.1 Admission authorities will only have a SIF if they need to collect any further information from a parent which is required to enable them to apply the school's admissions policy.

Admission authorities (the governing body for foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies and the LA for community and VC schools) will be responsible for sending this form to parents/carers as required, generally when they receive details of the application from the LA.

These forms must be returned directly to the relevant school. A SIF must not request details of the parent/carer's ranking of the school in relation to other preferences.

- 7.2.2 Schools that require a parent to complete a SIF will be identified in the *Secondary Education in Essex* booklet.
- 7.2.3 A SIF alone does not constitute an application for a school place. Applications can only be made on the common application form (online or paper).

7.3 **Processing Applications:**

- 7.3.1 All application forms (online or paper) must be received by the LA by the closing date of 31 October 2025.

If a Governing Body receives applications directly, they must send them directly to the LA.

- 7.3.2 The LA will co-ordinate applications and the offer of places for all Essex schools, acting as a clearing house for other admissions authorities (the governing bodies of foundation and VA schools, the Academy Trust for Academies) and as the admission authority for community and VC schools.
- 7.3.3 The LA will notify schools of every preference expressed for that school together with all the applicants details (apart from the ranking of the preference unless this is required – see 7.1.5) by use of electronic lists, which will be provided to schools once between the start of the application process in September and the closing date for applications.

- 7.3.4 A full and final list of all on time applicants for a school will be sent to that school by 4 December 2025 (subject to completion of data exchanges).

The list will set out all pupil information and include details of the number of first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth preferences. Schools will not be advised what preference they are named for any individual applicant (see 7.1.5)

Where VA, foundation schools and Academies use straight line distance as a criterion, the LA will supply this information using a computerised GIS system.

Regular updates of late applications will also be provided.

- 7.3.5 In respect of the three CSSE selective schools within Essex, the LA will communicate directly with the Consortium.
- 7.3.6 VA, foundation schools and Academies must provide the LA with their lists of applications, ranked in accordance with their admission policy, by 18 December 2025. This list **must rank all applications** received.
- 7.3.7 The Consortium of Selective Schools will provide the LA with the Order of Merit Lists for Essex Selective Schools by 18 December 2025 in accordance with the schools' admission policies.
- 7.3.8 The LA, using preference rankings and the ranked offer data supplied by foundation, VA schools and Academies (and offer data supplied by other LAs) will match the provisional allocations of places against each parent's ranking. The following will then apply:

Where a parent's first preference can be met:

A place will be allocated at the first preference school and the LA will then not consider any applications for schools at second preference or below.

Where a parent's first preference cannot be met but the second preference can be met:

A place will be allocated at the second preference school. The application for the first preference school will be placed on the waiting list. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at third preference or below.

Where a parent's first and second preference cannot be met but the third preference can be met:

A place will be allocated at the third preference school. The application for the first and second preference schools will be placed on the waiting lists. The LA will then not consider any applications for schools at fourth preference or below.

This process will continue until all preferences are exhausted.

Where none of the parent's preferences can be met:

A place will be offered at the nearest school with spaces available.

The right of a statutory appeal will be given for all preferences which have not been offered.

- 7.4 **Exchange of data with other LAs:**

- 7.4.1 Where Essex LA is made aware that a place is to be offered by another LA for a school with a higher ranked preference, any application for a lower ranked preference will not be actioned. If this information is not available multiple offers may occur.

The LA will use the Pan-London Co-ordinated Admissions System (PLR) to securely exchange information with other LAs, which is made up of 38 authorities in and neighbouring London, or the School to School site (S2S) to exchange information with LAs that are outside of the PLR system.

7.5 ***Late Applications and changes of preferences***

- 7.5.1 Applications received after the closing date will be accepted but may be treated as late applications. This means they will be considered after all on time applications have been processed.

However, if a late application is received on or before 21 November 2025 and the LA considers the circumstances for late submission to be exceptional, the applications will be considered as on time.

- 7.5.2 Other applications submitted after the closing date will be accepted but treated as late applications. Admission authorities will be asked to rank the applicant in line with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days.

Late applications will only be considered after all on time applications have been considered and the initial allocation of places has been made.

- 7.5.3 A new on time preference cannot be added after the closing date, to an application form received on time, unless in accordance with 7.5.1, the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional.

Any new application form/preference received after 21 November 2025 will be held and not considered until after the first round of offers has been made on 2 March 2026.

- 7.5.4 Changes in the order of preferences already expressed will not be accepted after the closing date, unless the reason is for a change of address. No such changes shall be permitted after 21 November 2025 until after the first round of offers has been made on 2 March 2026.

- 7.5.5 After 2 March 2026 the details of any applications received from parents who move into the area will be sent to schools as and when they are received.

Schools will be required to rank them in accordance with their admissions criteria and return the information to the LA within 15 working days (25 working days if applying for a selective or specialist place).

Names will be added to waiting lists in accordance with the admission criteria where appropriate.

7.6 ***Allocation of Places:***

- 7.6.1 The LA will send offers to parents on 2 March 2026 offering a place at the allocated school. Parents/carers should confirm rejection of a place within two weeks only if they do not wish to accept the place offered. Non confirmation of a rejection will be deemed to be an acceptance of the offer made.

For those that have had an application refused, parents will have a right of appeal to an independent panel.

Parents/carers who submitted their applications online will be able to access the outcome of their applications via the internet from 2 March 2026 and should receive an email informing them of the outcome of their application.

- 7.6.2 If an offer of a place is declined the LA will reallocate the place from the waiting list, in accordance with the parental rankings and the school's admission policy.
- 7.6.3 For pupils who, through the allocation process, have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools the LA will allocate and offer a place at the nearest school that have places available.
- 7.6.4 The LA will inform schools and other LAs where necessary, of the allocations made.

7.7 *Co-ordinated arrangements between the national offer date and September 2026:*

- 7.7.1 Where necessary the LA will hold waiting lists for all schools until the end of August 2026 and continue to allocate places from the waiting lists if spaces become available.

After this point, the LA will hand over the waiting lists for foundation, VA schools and Academies to individual schools. The LA will continue to hold the waiting lists for community and VC schools until the end of the autumn term and offer places as appropriate from these lists. Thereafter, parents will have the opportunity to register their continued interest in a place.

- 7.7.2 From the national offer day (2 March 2026) up to the end of August 2026 the LA will continue to co-ordinate admission arrangements for potential Year 7 pupils and make all offers to Essex residents on behalf of Essex secondary schools. All new applications will continue to be made on the common application form. The online system will be unavailable for new applications following the closing date of 31 October 2025.

8. Appeals:

- 8.1 Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at a school that they had put as a preference and for which they had not been allocated a place, even where that preference was of a lower rank than the place offered.
- 8.2 The appeal would be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school. The LA will provide the admission authority at that time with details of the preference expressed by parents.

9. Co-ordination of pupil admissions to Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy 2026-2027

The following paragraphs relate to pupil admissions to Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy from September 2026 and should be read in conjunction with the scheme for the co-ordination of pupil admissions to secondary schools.

The timetable set out in section 3 is relevant for the Year 9 – Year 10 transfer scheme, however the application process differs as set out below.

- 9.1 Applications will not be necessary for children moving from Year 9 to Year 10 in their existing secondary school if that school caters for 11 – 16 or 11 – 18 age range as these schools are a single legal establishment and Year 10 in these cases is not a 'relevant age group'.

However, parents of children in Year 9 of The Basildon Lower Academy need to make a form of application for their child to be admitted into Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy, even though this is the 'partner' school, because the Academies are separate legal establishments.

- 9.2 Parents of children attending Year 9 of The Basildon Lower Academy will not have to complete the common application form. Instead, a transfer register will be available at The Basildon Upper Academy for parents to sign. Signing the register will act as a formal application.
- 9.3 Parents of children attending Year 9 of any secondary school, other than The Basildon Lower Academy, who wish to apply for a place in Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy will need to complete the common application form provided by the LA.
- 9.4 The Basildon Upper Academy will write to all parents of Year 9 children attending The Basildon Lower Academy in September 2025, advising them of the registration scheme. The LA will include information for parents of children attending other secondary schools in its composite prospectus.
- 9.5 The closing date for signing the transfer register or completing a common application form for a Year 10 place at The Basildon Upper Academy is 31 October 2025.
- 9.6 The LA will provide a list of all applications received via common application forms to The Basildon Upper Academy by 4 December 2025.
- 9.7 The Basildon Upper Academy will rank all applications for Year 10 received through the registration scheme or the common application form in accordance with the published admissions criteria.
- 9.8 For all applications received by the closing date from parents of Yr 9 children attending The Basildon Lower Academy, The Basildon Upper Academy will inform parents of the outcome of that application on 2 March 2026.
- 9.9 For all applications received by the closing date from parents of Yr 9 children attending other secondary schools who wish their child to transfer to Year 10 of The Basildon Upper Academy, the LA will inform parents of the outcome of their application on 2 March 2026.

- 9.10 Parents of children attending The Basildon Lower Academy can apply for a place in Year 10 at another secondary school as well as signing the transfer register at The Basildon Upper Academy.

However, as Year 10 of other secondary schools is not a relevant year group in the context of co-ordinated admissions, applications received for a Year 10 place at another secondary school will be treated as 'in year' admissions.

The LA reserves the right to inform these parents of the outcome of such an application later than 2 March 2026.

10 Applications for School Places Received In-Year (mid year):

For the purposes of secondary school admissions an in-year (otherwise known as mid-year or casual) application is defined as any application for a place in Year Groups 8-11, or an application for a Year 7 place made on or after 1 September in the academic year in which the child is to be admitted to the school.

The arrangements detailed below shall therefore apply to applications submitted on or after 1 September 2026 for children to be admitted into Year Groups 7-11 during the school year September 2026 to July 2027.

10.1 Introduction

The School Admissions Code 2021 stipulates that there is no requirement for local authorities to co-ordinate in year applications. Parents can therefore apply directly to schools for places and schools must then offer or refuse a place, informing the parent of the outcome and notifying the local authority of the same. Schools must notify the Local Authority of every in-year application they deal with, along with the outcome.

10.2 Key operational requirements

- 10.2.1 There will be a common application form, produced by the LA which will be available at all Essex schools, on the Essex County Council website and on demand from the LA's School Admissions Team, enabling parents to apply directly to the school(s) of their preference.
- 10.2.2 The application form will have notes of guidance to assist the parent and inform the parent of their right of appeal against any decision not to offer a place, as well as signposting parents to the Local Authority's School Admissions team for further advice if they need it.
- 10.2.3 Upon receipt of an application, the school will consider the application without delay and make a decision as to whether a place is to be offered or not. In most cases, a decision will be easy to make since a place should be offered unless the year group is fully subscribed to the admission number, or there are competing applications for a limited number of places.
- 10.2.4 All schools will formally determine any application received by either offering a place, or by writing to the parent to refuse a place. This must be done within 15 school days of receiving an application in all cases.

- 10.2.5 Where a place is refused, the letter must give a reason for the refusal (which will normally be that the year group is fully subscribed) and advise the parent of their statutory right of appeal, enclosing a copy of the relevant appeal form.
- 10.2.6 Schools must send a copy of any letter offering a child a place to the Local Authority's School Admissions team. The letter must include the child's name, date of birth, address and telephone number for the parent.
- 10.2.7 Likewise, schools must send the Local Authority's School Admissions team a copy of any letter refusing a child a place, along with a copy of the application form completed by the parent. Where relevant, a copy of any additional information to support the reason for refusal must be enclosed with the copy of the refusal letter that is sent to the LA e.g. where a school permitted to refuse on the basis of challenging behaviour has refused a place on this basis.
- 10.2.8 These arrangements will be reviewed annually.

10.3 Scope of the arrangements

- 10.3.1 The overall arrangements apply to all in year applications made by parents to any secondary school in Essex.

10.4 Applications sent to the Council

- 10.4.1 Where an application form is sent to the Council for a place, this will be forwarded to the relevant school(s)/academies for consideration. Schools and Academies must comply with the arrangements set out above.

10.5 Waiting lists

- 10.5.1 The minimum requirement under the Statutory Admissions Code is that a waiting list is maintained for at least 31 December in the normal year of entry.

There is no requirement to keep a waiting list at any time or for any other school year.

Admission authorities may choose to keep waiting lists for longer than one term and in other school years if they wish.

- 10.5.2 The responsibility for maintaining waiting lists (where admission authorities choose to do so) rests with individual admission authorities i.e. the LA for community and VC schools and schools themselves in the case of foundation, VA schools and Academies.

Children must be ranked on a waiting list (where one is held) in accordance with the published oversubscription criteria.

10.6 Appeals

- 10.6.1 Parents will have the right of appeal for a place at any school that they apply for where they are refused a place. Schools and Academies must inform parents of their statutory right of appeal to an independent panel in the decision letter refusing a place.
- 10.6.2 Any appeal lodged will be against the admission authority and not the LA, unless relating to a community or VC school within Essex.