

Pan-London Admissions Scheme 2017 - briefing

1 March 2017

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

This year, 88,601 pupils applied for secondary school places through the Pan-London Admissions Scheme, an increase of just under 2 per cent as the pressure on places begins to transfer from primary to secondary school.

Sixty eight (68.15) per cent of pupils in London received an offer from their first choice school. Eighty nine (88.63) per cent of children got a place at one of their top three schools.

Overall, ninety four (93.99) per cent were allocated a school of their preference. This means 83,283 applicants got a place at a school of their choice this year, compared to 81,632 last year.

More than 93 per cent of pupils who did not receive an offer for one of their preferred schools were offered a place at an alternative school.

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 places that were not accepted 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 2016 poll, carried out by YouGov on behalf of London Councils, showed 79 per cent of parents said the system of applying was 'easy'.

How does the scheme work?

Parents fill in a single application form even if they are applying to schools in more than one borough. They enter up to six schools in order of preference and submit the form to the borough where they live. All state maintained schools and academies in London and surrounding counties are included in the scheme.

The application is then considered under the equal preference system. This means that all preferences are considered without reference to the order listed by the parents. Each child is considered separately for each school using the published admission criteria to decide whether or not a place can be offered.

If more than one school can offer a place, the local authority will allocate the highest (most preferred) of these listed in the application.

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.

Offers are sent out by email and either the ParentComms app or text during the evening of Wednesday 1 March 2017. Letters detailing offers are also sent to all parents on Wednesday 1 March 2017.

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 offer high standards of education – 94 per cent are currently rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. 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 already has siblings attending or because the school offers a specialism which would benefit the child. The heavy demand for certain schools inevitably means that some parents will be disappointed.

Some parents choose to put a single school on the form. 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.

The quality of public transport in London (and the fact that it's free to children) 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 in oversubscription criteria.

Parents applying for selective schools where places are based on a child's ability or subject aptitude but there is no pre-determined pass mark can have no certainty of being offered a place, as this is dependent 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 (such as distance from the school).

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. This year more than 93 per cent of pupils who did not receive an offer for one of their preferred schools were offered a place at an alternative school. If families have not had an offer of a place, there are still places available and an offer is on its way.

If children are offered a school which is not their first choice, they will automatically go onto the waiting list for the schools which were a higher preference than the one they were offered. Places will be filled in the order of the school's oversubscription criteria from the list as vacancies arise over the coming weeks.

Parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the secondary transfer process may appeal to an independent panel - these arrangements are set out in law and parents will find more details on their council's admissions page.

LA	% First preference offers	% Second preference offers	% Third preference offers	% Fourth preference offers	% Fifth preference offers	% Sixth preference offers
Barking & Dagenham	74.28%	11.96%	4.94%	2.15%	1.27%	0.62%
Barnet	68.71%	12.74%	5.36%	2.45%	1.69%	0.83%
Bexley	73.39%	14.98%	5.22%	2.45%	1.10%	0.57%
Brent	65.18%	14.04%	6.42%	3.67%	1.29%	1.38%
Bromley	71.90%	12.19%	6.14%	2.30%	1.85%	0.81%
Camden	70.54%	13.83%	6.15%	2.40%	0.87%	0.33%
City of London	58.82%	17.65%	0.00%	5.88%	5.88%	0.00%
Croydon	67.01%	14.74%	6.97%	3.32%	1.67%	0.70%
Ealing	66.61%	13.52%	6.56%	3.40%	2.04%	1.12%
Enfield	69.84%	13.26%	5.91%	2.90%	1.67%	0.76%
Greenwich	63.99%	13.78%	7.92%	3.03%	2.00%	0.87%
Hackney	64.07%	14.35%	7.86%	3.99%	1.80%	0.94%
Hammersmith and Fulham	53.48%	15.51%	7.05%	5.09%	3.13%	1.41%
Haringey	69.18%	12.94%	6.53%	2.63%	1.78%	0.97%
Harrow	72.57%	13.19%	5.41%	3.31%	1.85%	0.73%
Havering	79.08%	10.91%	4.20%	1.69%	0.83%	0.39%
Hillingdon	67.48%	14.55%	6.88%	3.40%	1.58%	1.05%
Hounslow	63.32%	15.47%	6.67%	4.24%	2.20%	1.23%
Islington	66.86%	14.40%	6.42%	2.80%	1.49%	0.89%
Kensington and Chelsea	61.05%	16.28%	6.69%	2.91%	1.89%	0.87%
Kingston upon Thames	76.25%	14.62%	4.63%	1.28%	0.24%	0.12%
Lambeth	61.96%	16.22%	8.37%	4.43%	1.21%	0.72%
Lewisham	57.77%	17.17%	7.86%	4.57%	2.05%	1.31%
Merton	65.23%	15.69%	7.06%	3.48%	2.40%	0.74%
Newham	72.68%	16.10%	4.91%	1.44%	0.69%	0.38%
Redbridge	65.87%	15.93%	6.20%	3.23%	1.74%	0.99%
Richmond upon Thames	67.71%	12.41%	5.83%	3.71%	1.59%	1.01%
Southwark	64.12%	16.67%	7.13%	3.15%	1.72%	0.90%
Sutton	76.14%	12.55%	4.76%	1.91%	1.06%	0.30%
Tower Hamlets	71.92%	14.19%	5.21%	1.95%	0.68%	0.39%
Waltham Forest	78.21%	12.22%	3.99%	1.20%	0.66%	0.30%
Wandsworth	58.19%	16.94%	9.46%	4.89%	2.22%	0.92%
Westminster	56.43%	16.09%	7.22%	4.43%	2.87%	2.00%
Total	68.15%	14.24%	6.24%	2.99%	1.56%	0.81%