

Darlington Local Authority

Co-ordinated Admissions for Schools in Darlington 2026-2027 Normal point of entry Scheme

Introduction

1. This scheme is made by Darlington Local Authority under The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 and The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 and applies to all schools in the Darlington area.
2. The co-ordinated normal point of entry scheme is for the academic year 2026/2027 and shall apply to every school in Darlington Authority area (except Beaumont Hill Special School and Marchbank Free School) and will take effect from September 2026.
3. The normal point of entry scheme is determined in accordance with the provisions set out in Schedule 1 and processed in accordance with the timetable set out in Schedule 2.

Interpretation

In this scheme –

“the LA” means Darlington Borough Council acting in their capacity as a local authority;

“the LA area” means the area in respect of which the LA are the local authority;

“primary education” has the same meaning as in section 2(1) of the Education Act 1996;

“primary school” has the same meaning as in section 5(1) of the Education Act 1996;

“secondary education” has the same meaning as in section 2(2) of the Education Act 1996;

“secondary school” has the same meaning as in section 5(2) of the Education Act 1996;

“school” means a community, foundation or voluntary school (but not a special school) which is maintained by the LA;

“academy school” as defined in Section 1 of the Academies Act 2010;

“free school” as defined in Section 1 of the Academies Act 2010;

“admission authority” has the meaning as in section 88(1)(4) of the SSFA 1998 and in relation to a community or voluntary controlled school means the LA and, in relation to a Foundation, Academy, Free School or VA school means the governing body of that school;

“the specified year” means the school year beginning at or about the beginning of September 2026;

“admission arrangements” means the arrangements for a particular school or schools which govern the procedures and decision making for the purposes of admitting pupils to the school;

“in-year admission” means any application received for a school place other than at the normal point of entry for primary, junior or secondary education that is received after 1 September 2026;

“eligible for a place” means that a child has been placed on a school’s ranked list at such a point which falls within the school’s published admission number;

“nearest appropriate school” is defined as a school closest to the home address that has places available”;

throughout the scheme those with parental responsibility will be referred to as ‘parent’.

Schedule 1

PART I – NORMAL POINT OF ENTRY SCHEME

1. There will be 2 standard application forms supplied by the LA for parents living in the Darlington area who wish to express a preference(s) for a school in the Authority area or to a school(s) in another LA area at the normal point of entry. The forms will be known locally as the Secondary School Admission Form (SSA) and the Primary School Admission Form (PSA). For any family wishing to make an application in-year, they will be requested to complete a standard In-Year Admission Form (IYAF)
2. The SSA will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into the first year of secondary education in the specified year.
3. The PSA will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into the first year of primary education in the specified year.
4. The IYAF will be used for the purpose of admitting pupils into any year group of statutory education in the specified year after September of the normal year of entry.
5. The forms must be used as a means of expressing one or more preferences for the purposes of section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, by parents’ resident in the LA area wishing to express a preference for their child(ren):
 - a. to be admitted to a maintained school, VA or Academy school within the LA area;
 - b. to be admitted to a school located in another LA’s area (including VA, Foundation schools, Free Schools and Academies).
6. The forms will invite the parent to express up to three preferences (five for primary at the normal point of entry) and give their reasons for each preference by completing the form and explain that the parent will receive no more than one offer of a school place and that:
 - a. all preferences expressed will be considered on an equal weighting basis but where a child is eligible for more than one place it will be the highest ranked school for which they are eligible that they will be offered by the LA as the admissions authority, or on behalf of another LA; admission authority of a VA, Foundation, Free or Academy School;
 - b. if a place cannot be offered at a preferred school, then the parent will be offered a place at the nearest alternative school that has places available.

- c. at the normal point specify the closing date and where it must be returned, in accordance with paragraph 12.
7. The LA will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to provide a SSA/PSA to every child living in the Darlington area who is due to transfer to secondary/primary education in September 2026 and the SSA/PSA is accompanied by a written explanation of the coordinated admissions scheme.
8. The LA will ensure that a supplementary form will be available for parents to complete who express a preference for a faith school.
9. All preferences expressed on the forms are valid applications. The governing body of a faith school can require parents who wish to nominate, or have nominated, their school on the SSA/PSA, to provide additional information on a supplementary form only where the additional information is required for the governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria to the application. Where a supplementary form is required, it must be returned to the LA, along with the SSA/PSA.
10. Where a school receives an application form in error it should inform the maintaining LA, whether the parent lives in that area or not, so that the home LA can ensure that a form is received with preferences and ranking.
11. Where a school receives a supplementary form from a Darlington resident it will not be regarded as a valid application unless the parent has also completed the appropriate form and the school is nominated on it. Where supplementary forms are received directly by a faith school, the school must inform the LA immediately so it can verify whether the appropriate form has been received from the parent and, if not, contact the parent and ask them to complete a form. Under the requirements of the scheme, parents will not be under any obligation to complete an individual school's supplementary form where this is not strictly required for the governing body to apply their oversubscription criteria.

Processing of SSA/PSAs

12. The closing date for secondary applications is 31 October 2025 and for junior & primary applications 15 January 2026. Completed SSA/PSAs are to be returned to the LA.
13. SSAs received after the closing date but before 3 November 2025 will be considered by the Authority if there are exceptional/individual circumstances which prevented the submission of the SSA by the stated deadline. The same will apply for PSAs but consideration will be given up to and including 19 January 2026. Consideration will be given to families who have moved into the area, single parents who have been ill for some time or for parents who have been dealing with the death of a close relative. All applicants must provide clear evidence for an admission authority to make a decision whether to accept their application as 'on time'. All SSA/PSAs will be considered on an individual basis, if the reason given is unacceptable then the application will be considered after the applications received by the deadline and the decision of the admission authority will be final. This allows for co-ordination between other LA's and admission authorities.
14. For secondary school applications by 24 November 2025 where parents have nominated a school outside the LA area, the LA will notify the relevant authority(s).
15. For primary school applications by 26 January 2026 where parents have nominated a school outside the LA area, the LA will notify the relevant authority(s).
16. For secondary school applications by 28 November 2025 the LA will notify each admission authority in Darlington that is oversubscribed of every nomination that has been made for that school, including all relevant details and any supplementary forms received by this date which a school requires, to apply their oversubscription criteria.

17. For primary school applications by 2 February 2026 the LA will notify each admission authority in Darlington that is oversubscribed of every nomination that has been made for that school, including all relevant details and any supplementary forms received by this date which a school requires, to apply their oversubscription criteria.

Determining offers in response to the SSA/PSA

18. The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places for all admission authorities in Darlington in response to the SSA/PSAs. The LA will only make a decision in respect to the offer or refusal of a place at a maintained school preference expressed on the SSA/PSA where it is acting in its separate capacity as the admission authority or in the role of coordinator for applicants who are not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has stated as a preference and is therefore offering an alternative school place.
19. By 5 January 2026 admission authorities within Darlington Authority who were oversubscribed will have considered all applications for a secondary place and informed the LA of all applicants ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.
20. By 30 January 2026 other LA's and their admissions authority schools will have considered the applications for their schools from a Darlington resident and advised Darlington LA of those applicants ranked according to the relevant school's oversubscription criteria who may provisionally be offered a place at an out of authority school. Applicants that are refused also need to be listed in order of oversubscription criteria. Darlington LA will compare the lists from all admission authorities against the schools nominated on the SSA.
21. By 2 March 2026 admission authority schools within Darlington Authority who were oversubscribed will have considered all applications for a primary place and informed the LA of all applicants ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.
22. By 9 March 2026 other LA's and their admission authority schools will have considered the applications for their schools from a Darlington resident and advised Darlington LA of those applicants ranked according to the relevant school's oversubscription criteria who may provisionally be offered a place at an out of authority school. Applicants that are refused also need to be listed in order of oversubscription criteria. Darlington LA will compare the lists from all admission authorities against the schools nominated on the PSA.
23. Where a child is eligible for a place at more than one school, then a place will be provisionally offered at the highest ranked school for which they are eligible.
24. Where a child is not eligible for a place at any of the nominated schools, the child will be provisionally allocated a place at the nearest suitable school with a vacancy.
25. The LA will consult with all relevant admission authorities until the allocation of places is resolved.
26. By 2 February 2026 the LA will negotiate with other LA's to finalise the offer of secondary places and by 17 February 2025 the LA will inform its secondary schools of the pupils to be offered places at their schools.
27. By 16 March 2026 the LA will negotiate with other LA's to finalise offer of primary places and by 23 March 2026 the LA will inform its primary schools of the pupils to be offered places at their schools.
28. **On 2 March 2026 for secondary places and on 16 April 2026 for primary places, (or the next working day if either national offer day falls on a weekend or bank holiday)** parents will be notified that they are being offered a place at an allocated school. The letter/email will give the following information:

- a. the name of the school at which a place is offered, whether it be an offer by the LA or on behalf of another admission authority;
 - b. the reasons why the child is not being offered a place at each of the other schools nominated on the SSA/PSA;
 - c. information about their statutory right of appeal against the decision to refuse places at the other nominated schools;
 - d. contact details for the school and LA (and those nominated VA or Academy schools where they were not offered a place, so that they can lodge an appeal with the governing body);
 - e. where a child has been refused a place at a nominated school, an invitation for the child's name to be added to a waiting list. The LA will operate waiting lists until the end of December 2023, to fill places that may become available in the first term of the school year of entry.
 - f. what to do if the place offered is in another LA;
 - g. what to do if an offer was not made at the preferred school which was within another LA and who to contact.
29. Parents will have an initial 14 working days to respond to the offer letter to accept/decline the school place offered. They will then receive a reminder letter and after 21 working days the admission authority will then look to withdraw the offer.
30. Where no SSA/PSA is received before the offer date, where the LA is aware of the child's details, all reasonable steps will be taken to contact the parent advising them that they need to make an application.
31. If a parent did not initially apply for a school but then wishes to do so, they then must make an application. An offer or refusal letter will be sent along with a supplementary form if applicable. Names can be added to a waiting list using the applicable oversubscription criteria.

PART II - LATE APPLICATIONS

SSAs received after 31 October 2025 (late applications) will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, e.g. families who have moved into the area after the closing date (refer to 13). These late applications will be considered up to and including 3 November 2026.

PSAs received after 15 January 2026 (late applications) will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, e.g. families who have moved into the area after the closing date (refer to 13). These late applications will be considered up to and including 19 January 2026.

In any other circumstances SSA/PSAs received after the closing date (late applications) will be held on a waiting list for consideration once the process has been applied to those applications who had submitted forms by the required deadline.

PART III - WAITING LISTS

A child's position on a waiting list(s) will be determined by the oversubscription criteria for the relevant admission authority. If a parent wishes to add their child's name to a waiting list for a school that they were refused a place at, then they must complete the 'options' form that will be attached to their offer letter or respond online. Admission authorities do not take account of the length of time that a child's name has been on the waiting list when determining any further offers due to a vacancy occurring, nor if the application was received late.

Vacancies often arise at short notice and those on the waiting list should be prepared to take up a place as soon as it occurs. Places will not be held for later consideration. The LA will maintain waiting lists for schools for Reception and Year 7 pupils only, until the end of December 2026. After 1 September 2026 normal transfer/in-year admission arrangements will operate.

Consideration of further offers made from waiting lists will commence after the parents have been given 21 days in which to respond (point 29) and thereafter every 3 weeks.

SCHEDULE 2

Timetable of Secondary Co-ordinated scheme

Consultation of admission arrangements (if applicable) Determination of admissions policy 2026/2027	1 October 2024 to 31 January 2025 (for at least 6 weeks) 28 February 2025
Co-ordinated Scheme to be formulated and published on council website	By 1 January 2025
Secondary Applications available no later than	12 September 2025
Parent open evenings for Secondary Schools	16 Sept 2024 to 27 Sept 2025
SSA's to be returned to the LA by	By 31 October 2025
Exchange of forms to other LA's	By 22 November 2025
Inform Academy schools of all applications made and forward supplementary forms	By 29 November 2025
Darlington admission authority schools to send LA their ranked list of offers	By 6 January 2026
Other LA's to send their lists to Darlington LA	By 27 January 2026
Negotiation with other LA's to finalise offer of places	By 3 February 2026
Inform schools of the final offer list including children offered places residing other LA's	By 17 February 2026
Offer Letters sent out on behalf of admission authority schools in Darlington and other LA's	2 March 2026
Admission Appeals (if necessary)	May/June 2026

Timetable of Primary Co-ordinated Scheme

<p>Consultation on admission arrangements (if applicable)</p> <p>Determination of admissions policy 2025/2025</p>	<p>1 October 2024 to 31 January 2025 (for at least 6 weeks) 28 February 2025</p>
Co-ordinated Scheme to be formulated and published on council website	By 1 January 2025
Primary Applications available no later than	12 September 2025
PSA's to be returned to the LA by	15 January 2026
Exchange of forms to other LA's	By 27 January 2026
Inform schools of all applications made and forward supplementary forms	By 3 February 2026
Darlington admission authority schools to send LA their ranked list of offers	By 3 March 2026
Other LA's to send their lists to D'Ton LA	By 10 March 2026
Negotiation with other LA's to finalise offer of places	By 17 March 2026
Inform schools of the final offer list including children offered places residing other LA's	By 24 March 2026
Offer Letters sent out on behalf of admission authority schools in Darlington and other LA's	16 April 2026
Admission Appeals (if necessary)	June/July 2026

SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2026/2027

School	Age Range	Admission Number	Type
Carmel College	11-16	180	Co-Ed
Haughton Academy	11-16	180	Co-Ed
Hummersknott Academy Trust	11-16	240	Co-Ed
Hurworth School	11-16	127	Co-Ed
Longfield Academy	11-16	180	Co-Ed
Polam Hall School	11-16	84	Co-Ed
St Aidan's Church of England Academy	11-16	120	Co-Ed
Wyvern Academy	11-16	140	Co-Ed

PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2026/2027

School	Age Range	Admission Number	Type
Federation of Abbey Schools (Infant)*	4-7	90	Co-Ed
Federation of Abbey Schools (Junior)*	7-11	90	Co-Ed
Bishopton Redmarshall CE Primary	4-11	15	Co-Ed
Corporation Road Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Firth Moor Academy	4-11	45	Co-Ed
Gurney Pease Academy	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Harrowgate Hill Primary	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Heathfield Academy	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Heighington CE Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
High Coniscliffe CE Primary	4-11	15	Co-Ed
Holy Family RC Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Hurworth Academy	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Mount Pleasant Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Federation of Mowden Schools (Infants)*	4-7	60	Co-Ed
Federation of Mowden Schools (Junior)*	7-11	60	Co-Ed
Northwood Primary	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Polam Hall School	4-11	45	Co-Ed
Red Hall Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
Reid Street Academy	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Skerne Park Academy	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Springfield Academy	4-11	30	Co-Ed
St Augustine's Catholic Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
St Bede's RC Primary	4-11	45	Co-Ed
St George's CoE Academy	4-11	60	Co-Ed
St John's CoE Academy	4-11	30	Co-Ed
St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary	4-11	30	Co-Ed
St Teresa's Catholic Primary	4-11	45	Co-Ed
The Rydal Academy	4-11	90	Co-Ed
West Park Academy	4-11	60	Co-Ed
Whinfield Primary	4-11	60	Co-Ed

*Associated school

Admission Authorities for the purposes of this scheme, are:

Primary

Federation of Abbey Schools (Infants)
Federation of Abbey Schools (Juniors)
Bishopton/Redmarshall CE Primary
Corporation Road Primary
Firthmoor Academy
Gurney Pease Academy
Heathfield Academy
Heighington CE Primary
High Coniscliffe CE Primary
Holy Family RC Primary
Hurworth Primary
Federation of Mowden Schools (Infants)
Federation of Mowden Schools (Juniors)
Mount Pleasant Primary
Northwood Primary School
Polam Hall School
Reid Street Academy
Skerne Park Academy
Springfield Academy
St Augustine's Catholic Primary
St Bede's RC Primary
St George's CE Primary
St John's CE Primary
St Mary's Cockerton CofE Primary
St Teresa's Catholic Primary
The Rydal Academy
West Park Academy
Whinfield Primary

Secondary

Carmel College
Haughton Academy
Hummersknott Academy
Hurworth School
Longfield Academy
Polam Hall School
St Aidan's Church of England Academy
Wyvern Academy

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Harrowgate Hill Primary
Red Hall Primary

IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS SCHEME

Applications received after 1 September 2025 and for places in year groups other than the normal year of entry will be treated as in-year admissions.

Parents who are new to the Authority will be directed to the LA who in turn will send out an IYAF for completion with a required response within 7 working days to the LA. Parents will then be contacted again if no IYAF is returned.

Processing of In-Year Admission Forms

All completed IYAFs are to be returned to the LA.

On receipt of the IYAF the LA will ascertain the availability of places if a stated preference is for a school maintained by another admission authority, in Darlington or in another LA area.

Processing of IYAFs from date of receipt will normally take 7 working days.

Determining offers in response to the IYAF

Where an applicant has been deemed to be 'hard to place' then their request for a school place will also be considered under the Fair Access Protocol, this does not limit the parents from appealing for their preferred school if their preference is not met.

For all other applications the relevant admissions criterion will be applied if there are more applicants than available places.

The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities in response to the IYAFs. The LA will only make any decision with respect to the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the IYAF where it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority or there is no availability at a school that the parent has expressed a preference for.

Where a child is eligible for a place at more than one school, then a place will be provisionally offered at the highest ranked school for which they are eligible.

Where the child is not eligible for a place at any of the preferred schools, the parent will be advised of alternative school availability.

The offer/refusal letter will be issued by the home LA on behalf of another admission authority within 10 school days but no later than 15 school days. The letter will give the following information:

- a. the name of the school at which a place is provisionally being offered whether it be an offer by the LA or on behalf of another admission authority;
- b. the reasons why the child is not being offered a place at each of the other schools stated on the IYAF;
- c. information about a parents' statutory right of appeal against the decision to refuse places at the other stated preferred schools;
- d. contact details for the school and LA (and those nominated VA or Academy schools where they were not offered a place, so that they can lodge an appeal with the admission authority);

- e. what to do if the place offered is in another LA area;
- f. what to do if an offer was not made at the preferred school which was within another LA and who to contact.

Parents will have 7 working days to respond to the offer letter to accept the school place offered. Acting in its capacity as coordinator and in conjunction with the admission authority the LA will then look to withdraw the offer.

The LA operates a waiting list for community & voluntary controlled schools for the academic year that the child has applied for only. Schools which are their own admission authority may also hold a waiting list which they have asked for the LA to maintain.

PART I – IN-YEAR TRANSFERS

Where a parent is wishing to transfer their child to another school in Darlington, they can obtain an IYAF from their current school.

In the first instance, parent discusses the transfer with the current school that the pupil attends. If they then still wish for the transfer to proceed, PART B of an in-year application form should be completed by the school and issued to the parent who will then forward to the LA. Should there be a vacancy in an alternative school requested by the parent, an appointment will be arranged at the school the child wishes to transfer, the in-year transfer request form will be forwarded to the preferred school, and a start date will be agreed.

Should the school determine that the request for a transfer fall under the Vulnerable Pupil Protocol then the request will be considered by the Vulnerable Pupil Panel, this does not limit a parent from appealing for their preferred school.

Should the school that the child wishes to transfer to advises the LA that they are unable to meet the parents request, then the parent has the right to appeal against the decision to refuse a place at the school. All in-year application forms must be sent to the LA including those for children wishing to transfer to an oversubscribed Academy school.

The LA will write to parents informing them of their right to appeal and if parents wish to proceed, appeal papers will be issued by the relevant admission authority.