

Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Bolton Local Authority

Applications for primary and secondary schools within Bolton Local Authority (except independent and special schools) for the normal admissions round and in year admissions shall be determined in accordance with the provisions set out in this scheme

Part One: The normal admissions round 2026-27 intake

- 1.1 Under its scheme of co-ordinated admissions, Bolton Local Authority will be responsible for managing the admission of pupils who are resident in Bolton. This will cover admissions to Bolton schools that have community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided or academy status; free schools; and co-ordinated admissions to schools maintained by other local education authorities. (Independent schools and special schools are not included in the co-ordinated scheme.)
- 1.2 Bolton local authority will also co-ordinate applications for other local authority applicants requesting places in the normal admissions round at Bolton schools.
- 1.3 Bolton local authority, as the admissions authority for community and controlled schools in Bolton will be responsible for allocating places at these schools in accordance with the local authority's published admission arrangements.
- 1.4 For voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies, the admission authority is the governing body or trust board. As such each governing body/trust board
- 1.5 is responsible who will be allocated a place at that school in accordance with the criteria described in the school's admission arrangements.

Application process

- 1.6 Full information on admissions processes and links to admission policies for all Bolton schools will be made available on Bolton Council's website by 1 September 2025. Admission policies for each school will be accessible via a link in the Schools Directory to the individual school's website. Hard copies of all information will be available on request.

- 1.7 Parents/carers will be able to make an application online on Bolton Council's website from no later than 1 September 2025.
- 1.8 The online application form will invite parents/carers resident in Bolton to name a maximum of 3 preferred schools.
- 1.9 Parents/carers should name and prioritise all schools which they wish their child to be considered for, including voluntary aided schools, academies, independent schools and/or any outside the Salford area.
- 1.10 Parents/carers will be asked to submit the online application form by 15 January 2026 (primary) and 31 October 2025 (secondary).
- 1.11 Receipt of all online applications will be acknowledged by email.
- 1.12 Parents/carers will be advised that if they have difficulty applying online, they can contact the school admissions team by email or telephone during office hours for further assistance.
- 1.13 All preferences are treated as equal initially and sent out as equal to other admission authorities (i.e. other local education authorities, aided schools, foundation schools or academies). If more than one school place can potentially be offered, the single offer is for the school listed highest.
- 1.14 Parents/carers who want to express a preference for a voluntary aided school, foundation school, an academy, a UTC or a school maintained by another authority will be advised in the online information to check the admission policy for the appropriate school or the relevant local authority.
- 1.15 Parents/carers who want to express a preference for an independent school will be advised in the information online to contact the school concerned directly.
- 1.16 Some voluntary aided schools in Bolton, free schools or academies may require further information to that collected on the online application, for example they may require a copy of a baptism certificate or a supplementary form. Parents/carers should check with the relevant schools for their requirements. Any information provided will only be used in

the event of the school being oversubscribed. This information should be submitted directly to the school by 31 October 2025 (secondary) and 15 January 2026 (primary). It is the parents' responsibility to check what is required and ensure the information is submitted by the correct date. The date may vary for some schools.

Shared parental responsibility

1.17 Where two adults have shared responsibility for a child they should agree before submitting an application which school(s) to name as their preference schools. In cases of dispute, or when two application forms are submitted, the local authority will process the application from the parent in receipt of Child Benefit, or in the absence of this, from the parent at whose address the child is registered with the GP.

Processing of applications

1.18 Applications will be processed in line with the following timescales:

Activity	Primary	Secondary
Closing date for applications	15 January 2026	31 October 2025
Preferences for other local authority schools from Bolton residents sent to those local authorities along with any supporting information	2 February 2026	14 November 2025
Bolton receives preferences for Bolton local Authority schools from other local authority residents	2 February to 6 February 2026	14 November to 5 December 2025
Preference information made available to own admission authority Bolton schools for ranking via the Schools Portal ¹	9 February 2026	8 December 2025
Bolton local authority receives rankings from own admission authority Bolton schools ²	6 March 2026	9 January 2026

¹ In order to comply with the School Admissions Code (2021) Bolton Local Authority will not share the parent's preference ranking for a school.

² Where a school has a service level agreement with the local authority the ranking process will be performed by the local authority and sent to the admission authority for approval by this date.

Bolton Local Authority informs other local authorities of offers made to their pupils; and requests offer details for Bolton pupils applying to schools in other local authority schools	10 March to 31 March 2026	17 January to 14 February 2026
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Determining Offers

- 1.19 When all applications have been ranked, where necessary, the Bolton Local Authority will co-ordinate the offer of a single place for each child. Due to the equal preference system, it is possible that some children will have more than one potential place. If this is the case, the place that has highest priority on the application form will be offered.
- 1.20 School places which become available following the first round of co-ordination will be offered to the child ranked next in the oversubscription criteria, unless the child already has a potential offer with higher priority on the application form.
- 1.21 Offers will be co-ordinated with other local authorities in the same way.
- 1.22 If a child living in Bolton cannot be offered a place at any of their parent/carer's preferences of school, where possible they will be offered a place at the next nearest Bolton school from their home address with a vacancy. This could be the nearest community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, academy or free school.

Notifying parents/carer of decisions

- 1.23 Bolton Local Authority will inform every Bolton resident of their allocated school place via the online application system. Parents/carers will be sent an email from 8am on the offer day (2 March for secondary and 16 April for primary) with their child's allocated school place. Alternatively, parents can log into the online system at any point on the offer day to view their child's allocated school place. This will also include offers of places that can be made to schools maintained by other local authorities.
- 1.24 The offer information will include:
- 1.24.1 The name of the school at which a place has been offered;

- 1.24.2 Information on how to accept the offered place;
 - 1.24.3 The reasons why the child has not been offered a place at the other schools which were given as a preference (if relevant);
 - 1.24.4 Information about the statutory right of appeal against the decision to refuse a place at any school given as a higher preference, and the date by which appeals should be submitted.
 - 1.24.5 Confirmation that in the re-allocation process, a child will be considered for any places that might become available in schools they ranked higher than the school they have been offered (i.e. the child's name will be placed on a waiting list and places will be reallocated to children on the waiting list according to the oversubscription criteria for the school concerned); the fact that the waiting is subject to change as new applications are received; the date at which the waiting list will cease and what to do if they wish to be considered for any vacancies beyond that point. Parents refused places at other admission authority or other LA schools will be advised to contact that admission authority for information on their waiting list process as not all authorities automatically place children on a waiting list.
- 1.25 Bolton schools will have access to the list of pupils who have been allocated places at least the day before offer day. Schools will not communicate any offers of places to parents until the offer day.
- 1.26 Parents will have two weeks to accept the place offered. Parents will be able to respond online to accept the place.

Offer days

- 1.27 The offer day for primary places is 16 April 2026.
- 1.28 The offer day for secondary places is 2 March 2026.

Right of appeal

- 1.29 Where parental preference cannot be met the parent/carer will be advised of their right of appeal. Parents will be advised of where information on appeals can be found on the Council website, including an online appeal and the date by which they must submit an

appeal. Parents of primary aged children will also be advised of infant class size restrictions on appeals.

- 1.30 If another admission authority maintains the preferred school and that authority is unable to offer a place at the parent/carers preferred school, Salford Local Authority, on behalf of the other admission authority, will inform the parent/carer in writing of this decision. The parent/carer will also be advised of their right of appeal and supplied with details of the appeals procedure.
- 1.31 All appeals for on-time applications must be heard within 40 school days of the appeal being lodged.
- 1.32 Appeals for late applications should be heard within 40 school days from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.
- 1.33 An appeals timetable is published on the Council's website by 28 February. This indicates when parents can expect their appeal to be heard.

Late applications

- 1.34 For applications received after the closing date and before the offer date of places:
 - 1.34.1 the application will be classed as late;
 - 1.34.2 it will only be considered after applications received on time;
 - 1.34.3 applications for other admission authority schools will be passed on noting they were received late. It is up to that admission authority to decide how they wish to proceed with the application;
 - 1.34.4 the offer of a place will be decided as described in section 1.19 to 1.22;
 - 1.34.5 where possible applicants will be notified on the usual offer date.
- 1.35 For applications received after the offer date but before the start of the school year:
 - 1.35.1 applications will be considered as they are received; and
 - 1.35.2 the offer of a place will be decided as described in section 1.19 to 1.22
 - 1.35.3 applicants will be notified as soon as possible.

- 1.36 The LA will only process applications received after the closing date as on time applications if there is an exceptional reason for late submission. Reasons for late submission should be submitted to the local authority in writing as part of the application. The local authority (or the relevant admission authority) will consider these reasons and where deemed acceptable will process the application as though it were received on time. If not deemed acceptable the local authority will continue to process the application as a late application.
- 1.37 A valid late application will include situations where children move into Bolton after the closing date but before offers of places are made; or where a parent/carer or child was hospitalised for a major part of the application period (i.e. 1 September to the closing date).
- 1.38 Parents should note that it may not be possible to accept late applications as on time after 15 November 2025 (for secondary applicants) and 31 January 2026 (for primary applicants). This is the date when application information is exchanged with other admissions authorities.

Waiting lists

- 1.39 Bolton Local Authority will co-ordinate waiting lists for all Bolton schools following the offer day.
- 1.40 Bolton Local Authority will operate a waiting list for Bolton community and voluntary controlled schools which are oversubscribed until 31 December 2026 for applicants whose initial request for primary and secondary places have been unsuccessful. Should any places become available they will be allocated in accordance with Bolton Local Authority's published admission arrangements.
- 1.41 Looked after children, previously looked after children and those allocated a place at the school in accordance with a Fair Access Protocol must take precedence over those on the waiting list.
- 1.42 Bolton Local Authority will also liaise with the voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies which are oversubscribed who will operate their own waiting lists until 31 December 2026 for applicants whose initial request has been unsuccessful. Should any

places become available the Local Authority will contact the school concerned and the place will be allocated in accordance with the published admission criteria for that school.

1.43 Length of time on the waiting list will not be seen as a relevant factor.

1.44 Children can only be on the waiting list for up to three schools at one time.

1.45 After 31 December, if a parent wishes for their child to remain on a waiting list for a school, they will need to make a new application using the in -year admissions process.

Change of preferences

1.46 A parent may change their preferences at any point up until the closing date for applications (31 October 2025 for Secondary or 15 January 2026 for primary). They can do this by amending and resubmitting their online application, or else by emailing the School Admissions Team before the closing date.

1.47 If a parent makes an on time application, they may change the order of those preferences after the closing date by emailing the School Admission Team. This will only be possible until the offer process is initiated (30 November for secondary, and 15 February for primary)

1.48 A change of preference (i.e. adding new preferences) after the closing date will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. This is likely to be where there is a significant change in address. Verification must be provided e.g. letter from the solicitor exchanging contracts or a tenancy agreement together with evidence to confirm permanent residency at the new address. The local authority cannot change preference for whatever reason after 30 November (secondary) or 15 February (primary) until after the offer day (2 March for secondary, 16 April for primary).

Applications outside the normal year of entry

1.49 Parents/carers may occasionally apply for their child to be admitted outside their normal age group (i.e. to the year above if the child is gifted or talented or to a lower year if the

child has special educational needs or has experienced problems or is a summer born child starting school for the first time). This should be requested at the time of application.

- 1.50 Bolton Local Authority, as admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, or the governing body/trust board, as admissions authority for voluntary aided, free schools, and academies, will consider these applications individually.
- 1.51 The decision will be taken by the admission authority after discussion with the Head teacher and other relevant professionals, such as an Educational Psychologist. The decision will consider the circumstances of each case and will be made in the best interests of the child concerned, in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021).
- 1.52 Full details of the process for such applications are available on the Bolton Council website.

Children from Overseas

- 1.53 Parents living outside of the UK are advised to consult the guidance at www.gov.uk to ascertain their status and that of their dependents, including children under 18 for whom they wish to apply for a school place.
- 1.54 Children who hold a full British Citizen passport or children whose passport has been endorsed to show they have the right of abode in the country are entitled to apply for a place at a maintained school.
- 1.55 Specific named UK immigration routes also allow children aged under 18 to enter the UK and attend a school if they are part of a family entering and residing in the UK. At the date this scheme was last updated these routes include programmes for:
 - 1.55.1 Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) (BNO) and their dependants who have applied, at the same time, to move to the UK as a family
 - 1.55.2 Ukrainian families fleeing the conflict in their country
 - 1.55.3 eligible Afghan citizens to enable them to resettle in the UK

1.55.4 eligible people of Chagossian descent

1.56 In addition, children who have been recognised as refugees and asylum seeking children (including dependant children of an asylum seeker) in the UK who are still awaiting a decision, are entitled to access a school-based education. The outcome of their claim will not affect their entitlement to attend school. They do not need to 'prove' their status as an asylum seeker or refugee to apply for a school: they have the same rights to a school place as any other children resident in the UK.

1.57 Applications from the above groups will be accepted for the normal admission round however, where distance rules apply only their home address overseas will be used for admissions purposes, until they are resident in the UK.

1.58 Further guidance on overseas admissions can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-admissions-applications-from-overseas-children>

Children from Service families

1.59 Applications for children of service personnel with a confirmed posting or crown servants returning from overseas will be considered in advance of the family moving into the area. Where possible, an application must be included in the normal admission round.

1.60 An official letter, such as a posting note or letter of support from the commanding officer should be sent to the local authority as soon as possible. This should include the relocation date and Unit postal address or quartering area address (the address of the closest house in the nearest 'quartering area').

1.61 Until a fixed address is available, the Unit postal address or quartering area address will be used and a school place allocated accordingly.

Full timeline for normal round admissions for 2026-27 intake

Activity	Primary	Secondary
Closing date for applications	15 January 2026	31 October 2025

Preferences for other local authority schools from Bolton residents sent to those local authorities along with any supporting information	2 February 2026	14 November 2025
Bolton receives preferences for Bolton local Authority schools from other local authority residents	2 February to 6 February 2026	14 November to 6 December 2025
Preference information made available to own admission authority Bolton schools for ranking via the Schools Portal	9 February 2026	8 December 2025
Bolton local authority receives rankings from own admission authority Bolton schools	6 March 2026	9 January 2026
Bolton Local Authority informs other local authorities of offers made to their pupils; and requests offer details for Bolton pupils applying to schools in other local authority schools	9 March to 31 March 2026	17 January to 14 February 2026
Offer day	16 April 2026	2 March 2026
Date for acceptance or decline of places	1 May 2026	16 March 2026
Any appeals to be submitted by	15 May 2026	30 March 2026

Part Two: In-year admissions 2025-26 academic year

- 2.1 Bolton Local Authority will be responsible for managing the admission of all pupils requiring an in-year admission to a school in Bolton, regardless of their residence. This includes community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, free school and academies.
- 2.2 Where a school does not participate in the co-ordination of in-year admissions, this will be listed on the online application form and parents will be advised to contact those schools directly to make their application.
- 2.3 Bolton Local Authority, as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in Bolton, will be responsible for allocating places at these schools in accordance with the published admission arrangements.
- 2.4 For voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies, the governing body/trust board of each school is the admissions authority. As such it is the governing body/trust board of each school that determines who will be allocated a place at that school in accordance with the criteria laid out in its school admissions policy.
- 2.5 Bolton residents wishing to apply for an in-year move to a school in another local authority area should contact that local authority.
- 2.6 Applications for an in-year move to a Bolton school should be made on the online form at www.bolton.gov.uk/admissions. This can be submitted at any point during the school year, including during school holidays.
- 2.7 For voluntary aided, free schools and academies parents/carers may need to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) obtainable from the school which should be returned directly to the school. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure they submit all the necessary supporting information for their application.
- 2.8 The local authority will process all in-year applications within 10 school days wherever possible, and within a maximum of 15 school days.

- 2.9 In the case of a pupil with an EHCP, any parent making an application will be referred to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team, who will support them with securing a place at a new school.
- 2.10 Applications for Looked After Children will be shared with the Virtual School Team. Where a place cannot be secured at the best school to meet the child's needs via the normal in year admission process, the Virtual Headteacher may wish to consult the preferred school to admit the child as set out in section 3.26 and 3.27 of the School Admissions Code (2021).
- 2.11 The local authority will liaise with the preference schools to determine whether a place can be offered.
- 2.12 The local authority will co-ordinate responses and wherever possible, a place will be allocated at the highest preference school.
- 2.13 Where schools are full in the relevant year group, parent/carers will be advised of the waiting list policies for the relevant schools as well as their right to appeal. Waiting lists will be prioritised in accordance with the schools published admission criteria.
- 2.14 Parents will also be advised of the right to appeal and provided with guidance on how to access appeal information and submit an appeal. Parents will be given 30 days to submit an appeal for an in-year admission. Only one appeal per academic year can be heard unless there has been a significant or material change in circumstances.
- 2.15 Where a child cannot be offered a place at their preferred school, an alternative place will be offered at the next nearest school to their home address with a place available and within a reasonable distance. (See <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/admissions/moving-school-year/4> for information on reasonable admissions)
- 2.16 Where a child is unplaced (i.e. no preferences can be met and no alternative school place can be identified within a reasonable distance of their home address), and their application meets the criteria for in-year fair access, their application will be referred for placement through the in-year fair access process. Under this process, the local authority has a further 20 school days to allocate places for these pupils.

- 2.17 Where a place can be offered then the school must agree a start date with the parent /carer to admit the student within 10 school days of the offer being made. If the parent/carers does not accept the place within this timescale then the place will be withdrawn, and a new application will need to be made.
- 2.18 For those schools and academies that do not co-ordinate in year admissions they must inform the Local Authority of the outcome of all applications for admission.
- 2.19 All schools and academies must inform the Local Authority of places as and when they become available so that places can be offered to children from the waiting lists.

In-year fair access protocol

- 2.20 The protocol will be initiated for children within categories listed in the policy where a school place cannot be found or where a school refers a case for consideration under the protocol.
- 2.21 The operation of the In-Year Fair Access Protocol is outside the arrangements of co-ordination and is triggered when a parent of an eligible child has not secured a school place under the in-year admission arrangements.
- 2.22 Fair Access Protocols exist to ensure that unplaced children outside the normal admissions round, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a suitable school as quickly as possible and to ensure that all schools in an area admit their fair share of these pupils.
- 2.23 In the event of a governing body refusing to admit a pupil with challenging behaviour outside the normal admissions round, even though places are available, a referral will be made to the Local Authority for action under the In-Year Fair Access Protocol.
- 2.24 This provision will not apply to a looked after child or a child with an Education Health and Care Plan naming the school in question, as these children must be admitted.
- 2.25 All admission authorities must participate in the In-Year Fair Access Protocol in order to ensure that unplaced children are allocated a school place quickly. There is no duty for local authorities or admission authorities to comply with parental preference when

allocating places through the Fair Access Protocol.

- 2.26 In the vast majority of cases children and young people requiring a school place will continue to be admitted in accordance with the usual admission procedures rather than through this protocol.