



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Guidance on the co-ordination of school admission arrangements

This non-statutory guidance relates to new requirements imposed by the 2024 Regulations. It is for admission authorities, admission appeals panels and admission forums.

First published: 2 October 2024

Last updated: 2 October 2024

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Contents

Overview

Action to be taken by a local authority in relation to a co-ordinated scheme

The requirements of a co-ordinated scheme

Main obligations on the local authorities and other admission authorities within the co-ordinated scheme

Timetable

Composite prospectus

A summary of the key actions to be taken by a local authority

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Overview

This is non-statutory guidance aimed at admission authorities (school governing bodies and local authorities), admission appeals panels and admission forums.

This guidance is published pursuant to section 10 of the Education Act 1996 which places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to promote the education of persons in Wales.

There is no statutory duty to have regard to this guidance, but the Welsh Ministers would expect those to whom it is addressed to take it into account when considering matters to which it relates.

This guidance is not and does not purport to be a comprehensive statement of the law and so should not be taken to be advice as to what the law requires.

It provides guidance on new requirements imposed by the Education (Co-ordination of School Admission Arrangements and Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2024 (“the 2024 Regulations”) which came into force on 28 June 2024.

Any reference to parent in this guidance should be interpreted in accordance with the definition in section 576 of the Education Act 1996.

The purpose of the 2024 Regulations

The 2024 Regulations place a duty on local authorities to formulate for each school year a scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements for maintained schools within their area (“co-ordinated scheme”). This includes boarding schools but excludes school sixth form places, maintained special schools and maintained nursery schools.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Parental preference

The purpose of co-ordinated schemes is to establish mechanisms for ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that every parent of a child living in the local authority area who has applied for a school place in the 'normal admission round' receives an offer of one, and only one, school place on the same day. Schemes should also address how late applications and arrangements for handling admissions outside the 'normal admission round' will be handled.

The right for a parent to express a preference for a school place remains. That right is set out in section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") which provides that a local authority is under a legal duty to make arrangements for enabling the parent of a child in the area of the authority to:

1. express a preference as to the school they wish their child to attend
2. give reasons for this preference

Section 86 of the 1998 Act also states that the arrangements may also allow a parent to express preferences for more than one school. In that case section 86 provides that the right to express a preference does not require the admission authority for a maintained school for which a child's parent has expressed a preference to offer the child admission to the school if, in accordance with a co-ordinated scheme, the child is offered admission to a different school for which the parent has also expressed a preference.

Setting admission arrangements

Co-ordinated schemes do not affect the rights and duties of the governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools to set and apply their own admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria. Co-ordinated schemes

are an administrative process to make school admissions easier, more transparent and less stressful for parents. They do not mean that all admission authorities in an area have to have the same or similar oversubscription criteria.

When will the 2024 Regulations apply?

The requirements in the 2024 Regulations apply from 28 June 2024. The School Admissions Code and School Admission Appeals Code will be updated in due course to reflect these requirements.

A summary of the key actions to be taken by a local authority can be found at the final section of this guidance.

Action to be taken by a local authority in relation to a co-ordinated scheme

The first step is for each local authority to formulate, in relation to the determination year 2025 to 2026 (the first determination year) and subsequent determination years, a co-ordinated scheme (referred to as “qualifying scheme” within the 2024 Regulations) in relation to maintained schools in its area.

The determination year is defined in the 2024 Regulations to mean the academic year beginning 2 academic years before the academic year to which the admission arrangements relate.

The first co-ordinated scheme will apply to admission arrangements for the 2027 to 2028 school year. Working back from that school year means local authorities must have formulated and adopted a co-ordinated scheme by 1 January 2025 and by 1 January for all subsequent years.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Once the local authority has formulated a co-ordinated scheme for its area, it must consult on the draft scheme. The required consultees are as follows:

- the admission forum
- each governing body which is the admission authority for a maintained school in the local authority's area
- any other local authority that the local authority thinks is likely to be affected by the co-ordinated scheme

The local authority must carefully consider the responses from the consultees and whether there should be any amendments to their proposed co-ordinated scheme.

The consultation must be undertaken with a view to securing that the arrangements for the admission of pupils to maintained schools in the areas of different local authorities are, so far as is reasonably practicable, compatible with each other.

After the local authority has carried out its consultation, it must determine the co-ordinated scheme in its original form, or with such modifications as the local authority sees fit. The local authority must adopt the qualifying scheme and take all reasonable steps to secure its adoption by each governing body which is an admission authority with which the local authority consulted.

There is no requirement to consult on a co-ordinated scheme for subsequent years unless the scheme is substantially different from the scheme adopted for the previous year, or the local authority has not consulted on a scheme that the local authority has adopted in the previous 6 years.

For the admission year 2027 to 2028, each local authority must inform the Welsh Ministers, by emailing SGOA@gov.wales, on or before 28 February 2025 whether or not it has adopted a co-ordinated scheme. Thereafter, for every subsequent admission year, each local authority must inform Welsh Ministers on

or before the 28 February in the relevant determination year whether or not it has adopted a co-ordinated scheme. The Welsh Ministers must be notified that schemes are in place.

A co-ordinated scheme may be imposed by Welsh Ministers where a local authority has not notified the Welsh Ministers by 28 February each determination year whether or not a scheme has been adopted.

The requirements of a co-ordinated scheme

A co-ordinated scheme for the co-ordination of admission arrangements must:

- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that each parent in the local authority's area who makes an application on the common application form receives a single offer of admission for a child to a maintained school under the scheme
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, where a child is eligible to be offered admission to more than one maintained school, that the child is offered admission to whichever of those maintained schools is ranked highest by the parent on the common application form
- require a common application form to be completed, enabling a parent in a local authority's area:
 1. to provide their name and address
 2. to provide the name, address and date of birth of their child
 3. to apply for no fewer than 3 maintained schools, whether or not any maintained school for which an application is made is within the local authority's area
 4. to give reasons for any application
 5. to rank each application in relation to any other application (even if admission authorities in the area do not use a ranking system as part of their individual admission arrangements)

- ensure that a copy of the common application form is published on the local authority's website and make copies available for distribution without charge to parents on request at the local authority office. The common application form must be complemented by a form on the local authority's website for online applications. The common application form can be supplemented (but not replaced) by additional forms where particular schools in the area might need extra information, for example to assess denominational commitment or in relation to testing
- identify for each maintained school to which the co-ordinated scheme applies whether it is the local authority or the governing body that is the admission authority
- where the governing body is the admission authority for a maintained school and has made arrangements for another body to determine the order of priority in which the application for the school is ranked, identify that body
- specify that any notification of acceptance for an offer of admission for a child to a maintained school must be received by the local authority within 2 weeks after the offer date

In respect of applications made in the course of a normal admission round, a co-ordinated scheme must:

- require the common application form to be submitted to the local authority by 15 January in the offer year, in relation to applications for primary schools, and by 31 October in the offer year, in relation to applications for secondary schools. It must also specify how applications submitted after these dates will be determined
- require each local authority, whether or not it is the admission authority, to send any determination offering or refusing admission to a maintained school to a parent on the offer date
- specify the dates by which each of the steps required to be taken by the bullet points listed are to be performed

The 2024 Regulations state that an application is made in the course of a normal

admission round if:

- it is for the admission of a pupil to a relevant age group
- it is not a late application or an in-year application. In other words, it refers to an application made before the date set out for the receipt of applications in the school prospectus

In respect of applications made for a maintained school in the area of the local authority, the co-ordinated scheme must require the local authority:

- where the application is for a maintained school for which the governing body is the admission authority, to provide to the governing body, or the body with whom the governing body has made arrangements for another body to determine the order of priority in which the application for the school is ranked relative to other applications, details of the application and any supporting information provided by the parent
- where the application is for a maintained school for which the local authority is the admission authority, to determine by reference to the maintained school's admissions criteria the order of priority in which each application for the school is ranked relative to other applications
- to determine in accordance with the provisions of the co-ordinated scheme whether the child is to be offered or refused admission to a maintained school in its area where it appears to the local authority that a child in its area is eligible to be offered admission to more than one maintained school, or that a child in its area is not eligible to be offered admission to any maintained school
- to make this determination by having regard to those schools' (to which the parent has applied) admissions criteria
- in the case where the local authority's determination whether a child is eligible to be offered a place at a maintained school, but it is not the admission authority for that school, to notify the school's governing body of its determination
- to send its determination to the parent, whether or not it is the admission

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

authority, except where the application relates to a child living in a different local authority, in which case it must notify that local authority of its determination

In respect of applications for out of area schools:

- where a parent in the area of a local authority (“the home authority”) applies under the common application form for admission to a maintained school in the area of a different local authority (“the maintaining authority”), the home authority must forward details of the application to the maintaining authority
- the co-ordinated scheme must specify that, in making a determination on whether the child is to be offered or refused admission to any maintained school in the home authority’s area for which an application has also been made, that home authority must have regard to any information provided by the maintaining authority as to whether the child is to be offered or refused admission to a maintained school within that maintaining authority’s area
- the co-ordinated scheme must also require the home authority to send any determination offering or refusing admission to the maintained school in the maintaining authority’s area by the admission authority for that school to the parent

In respect of duties of a governing body, the co-ordinated scheme must require each governing body which is the admission authority for a maintained school:

- to forward to the local authority in whose area it is situated, details of any applications made directly to the maintained school in the normal admission round or as a late application, and any supporting information provided by the parent, regardless of whether the parent making the application resides in that local authority’s area
- to determine or make arrangements for another body (including its local authority) to determine by reference to the maintained school’s admissions criteria the order of priority in which each application for the school is ranked relative to other applications

- to notify or, where arrangements have been made for another body (not being its local authority) to make a determination on the order of priority in which each application for the school is ranked relative to other applications, to arrange for that body to notify its local authority of its determination

A local authority should inform any other admission authority (or, in the case of applications for schools outside the local authority's area, the other local authority concerned) of any application made on the common application form for their school, and pass on any relevant supporting information (such as proof of practising membership of a church).

The parents' order of ranking need only be shared with those who need to know it, such as another local authority which uses rank order in its co-ordinated scheme, or a school admission authority whose oversubscription criteria mention rank order.

A local authority and its schools may provide in their agreed co-ordinated scheme that any additional forms provided by schools which require supplementary information can only be considered if submitted via the home local authority on that local authority's common application form. Alternatively, they may agree that such additional forms which schools or other local authorities may receive direct are to be treated in the same way as those received via the home local authority, once it has been established that these only relate to applications which are mentioned and ranked on the home local authority's form.

Each preference must then be considered by the admission authority for the school concerned. By the date specified in their maintaining local authority's co-ordinated scheme, governing bodies who are the admission authority for a school should provide their local authority with a list of all children who applied for places at their school, ranked in their order of priority under the admission arrangements, showing which criteria apply to which child.

If a school has, say, 100 places, the local authority needs to know not only which 100 applicants best fit the oversubscription criteria, but also which children are next in line should places become available as potential multiple offers are avoided according to the terms of the co-ordinated scheme. Where applications greatly exceed the admission number, it may not be necessary to rank individually the children in the lowest priority groups according to the oversubscription criteria, because there is no likelihood of a place becoming available for them even if quite a few higher-priority applicants leave the rankings as potential multiple offers are avoided.

If a parent resident in one local authority applies for a place at a school maintained by another local authority, the maintaining local authority must tell the home local authority if it intends to offer a place. The home local authority may have regard to that information in deciding whether or not to offer the parent a place at a school in its own area, but should explain its intentions clearly to parents in its composite prospectus.

Main obligations on the local authorities and other admission authorities within the co-ordinated scheme

Local authorities must operate a co-ordinated scheme within their own area. However, parents who are resident in one local authority but who wish to apply for a place at a school maintained by another local authority will apply through the maintaining authority's common application form. Where cross-border applications are made, it will be necessary for local authorities to inform each other of the outcome of those applications, in order to monitor cases where more than one offer has been made.

Timetable

Apart from the national offer dates, it is for local authorities to agree with their own admission authority schools, and write into their co-ordinated scheme, other deadline dates. It is recommended that local authorities agree with their neighbours a date for exchange of information about the offers each will be making to the other's residents. This should be long enough before the national offer day for the home local authority to have time to find alternative offers for those whose expressed preferences have all been unsuccessful.

It is vital that governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools comply with agreed timetables in order that the co-ordinated scheme in their local authority area works. It is also vital that local authorities adhere to timetables for exchange of information agreed with neighbouring local authorities.

Composite prospectus

For the school year 2026 to 2027, and all subsequent school years, local authorities must provide as part of their general information to be published in the composite prospectus, a summary of the local authority's co-ordinated scheme as determined each year, alongside a clear explanation of the stages in the process of applying for a school place.

A summary of the co-ordinated scheme must include:

- a brief description of how an application for admission to a school under the scheme can be made, including how to apply and by what date
- a brief description of when offers of admission to a school will be communicated to parents under the scheme
- a brief description of when appeals against a refusal of a place will be heard

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

- a brief description of how applications made otherwise than in a normal admission round will be determined under the scheme
- a copy of the common application form

A summary of the key actions to be taken by a local authority

The following illustrates a timeline of the key actions the local authority must undertake in meeting the requirements of the 2024 Regulations. The flow chart is based on the first determination year (1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025).

From 28 June 2024 to 1 January 2025

The local authority must consult on their proposed co-ordinated scheme and adopt such a scheme by 1 January 2025. This means that process must be completed by no later than 31 December 2024.

The consultees are:

- the admission forum
- each governing body in its area which is an admission authority
- any other local authorities the local authority thinks are likely to be affected

For subsequent determination years the local authority is only required to consult with those listed bodies if:

- a co-ordinated scheme is substantially different from the scheme adopted for the preceding determination year, or
- the local authority has not consulted on a co-ordinated scheme that it has adopted within the previous 6 years

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

On or before 28 February 2025

The local authority must inform the Welsh Ministers, by emailing SGOA@gov.wales, whether or not it has adopted a co-ordinated scheme. If a local authority fails in this requirement, the Welsh Ministers may impose a scheme on the local authority.

March 2025 to August 2025

During this period, the local authority will be developing their 2027 to 2028 admission arrangements ahead of consulting on them from 1 September 2025.

Also during this time, the statutory school offer dates for 2025 to 2026 academic year are 3 March (secondary) and 16 April (primary) and local authorities will arrange for appeals to be heard from parents appealing against local decisions (the 1 March and 2 March 2025 are non-working days).

1 September 2025 to 1 March 2026

The local authority must consult on its 2027 to 2028 admission arrangements, which will include a summary of the co-ordinated scheme.

By 15 April 2026

The local authority must determine its 2027 to 2028 admission arrangements.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

September 2026 to January 2027

The local authority must publish its 2027 to 2028 prospectus, including a summary of the co-ordinated scheme, no later than 1 October 2026.

This will be the period where the local authority will make available common application forms for school places. A co-ordinated scheme will require the common application form to be submitted to the local authority by 15 January in the offer year, in relation to applications for primary schools, and by 31 October in the offer year, in relation to applications for secondary schools.

October 2026 to March and April 2027

The local authority will co-ordinate applications it receives and send these to relevant governing bodies and other local authorities as required.

The statutory school offer dates are 1 March (secondary) and 16 April (primary).

This document may not be fully accessible.

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/guidance-co-ordination-school-admission-arrangements-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).