

TORBAY COUNCIL

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary Schools

2022-2023

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Introduction

This scheme has been developed in consultation with schools and admission authorities who want to work together to provide a co-ordinated in year application process to enable children to enter schools in Torbay.

Where the word 'parent' is used in this document, it also includes other people in the role of parent e.g. guardians or carers who have parental responsibility for a child needing a school place.

This scheme describes the process for admitting children into the reception year in primary school. There is also a booklet, TIPS8 that summarises the admission process, and a primary supplement that gives information about the way that each school prioritises its applications for places. These documents together make up the 'composite prospectus' that local authorities have to publish each year. They are available on the council's website www.torbay.gov.uk or by telephoning Student Services.

Who processes the admission applications?

Torbay Council (the local authority or 'LA') processes the admission applications for all children living in Torbay who need a reception place either inside or outside of Torbay. Parents who live outside of Torbay but would like their child to attend a Torbay school must apply to the LA where they live.

Torbay Council's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) team processes the admission applications for children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) because there is a separate statutory consultation process.

Parents of children who live outside England e.g. in Wales where there is a separate application process should apply directly to Torbay LA if they would like a place for their child in a Torbay school.

The LA does not get involved in the processing of applications for South Devon High School or for independent schools. Parents should contact them directly.

How are parents told about the need to apply?

The LA will do all it can to ensure that every Torbay parent who has a child due to start primary school during 2022/23 knows about the need to apply and the application deadline. This will include writing to parents of all known children who were born between 1 September 2017 and 31 August 2018 to tell them about the application process (subject to this data being shared by health services), advertising at Early Years settings, primary schools, in Torbay libraries and elsewhere, and using social media. Ultimately, though, it is the parent's responsibility to apply.

How do parents apply for a place?

The person applying must have parental responsibility for the child needing a school place.

There is a Common Application Form (Form CAF2) for all parents to use. This will be available online at www.torbay.gov.uk during the application period, 1 November 2021 to 15 January 2022. Parents can complete and submit the form electronically.

Paper forms will also be available from the LA and from schools and nurseries.

Some schools use supplementary information forms for parents who want their child to be prioritised for specific reasons e.g. on grounds of faith or because the parent is a member of

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staff at the school. These forms are used to collect additional information to help the admission authority to prioritise children correctly. Parents should return these forms directly to the school by the application deadline.

These supplementary forms are optional and parents can choose whether or not to complete one, depending on their circumstances. All parents must complete the common application form in order to make an application for a school place. Schools should check with the LA that a common application form has been completed for each parent who has sent them a supplementary information form. If the supplementary information is completed before the deadline but the common application is not completed until after the deadline, the application will be treated as 'late'.

Schools and must forward any common application forms they receive to the LA. They should keep a record of any application received.

Parents can list up to 3 schools on the common application form, in order of preference. These schools can be inside or outside of Torbay. Parents will be able to give the reasons for their preferences on the form.

Parents who apply online will receive a confirmation email that they should keep safely as a record of their application. Parents who apply on paper should keep a copy of their application. They should also send a stamped, addressed envelope or postcard with their application so that the LA can confirm that they have received the application. If a parent sends in a stamped, addressed envelope and has no response after two weeks they should phone Student Services to check what has happened.

Parents posting their application form or supplementary information form close to the deadline should obtain proof of posting and should send a copy of this to Student Services. Where there is proof that the application was posted prior to the deadline, the application will be treated as an on time application. If no proof of posting is sent in and there is no evidence from a postmark that the application was posted before the deadline, the LA will treat the application as late.

What are the rules if a child lives abroad?

Parents should apply in the same way as other parents of children who already live in the area. The LA will allocate places according to current government guidance. Generally parents will need to provide a photocopy of a passport including a valid visa or other document allowing for entry into the United Kingdom/ or documentation showing that the child is living in the United Kingdom and is entitled to live in the United Kingdom. No place will be given that conflicts with the requirements of UK Border Agency.

What if a child has special educational needs or a disability (SEND)?

If a parent has a child with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or if they are seeking an assessment placement in a special unit or special school they should still complete a common application form. They should also contact Torbay's SEND team: send@torbay.gov.uk for any additional advice.

Where children have an EHCP the LA's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team will follow the SEND Code of Practice. Parents will still be invited to express a preference for up to three schools. The LA will then consult with the preferred school. The LA expects that the school will be named on the Education, Health and Care Plan and the pupil will be given a place at the school unless the school cannot meet the child's needs, or the admission would be a good use of resources.

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Sometimes a child is still being assessed for an Education, Health & Care Plan on the National Offer Day. In this case the LA will notify the parent of the school place they will offer if the EHCP is refused. This place will be held as a provisional offer until the EHCP process is complete.

What are deferred and delayed admissions?

A deferred admission is where a parent is allocated a school place for September but chooses for their child to start in reception later in the school year. The latest possible start date will depend on the child's age; they must start at the school full-time at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. Deferred admissions are agreed directly with the school once a child has been given a place there. A delayed admission is only for children born on or after 1 April. It is where a child should start in reception in a particular year but starts in reception a whole year late.

The way that each school handles requests for delayed admission is described in their admission policy. The LA advises that parents should apply for a place in the child's correct year group by the deadline of 15 January unless they have already had confirmation from their preferred schools that they would accept a delayed application for the child. Parents can choose to withdraw the application at a later date. At the same time parents should notify the LA that they would like a delayed admission for their child if they have not already done so.

The LA will ask for additional information to support the request and will pass this to the preferred schools for them to consider. Schools must consider each request individually to decide what would be in the best interests of the child. The schools will let the LA know their decision and if they refuse the request they must set out their reasons in writing for the parent.

When the parent knows the schools' responses they will be able to decide whether to

- a) Accept a place in the correct age group
- b) Refuse a place in the correct age group and apply in the following admission round
- c) Accept a place in the correct age group but defer the start date.

If a parent chooses to make a delayed application, there is no guarantee their child will be allocated a place at their preferred school because their application will be ranked against all the other children applying for the school in the following admission round. The offer of a place will be dependent on how highly they are ranked against the school's oversubscription criteria. If a school can offer a place in the child's correct year group, the parent will not be able to appeal. If none of the preferred schools can offer a place the LA cannot guarantee that it will be able to provide a place out of year group at another school.

There is no legal requirement for a school to admit a child into reception early, that is, in the academic year before they reach their 5th birthday. Parents may make a request but they have no right to appeal if their request is refused.

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How does the admission process work?

After the closing date the LA will check that all applications received are on the system. The LA will forward applications for schools in other LA areas to the correct LA.

Torbay LA will forward details of their applications to all other admitting authorities by 7 February 2022. This will include VA and Foundation schools and academies within Torbay who manage their own application process. The LA will not tell other admitting authorities whether the application is a first, second or third preference. The LA will send applications for places outside Torbay to other LAs for them to be ranked by their admission authorities. LAs will exchange information via a secure electronic system except in the case of electronic failure.

All admitting authorities will rank each application against the admission criteria for the school and place them in order of priority. They will use only the admission criteria to prioritise the applications. They will return their ranked lists to the LA by 2 March 2022. The LA will rank applications in the same way where it is the admitting authority for a school or is acting on behalf of the school.

The LA will allocate each child a place at the parent's highest ranked school that can offer a place. This means they will decide which place to allocate if more than one school can offer a place to a child. Where the LA is not able to allocate a place at any of the parent's preferred schools, they will allocate the child to the closest school (by walking route) to their home address within Torbay where there are places available taking into account travel time and transport costs. The LA will liaise with other LAs regarding cross-border applications.

The LA will send all Torbay primary schools a draft list of children allocated to them by 8 April for schools to do a final check.

On the National Offer Day, 16 April 2022, parents who applied online and said they wanted to be notified by email will receive an email. Other parents will be sent a letter by second class post.

The email or letter to parents will tell them

- a) Which school their child has been allocated;
- b) Why their child has not been allocated a place at another preferred school;
- c) How to appeal for a place at a school where the application has been refused;
- d) The date by when parents must submit their appeal (20 May 2022);
- e) The deadline for parents to confirm they want to accept the place offered (3 May 2022)

Each admitting authority will give information to the LA about the number of children allocated a place at their school under each oversubscription criterion. The LA will publish this information on its website to assist parents in deciding whether or not to appeal and to inform parents applying for places in future years.

Parents cannot normally have more than one offer of a place.

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What are the timelines?

The closing date for parents to submit the Common Application Form will be 15 January 2022. The online application facility will close at 23.59pm on that date.

Timetable

1 November 2021	Website opens for online applications and TIPS paper forms available
15 January 2022	Closing date for submission of Common Application Form and deadline for sending supplementary information forms to schools. Online applications will close at 23.59.
1 February 2022	LA exchanges data with other LAs where parents have applied across LA boundaries
1 February 2022	LA send other admitting authorities details of applications for them to rank
18 February 2022	Foundation and VA schools and academies return ranked lists of pupils
18 March 2022	Cut-off for taking new addresses into account for first round unless a school's admission policy gives a different date
25 March 2022	Day when LA starts offer processing. The LA will inform other admitting authorities of provisional offers to be made to applicants residing in their area.
1 April 2022	LA sends schools draft list of allocated pupils for them to check
19 April 2022	Allocation Day: Online applicants notified of allocation by e-mail. Other applicants sent letter by second class post.
3 May 2022	Deadline for parents to accept offer
3 May 2022	Closing date for second round applications
20 May 2022	Decisions on late applications
20 May 2022	Closing date for receipt of 1 st round appeals to be heard before the end of the summer term
10 June 2022	Deadline for parents to accept offer for second round applications
June/July 2022	Appeals for on time applications
30 June 2022	Closing date for receipt of 2 nd round appeals
July/September 2022	Appeals for late applications
6 September 2022	Date when applications are treated as In Year Admissions

What is the admission address?

The home address used to decide on priority for admission purposes is the one where the child is living at the time of the application (normally the closing date). Where a child lives with separated parents the admission address is the one where the child lives for the majority of the school week. The admission authority, or the LA acting on its behalf, will make the final decision about the address to be used as the admission address, according to the definition of 'home address' given in the school's admission policy.

When a school is oversubscribed the admission authority will usually make checks to ensure the given address is correct. This may involve checking council tax records and/or asking for documents to prove that the parent who has care of the child is living at the given address. Acceptable documents may include council tax statements, utility bills, benefit statements or tax credit statements. Phone bills and bank statements are unlikely to be acceptable. Each admission authority will make its own decisions about what evidence they will accept.

If the admission authority has a concern that an address may be fraudulent or misleading, they may ask the parent for additional information and may visit the address to check that it is genuine. The council or other admitting authorities may use Torbay's Address of Convenience Protocol. If the address is found to be fraudulent the admission authority may withdraw the offer of a place. They will take into account the length of time that a child has been attending the school.

Where an applicant is a member of the UK forces or a crown servant returning from overseas, official proof of a posting to the area will be required as in the School Admissions Code.

What if a child moves house after the application deadline?

If a family moves house on or before 15 March 2022, or if they have exchanged contracts on a house purchase by that date, the new address will be used as the admission address unless a school's admission policy says something different. If the move means that the schools applied for are no longer appropriate, the parent may give some new preferences. If a parent moves on or before 15 March 2022 and does not tell the LA, and their child is given a place at a school that they should not be given based on the new address, the place may be taken away if the school is over-subscribed.

What other changes of preference can be made after the closing date?

Once the closing date has passed, parents can only change their preferences if there is a significant change of circumstances. This is defined as

- a) Where there are significant new medical reasons supported by a medical practitioner that may make the original choice of school unsuitable
- b) Where a child is taken into care and the change is supported by a letter/email from Social Care, as long as the information is new and was not available to the applicant at the time the application was made.

Other changes of preference can only be made after the National Offer Day 18 April 2022

What happens to late applications?

Late applications are those received after the closing date of 15 January 2022 and before the start of September 2022. Late applicants complete the same application form but the online process will not be available. An electronic version of CAF2 will be available on the council's

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website to download, complete and email back to Student Services. Very occasionally there is an exceptional reason why a parent could not submit an application by the closing date. If this reason is genuine and serious the LA or admission authority may agree to treat the application as on time. Acceptable reasons might be e.g. the death of a close relative or serious illness meaning the applicant or a close relative is in hospital. As the application period is two and a half months, these exceptions will be rare.

Parents wanting their late application to be treated as on time will need to make their case in a letter or email to Student Services and to send in supporting evidence. This must be done as soon as possible after the closing date. The later the request, the weaker the case is likely to be unless there is good reason. The LA will tell the parent when a decision has been made.

What happens after the national offer day?

Any parent who is not happy with the school place offered to their child can request a change of preference. If no place is available at a higher preference school the child will keep the offer already made unless a parent refuses this place by letter or email. Parents who are allocated places in the first round wanting to change their preferences should do so by 3 May 2022.

Admission authorities will rank late applications received by 3 May 2022 along with any changes of preference requested by parents after the National Offer Day. Offers of places for late applications and changes of preference will be made on 16 May 2022. All late applications and changes of preference received by 3 May will be treated equally and parents will be offered a place at their highest preference school that has a place available for their child.

The LA will prioritise applications and changes of preference received after 3 May by the date when they are received. If a vacancy only arises after the date of receipt, all applications current on the date the vacancy arises (waiting list, changes of preference and new late applications) will be ranked by the admission authority using the school's oversubscription criteria to decide who takes highest priority.

What happens regarding withdrawing a School Place Offer & Fraudulent Applications

An offer will only be withdrawn if 1) it was based on an application that was fraudulent or deliberately misleading. 2) it was made in error 3) it was made by someone who did not have authority to offer a school place. 4) a parent (having been issued with reminders from the school or admissions team and made aware of the consequences) failed to accept their school place within ten days of the final reminder. This includes failure to respond to contact from the school regarding transition arrangements.

What happens with duplicate and disputed applications?

If two parents both apply for a place for the same child but give different preferred schools, or the same schools but in a different order, the LA will contact both parents and ask them to agree on the schools and the order of preference.

All parental applications are subject to Data Protection legislation and the personal content of an application will not be shared (other than to agencies mentioned in the privacy statement on the application form) without the agreement of the applicant, unless there is a legal requirement to do so. However, the LA will inform a person with parental responsibility that an application has been made and will share the preferred schools if asked to do so. The LA will first check with the person who made the application that there is no legal reason to withhold this information.

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Where no agreement can be reached by parents, places may be held at two schools and one place will be removed when the child is physically admitted to the other school as a child cannot have two school places. Parents will be asked to settle disputes about school places if at all possible as uncertainty can be upsetting for the child.

How does the waiting list work?

Any child who does not get a place at the first preference school will automatically be added to the waiting list. If a place becomes available the LA will contact the parent of the child at the top of the waiting list and offer the place. The allocated school will not be changed until the parent has confirmed they want the place at the waiting list school.

The LA will manage the waiting list until the beginning of September 2022. After this, all admission authorities must keep a waiting list until the end of December 2022. The LA will do this on behalf of the schools that take part in the joint In-Year scheme.

Any parent who wants to keep their child on a waiting list for a school after 31 December 2022 will need to complete an in-year application form during December 2022. Admission authorities do not legally have to maintain a waiting list after 31 December. However, the LA will continue to keep a waiting list for all schools participating in the in-year co-ordinated scheme (this is separately published on Torbay Council's website). Parents will need to email or write to Student Services to confirm that they want their child to continue on the waiting list before the start of each half-term. Parents will also have to complete a new application form the following September if they are still waiting for a place.

How do parents appeal?

Parents who have been refused a place at a school can appeal against this refusal. For on time applications the deadline to ensure the appeal is heard before the end of the summer term is 20 May 2022. If a parent appeals after this deadline their appeal will be heard after all the on-time appeals and this may put them at a disadvantage because any places the appeal panel decides can be offered may have already been filled. Details of the appeal process are included on Torbay Council's website and/or individual school websites.

A parent can appeal for a place at any of the schools where they have been refused a place, except where they have made a delayed admission and a place could be offered in the correct year group.