

# Starting Primary School

## The Admissions Process

A Practical Guide for Parents/  
Carers of Pre-school children



This information booklet has been created  
by the Integrated Early Years Service.



# My child is starting primary school - what should I do?

**Start looking on the Dudley Council website from the end of July onwards. Begin to familiarise yourself with the links and the information.**

The Dudley primary school admissions process for children starting in the September of the year they are 5, opens on 1st October, 2025. The deadline for applications is 15th January 2025. Parents can apply online at

**[www.dudley.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/admissions)**

or by requesting a paper application form. Online applications are encouraged due to their speed and convenience.

The website generally gives the current dates for applications and deadlines at the beginning of the academic Autumn Term. Look out for these.



# Overview of the Process

**Key process points will be:**

## **01 Application Opens**

The application process will open on 1st October, 2025 (the year before your child starts reception the following September).

## **02 Application deadline**

Applications will close on 15th January, 2025 for both online and paper applications.

## **03 Decision E-mails**

If you applied online an e-mail to inform you of the decision on which Primary School your child has been allocated will be sent on 16th April, 2026.

## **04 Decision letters**

If you submitted a paper application letters to inform you of the decision on which Primary School your child has been allocated will be sent via 2nd class post and should arrive with you by the end of April.

## **05 Appeals**

If you have not been allocated the mainstream placement you had hoped for and have made an appeal to the Independent Appeal Panel these are heard sometime in June/July.

# How do I choose which school is best for my child?

If your pre-schooler/s do not have an older sibling already attending a Primary School, this is likely the first time you have had to go through the application process. Finding a school can be a daunting task. So here are some tips on where best to start....

Begin by making a list of your local primary schools. It is a good idea to start this in July and over the school summer holidays. Think about what you might need:

- Do you need the school to be within walking distance?
- Have you got another child who attends a nursery or secondary school, do you need to consider the logistics?
- How far away is the school from where you work or spend most of your time during the day?
- Is it important for you to be in close proximity to the school or do you have relatives / friends that are able to help out?



After making a list of the schools you may wish to consider, now is the time to do a bit of research to see if the schools meet both yours and your child's needs. This will help you to make an informed decision.

- Look at the OFSTED report - be mindful of when school had it's last OFSTED. If it was some time ago consider that there may have been changes since.
- Does the school have wrap around care facilities (breakfast club/afterschool club)?
- Does the school offer a range of extra curricular activities?
- Be sure to look at the key policies on the school website and note down any questions / queries you may have about them.
- Look at the school's admissions criteria as you must meet this for your child to be accepted.
- Look at data for previous years school admissions to help you assess your chances of gaining admission to your chosen school. <https://explore-educationstatistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/primary-andsecondary-school-applications-and-offers>
- Talk to parents of children who already attend the school.

**In September:** Contact your preferred schools for dates of open evenings - These should be advertised on the school's website. Also ask if you can arrange a visit to look around during the school day so that you can see what the school is like when it is in action.

## **What should I look for when I am visiting the schools?**

Visiting schools with a view to making the ultimate decision can be overwhelming and you may forget things you want to ask or look for – so be prepared.

Write a list of questions you would like to ask ready for the visit.

**Do not be afraid to have more than one visit to help you decide!**



Some useful leading questions to consider are:

### **1. How would you describe the feel of the school?**


During your visit to the school, think about the words that you would use to describe the atmosphere. Do the staff seem happy, friendly and welcoming? Is there a good 'feel' to the school? It's amazing how accurate your gut feeling can be when forming your initial opinions.

### **2. When was the last Ofsted inspection and how did the school do?**

Ofsted inspections can be very helpful, but be aware that they only give part of the picture, as the judgments will have been formed on the basis of a one or two-day inspection.

### **3. How does the school communicate with parents and involve them in the life of the school?**

Most schools these days use a range of ways to interact with parents, including social media and messaging platforms, so ask about what the school uses and try to gauge how the school values and encourages parents to get involved in their child's education. Hopefully, the school will put on events where you are able to join in and build your relationships, plus assemblies or other occasions where you can celebrate your child's achievements.



#### **4. How does the school support children of all abilities?**

Some parents will be aware that their child needs some additional support, whether it's to help them to reach age-related expectations or stretch the more able. Remember schools are held to account for how well they support and challenge children of all abilities. Be honest though, and share your concerns with the person showing you around as they will probably be able to put your mind at ease.

#### **5. What are the lunchtime arrangements?**

For a very small number of children, lunchtime can feel like a big deal if they're less confident trying different foods. Ask about lunchtime arrangements: are pupils allowed to bring in packed lunches and can they pick and choose the days that they want a school meal? Most schools publish their weekly menus so that parents and children can see what is coming up and choose what they are going to eat on certain days.

#### **6. What experiences does the school offer the children?**

Many schools are able to offer extra-curricular clubs after school so children can participate in activities that can't be squeezed in to the school day; ask what days they are on and what age-ranges they are open to. However, be aware that most schools offer clubs to the older children, as the younger ones can be very tired at the end of the day. You could also ask about visitors who might be coming in to talk to the children, and whether the school makes use of the local area and further afield in terms of trips.


## **7. Is there a before and after school club?**

For some parents, breakfast clubs and after-school childcare provision can be really important as it may make life a lot easier if they are working. If this is a priority, ask about opening and closing hours and how to sign up as some may have a waiting list. If the school is unable to provide this service themselves, they will usually be able to point you in the right direction.

## **8. Is this a happy school and is it the right one for my child?**

When you have finished your visit, ask yourself whether the children and staff looked happy. Think about the welcome you received from the staff and how you were treated on your way around. You will hopefully have had enough of an opportunity to make your mind up about whether this is the right school for you and your child. Use your knowledge from the visit and what other parents think about the school. Have a look at the school website, read the Ofsted report and look at their social media if they use it. By then, you should be in a good position to make an informed decision about whether this is the right school for you and your child.

This information is courtesy of BBC Bitesize - Starting Primary School <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/groups/cx1lpm3ve37t>



# I think my child has additional special educational needs

## – Do I still apply for a mainstream school?

**Yes!** Even if your child has additional needs, and your preference may be a more specialist provision, you must go through the admissions process. The admissions team work with the mainstream schools and allocate parent preference as much as they are able. They do not have the special schools and inclusion hubs on their system – this is with the SEN Team and is allocated via children's personal Education Health Care Plans (EHCP). This is a different process on placement allocation.

If you do not go through your local authorities' admissions process your child may be allocated a place at a primary school that has spaces, not necessarily one you would have chosen.



## **Dudley Admissions – A Parents Guide to Primary and Secondary Admissions states:**

'The majority of children with SEN will attend their local mainstream school. All mainstream schools receive funding within their budget so that they can put appropriate provision in place to meet the needs of all children including those who are identified as requiring SEN Support.

Schools are required by law to have a qualified special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo). All schools must have regard to the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015 as well as the Single Equalities Act 2010 when making provision for children and young people with SEND. If your child is identified as SEN Support, the process will be the same as that for all children when choosing their next school whether starting primary school or moving to the secondary phase of their education.

Where a pupil is placed at SEN Support, parents will have been working in partnership with their child's school./ nursery. They will have discussed their child's needs and shared the detail and outcomes of personal learning plans or similar SEN records through regular meetings.

If your child has special educational needs you may want to talk to the headteacher and/or SENCo in the schools that you are considering to find out more about the school and to discuss your child's special educational needs with them. You can also look at their website and the published SEN information report.'

## **When should I begin to start my application ?**

Once you have looked around the schools and feel you have a preference, complete the application form online. To do this you will need to access the online admissions parent portal. Please follow the link below:


**<https://www3.dudley.gov.uk/Synergy/Enquiries/Citizen/citizen.aspx/admissions-signin>**

Applications are open from 1st October, 2025. Please complete and submit applications where possible before the Christmas break.

Be open and honest on your application. If your child has medical, physical, educational or any other additional need – please put this down on the application.

If you need to apply via a paper form, please allow more time to complete it and allow for posting time. If you need a paper form, you can request one by contacting Dudley Council Plus on: **0300 555 2345.**

You can choose up to five schools - please choose at least three and put them in priority order of preference.



# Other frequently asked questions:

(Taken from Dudley Admissions Guidance)

## **Why has my child not been offered a place at one of their preferred schools?**

Some schools will receive more applications than it has places available and unfortunately not every parent will be successful. Priority must be given to those who most closely meet the school's published admission arrangements.

## **Are primary school places first come first serve?**

All applicants must be offered a place if the school is not oversubscribed. If a school is oversubscribed, that is when more parents applied for a place than the number of places available, then the school uses its oversubscription criteria to decide the priority order in which places are allocated.

## **What to do if you want to change your child's school?**

How to change schools in-year. To change your child's school in-year, you will need to apply to either the school you wish your child to go to, or to the local authority. This is known as an 'in-year application'. The process for applying for a school place in-year can differ from area to area.



## Useful websites/contacts:

[www.dudley.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/admissions)



<https://www3.dudley.gov.uk/Synergy/Enquiries/Citizen/citizen.aspx/admissions-signin>



Email: [admissions.cs@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:admissions.cs@dudley.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01384 814223

## Starting Primary School - BBC Bitesize

<https://startingreception.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2025/03/Starting-Reception.pdf>



<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/>

