

Pan-London Admissions Scheme 2015 - briefing

2 March 2015

For the eleventh year running, London's admissions system has enabled more parents to be allocated a secondary school of their preference by a fairer distribution of available offers.

This year, 84,140 pupils applied for secondary school places through the Pan-London Admissions Scheme, an increase of 3.9 per cent as the pressure on places begins to transfer from primary to secondary school.

Sixty-eight (67.56) per cent of pupils in London received an offer from their first choice school. Eighty-eight (88.42) per cent of children got a place at one of their top three schools.

Overall, 93.51 per cent were allocated a school of their preference. This means 78,908 applicants got a place at a school of their choice this year, compared to 77,148 last year.

Why was the scheme introduced?

The Pan-London Admissions Scheme started in 2005 with the aims of simplifying the application process for secondary school admissions and increasing the number of pupils who receive an offer from one of their preferred schools.

How have pupils benefitted from the scheme?

Previously, parents had to fill out separate application forms for each local authority which handled admissions for their chosen schools. Neither the offers, nor the dates on which the offers were made, were co-ordinated between authorities.

It meant some parents held on to more than one offer for weeks or months until they had heard back from all the authorities they had applied to before deciding which offer to accept. This resulted in a delay in allocating the surplus places to other children.

Co-ordinating admissions in London has meant a fairer distribution of available offers and resulted in more parents getting an offer from one of their preferred schools earlier. It has substantially reduced the number of pupils who receive multiple offers or no offer at all.

The scheme is well-perceived by parents; a 2014 poll, carried out by YouGov on behalf of London Councils, showed 77 per cent of parents said the system of applying was 'easy'.

How does the scheme work?

In London, parents fill in a single application form even if they are applying to schools in more than one borough. They put down up to six schools in order of preference and submit the form to the borough where they live.

Their application is then considered under the equal preference system. This means local

authorities consider all preferences without reference to the order listed by the parents. Each child is considered separately for each school using its admission criteria to decide whether or not they can be offered a place.

If more than one school can offer a place, the local authority will allocate the highest ranked school listed in the parents' preferences.

Every time a multiple offer is eliminated an offer can be made to another pupil who would otherwise have received a less satisfactory offer or no offer at all.

Why do some boroughs offer more pupils their first choice than other boroughs?

London is unique in that nowhere else in the country has such a large volume of applications to so many schools. The capital's dense population means there is always a lot of movement across local authority boundaries. This is reflected in the statistics. While some boroughs might not be offering as many first preferences to their residents as other authorities do, they may well be meeting a high proportion of first preferences for pupils from neighbouring boroughs.

For example, a school located near the border of two boroughs, which uses geographical distance from home to school as one of the criteria for its admissions policy, may take more pupils from a neighbouring borough than from its own borough. Boroughs within travelling distance of a number of very popular selective schools or denominational schools will have a lower percentage of resident pupils receiving their first preference because of the higher level of competition for places at those schools.

What factors impact on the statistics?

It is important to note that there are enough secondary school places to meet overall demand across London and that schools across the capital are improving strongly. Despite this, some schools remain more popular than others with parents. This can be for a variety of reasons, including academic performance, religious ethos, proximity to the parents' home or work, whether the child has any siblings there or it offers a specialism which would benefit the child. The intense demand on certain schools inevitably means that some parents will be disappointed.

Some parents choose to put a single school down. Other parents, who are aware that all their preferences will be considered equally, may select a school which their child is unlikely to be admitted to as their first choice. Therefore it is important to consider how well second and third preferences have been met, as these are likely to have been more than satisfactory to many parents.

Free public transport in London encourages parents to apply for schools some distance away, whereas in reality they may have little chance of success as distance from home to school is commonly used as a tie breaker by local authorities.

Parents applying for selective schools without a pre-determined pass mark (by ability or subject aptitude) can have no certainty whether they will be offered a place, as this is dependant not only on how their child does in a test, but how they perform in relation to other applicants.

Similarly, although applicants for denominational schools may be confident that they will meet criteria based on the degree of church attendance or commitment, the offer of a place will depend on the number of other applicants who do so and other criteria which are used as a tie-breaker.

What happens next?

Parents who have not been allocated a place at one of their chosen schools have either been offered an alternative or will shortly be advised of their options.

Unsuccessful applicants can be placed on a waiting list in the order of the school's oversubscription criteria. Places will be filled from the list as vacancies arise over the coming weeks.

Parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome may appeal to an independent panel.

Local Authority	% First preference offers	% Second preference offers	% Third preference offers	% Fourth preference offers	% Fifth preference offers	% Sixth preference offers
Barking & Dagenham	72.59%	12.93%	5.43%	2.18%	0.96%	0.63%
Barnet	68.30%	13.85%	6.22%	2.51%	1.07%	0.62%
Bexley	77.52%	13.61%	3.72%	1.99%	0.75%	0.26%
Brent	64.31%	14.43%	6.45%	3.60%	1.44%	1.20%
Bromley	72.37%	12.68%	5.03%	2.50%	1.51%	0.65%
Camden	71.37%	13.65%	5.96%	2.05%	0.53%	0.53%
City of London	59.09%	13.64%	9.09%	4.55%	0.00%	0.00%
Croydon	66.45%	15.60%	6.59%	3.54%	1.50%	0.68%
Ealing	66.06%	13.13%	6.29%	3.39%	2.11%	1.45%
Enfield	74.69%	12.58%	4.59%	2.45%	1.79%	0.44%
Greenwich	60.40%	11.06%	4.33%	2.36%	1.68%	0.72%
Hackney	64.80%	14.92%	7.65%	3.97%	1.35%	0.37%
Hammersmith and Fulham	55.02%	14.70%	9.24%	5.70%	1.61%	1.61%
Haringey	68.44%	13.35%	6.08%	3.24%	1.62%	0.75%
Harrow	67.58%	14.63%	6.61%	2.70%	1.25%	0.70%
Havering	76.44%	11.59%	4.27%	2.13%	1.07%	0.55%
Hillingdon	74.47%	13.14%	5.81%	1.81%	1.38%	0.53%
Hounslow	66.78%	14.67%	5.90%	3.71%	1.71%	1.35%

Islington	69.69%	15.82%	6.62%	2.39%	1.39%	0.19%
Kensington and Chelsea	65.29%	14.05%	6.61%	2.07%	1.38%	0.96%
Kingston upon Thames	71.80%	17.17%	6.27%	1.58%	0.43%	0.55%
Lambeth	61.79%	15.30%	9.35%	3.96%	2.30%	0.59%
Lewisham	61.30%	16.15%	8.15%	3.62%	2.00%	1.55%
Merton	62.76%	17.10%	8.48%	3.43%	1.66%	0.86%
Newham	74.68%	14.25%	4.76%	1.74%	0.72%	0.22%
Redbridge	68.76%	13.23%	6.22%	3.01%	1.88%	1.55%
Richmond upon Thames	66.99%	11.88%	6.83%	2.99%	1.55%	0.98%
Southwark	59.61%	17.73%	9.17%	4.28%	1.59%	0.80%
Sutton	74.62%	13.89%	4.53%	2.71%	0.71%	0.58%
Tower Hamlets	74.16%	13.99%	5.39%	1.71%	0.38%	0.03%
Waltham Forest	74.90%	11.22%	4.03%	1.54%	0.61%	0.35%
Wandsworth	57.82%	17.77%	9.48%	5.30%	1.93%	0.96%
Westminster	58.48%	19.08%	10.31%	4.62%	2.41%	1.35%
Average	67.56%	14.33%	6.53%	3.01%	1.34%	0.74%