Hampshire County Council's Nursery Admission Policy 2026/2027

Introduction

The Local Authority is responsible for admissions to nursery classes in community and voluntary controlled schools and to community and voluntary controlled nursery schools.

This policy should be used to determine admissions to Hampshire County Council's nursery schools and units. Parents do not have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeal panel in relation to nursery admissions so it is essential therefore, that all admissions decisions can be justified by reference to the following criteria, taking into account the particular circumstances of individual schools and units.

The early years entitlements available to all approved providers in Hampshire are:

- the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months to 2 years old (new entitlement from 1 September 2024)
- the 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2 year old children (new entitlement from 1 April 2024)
- the 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged 2 year olds
- the universal 15 hours entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds
- the additional 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds

The entitlement hours are up to 15 hours of childcare a week over 38 weeks of the year (equivalent to a maximum of 570 hours a year), or, for 3 and 4 year olds, up to 30 hours of childcare a week over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children of working parents (equivalent to a maximum 1,140 hours a year)[1].

All entitlements will be offered to parents on a flexible basis and the nursery school or unit will advise parents of the patterns of attendance they can offer.

Procedures for Little Pioneers

You may apply for a place at any time by completing an application available upon request from this school. To assist with the planning of nursery places it is preferred that you complete an application form and submit it to this school when your child is 2 years old, or as soon as possible after that.

Please be aware that Hampshire County Council and Hampshire nursery schools are awaiting further information from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the new entitlements. As a result, any application forms direct from the nursery schools may not have been updated to reflect the new entitlements and availability.

[1] Childcare and early years | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)

Where there are more applications than places, the admission criterion will be used to determine the priority for admission. The school will let parents know by letter of their application outcome, where possible at least half a term before the requested start date, ordinarily this will be by the end of October, February and May. If your child is offered a place, you must confirm your acceptance to the school within two weeks otherwise the school may have to refuse places for other children unnecessarily.

The final decision on when a child is admitted, the number of hours a child can attend and his or her pattern of attendance, rests with the headteacher.

Admission criteria

All applications will be considered in accordance with the following criteria, set out in priority order. Length of time on *any* waiting list will not be taken into account.

Categories B & C contain examples of both special educational and social need.

A Looked after children or children who were previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption order, a child arrangements order, or special guardianship order. [A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989). An adoption order is an order under section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or section 12 of the Adoption Act 1976. Child arrangements orders are defined in section 8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).] Previously looked after children also includes those who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

B Children for whom there is a recommendation for nursery education by a health professional, social worker, educational psychologist, area Inco, outreach worker or education welfare officer based on the child's special educational needs.
Examples of special educational needs, in no order of priority, might include:

- emotional and behavioural problems
- hearing difficulties
- lack of personal interaction and stimulation
- physical disabilities
- speech and language problems
- visual difficulties

C Children with social needs, based on information gained by the headteacher, as part of the application procedure.

Examples of social needs, in no order of priority, might include:

- children who were multiple births (twins, triplets)
- a child with a confined play space
- a child from a one parent family
- a child in a large family (four or more children)
- a child with parents under 20 years of age
- a child in sole care of grandparents
- a child who has two or more siblings under 4 years of age
- a child on the child protection register
- a child of parents with disabilities
- a child with English as an additional language
- a child who is eligible for the 2 yr old disadvantaged early education funding
- a child who is eligible for the 15 or 30 hours free childcare for working families, *subject to confirmation of the eligibility from the DfE. (*Families who meet the 30 hours criteria and have moved from government unemployment benefits to employment or low income will be given higher priority than those currently in employment).

D Children with a brother or sister (including children living as siblings in the same family unit) with disabilities (as in A) that require a significant amount of additional support.

E Children who have a brother or sister (including children living as siblings in the same family unit) on the school roll who will still be attending (insert name) School, or a linked junior school, the following academic year.

F Children of staff who have, (1) been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, or (2) have been recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

G Other children.

Distance Measurement

If the nursery is oversubscribed within any of the above categories (A –F), children due to start school in the next academic year will be given priority. Then preference will be given to Distances will be measured from the Ordnance Survey home address point to the school address point using Hampshire County Council's Geographic Information Systems (GIS). children who live closest to the school.

Tiebreaker

Where two or more applicants are equidistant, random allocation will be used to allocate the place. An explanation of the random allocation procedure is available on the County website. Hampshire schools' admission arrangements | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council.

Other information

1. Applying for a place in Year R (FS2)

2. Admission to a reception class will be in accordance with the County Council's Admissions Policy for community and controlled infant and primary schools. **Admission to a nursery unit/school does not constitute any right of entry to the nearest local school, and places will be allocated according to that school's admissions policy**. Parents have the right not to send their children to school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Only in exceptional circumstances can children remain in the nursery beyond the normal admission date for reception classes (i.e. the September of the school year concerned). For those parents who have chosen for their child to decelerate their child's admission to school for a whole year or defer their child's start at school until later in the academic year, there is no guarantee that there will still be a place available in the nursery school for them. Please discuss such plans with us as soon as possible. **Schools and those with parental responsibility for a child:** (Guidance from the Department for Education)

The definition of a *parent* in the Education Acts includes:

- all natural parents whether they are married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has *parental responsibility* for a child or young person; and
- any person who, although not a natural parent, *has care* of a child or young person.

Having *parental responsibility* means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. It is defined by the Children Act 1989. It gives parents the legal right to make decisions and choices, such as where the child will live or go to school etc. If the parents were married to each other at the time of a child's birth, or if they have been married to each other at any time since the child's conception, they each have parental responsibility.

Having *care* of a child or young person means that a person who the child lives with, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.