

## **Pan-London Admissions Scheme briefing**

### National Secondary Offer Day - Monday 1 March 2021

For the sixteenth 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, 93,727 pupils applied for secondary school places through the Pan-London Admissions Scheme, an increase of 0.4 per cent compared to last year.

67 per cent (66.63 per cent) of pupils in London received an offer from their first preference school - equivalent to 62,453 pupils. 87 per cent (86.97 per cent) of children got a place at one of their topthree schools - equivalent to 81,522 pupils.

Overall, 93 per cent (93.30 per cent) of applicants were allocated a school of their preference. This means 87,446 applicants got a place at a school of their choice this year, compared to 87,548 last year.

6 per cent (6.24 per cent) of applying children 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 aim 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 2017 poll, carried out by YouGov on behalf of London Councils, showed 82 per cent of parents said the system of applying was 'very' or 'fairly' easy. Furthermore, 98.5 per cent of applications were made online this year, an increase of 0.6 per cent compared to last year.

### **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 or text during the evening of Monday 1 March 2021.

### **How has the pandemic impacted the statistics?**

This year, due to pandemic restrictions, the Pan London Admissions Scheme has been run entirely remotely by London borough admissions teams. Their hard work and ability to adapt to this challenge are hugely appreciated.

Overall application numbers have remained relatively stable compared to last year, suggesting that the vast majority of families have been able to apply for secondary school places for their year six children as normal.

Many schools have worked hard to organise online Q&As and virtual or social distanced school tours to enable parents and children to make informed decisions.

98.5 per cent of families applied for their child's school place online, a 0.6 per cent increase compared to last year.

However, in some boroughs with selective schools e.g. grammar schools, we have observed an impact on first preference rates that could be explained as follows.

The School Admissions Code requires schools which hold admission tests (i.e. schools with ability or aptitude selection criteria) to test early enough to provide results to parents before the deadline for submitting school place preferences (31 October).

This year Covid-19 prevented most schools from holding tests early enough to do this and the DfE had to relax the requirement. In London, we agreed a protocol to be followed by all London local authorities to allow applicants to make changes to an application submitted before the deadline, by making a request to their local authority before 10 December, by which time most test scores would have been received. Boroughs were requested to publicise this to parents on their websites.

Families may have chosen a selective school as their first preference but their child did not receive the required test score. They are not disadvantaged by this as the system allows for each of the six preferences which may be made to be treated equally as explained above. However, if the family did not request to change their first preference to reflect this, their child will not have received a school place offer for their first preference because they did not meet the school's criteria. We think this has played a role in the number of children not receiving a place at their first preference school in some boroughs, which then impacts London's overall first preference rate as well.

Other factors that may have impacted this year's statistics are significant increases or decreases in application numbers within particular boroughs, and increased demand for places at the most popular schools. Individual boroughs will be able to provide this context where relevant.

### **Why do some boroughs offer more pupils their first preference 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 – 93 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 religious 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 whose children have not been allocated a place at one of their preferred schools have either been offered an alternative or will shortly be advised of their options.

This year 6,281 secondary school applicants did not receive an offer for one of their preferred schools. Of these, 5,853 children (6.24 per cent of total applications) will be offered an alternative school on Monday 1 March.

Of the remaining 428 applicants:

36 children already have a Year 7 place in an all-through school on 1 March and 3 children do not require an alternative school place.

The remaining children will be advised of places becoming available shortly after Monday 1 March as a result of withdrawal of successful applicants - as higher preferences become available through waiting list movement or opting for a place at an independent school.

If children are offered a place at a school which is not their first preference, 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.

In addition to the places offered through the co-ordinated admissions process, there is one Academy opening in the capital in September 2021 offering 180 places. This school is permitted to run its own admission process in the first year, but this adds to the availability of places.

Although some London local authorities will be under more pressure than others, overall we can say that there are sufficient Year 7 places to meet demand in London schools.

[Research by the Education Policy Institute](#) provides evidence that after National Offer Day there is a significant increase in London children getting a place at their first preference school or a higher preference school. This is for a range of reasons (such as children declining school place offers because they are moving out of the area or will be attending a private school).

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	79.60%	10.05%	3.71%	1.99%	0.86%	0.56%
Barnet	70.43%	13.24%	5.31%	2.71%	1.35%	0.77%
Bexley	64.52%	13.75%	8.52%	6.01%	3.08%	0.90%
Brent	65.66%	14.63%	6.38%	2.91%	1.81%	0.91%
Bromley	68.68%	12.45%	5.65%	3.39%	2.11%	1.57%
Camden	66.78%	15.18%	6.32%	2.74%	1.04%	1.04%
City of London	73.91%	4.35%	4.35%	13.04%	0.00%	0.00%
Croydon	60.47%	15.51%	7.86%	4.50%	2.38%	1.35%
Ealing	67.41%	12.08%	5.67%	3.09%	1.85%	1.53%
Enfield	67.30%	16.69%	6.30%	3.16%	0.91%	0.52%
Greenwich	59.91%	14.82%	7.59%	4.41%	3.00%	1.91%

<b>Hackney</b>	63.64%	15.67%	7.73%	3.17%	1.44%	0.82%
<b>Hammersmith and Fulham</b>	57.52%	14.06%	8.40%	5.35%	1.99%	1.53%
<b>Haringey</b>	67.77%	13.71%	6.30%	3.27%	1.23%	0.69%
<b>Harrow</b>	65.61%	11.77%	5.83%	3.51%	2.52%	1.91%
<b>Havering</b>	81.24%	9.28%	3.13%	1.74%	0.72%	0.36%
<b>Hillingdon</b>	67.48%	12.56%	5.93%	3.60%	2.22%	2.27%
<b>Hounslow</b>	66.20%	14.00%	6.19%	3.47%	2.32%	1.45%
<b>Islington</b>	64.53%	14.95%	6.73%	2.92%	1.93%	1.16%
<b>Kensington and Chelsea</b>	63.26%	15.38%	7.69%	3.71%	2.12%	0.80%
<b>Kingston upon Thames</b>	63.83%	14.78%	6.39%	4.01%	2.01%	1.00%
<b>Lambeth</b>	61.07%	14.72%	6.83%	4.71%	2.28%	1.41%
<b>Lewisham</b>	62.08%	15.90%	7.53%	4.33%	2.12%	1.31%
<b>Merton</b>	62.49%	14.11%	8.45%	3.68%	1.71%	1.26%
<b>Newham</b>	66.74%	16.82%	7.02%	2.19%	1.29%	0.39%
<b>Redbridge</b>	66.92%	13.88%	6.02%	3.14%	1.99%	1.41%
<b>Richmond upon Thames</b>	59.85%	14.66%	8.17%	3.58%	1.99%	1.33%
<b>Southwark</b>	64.82%	13.38%	7.02%	3.65%	2.58%	1.13%
<b>Sutton</b>	66.23%	13.47%	7.59%	4.94%	2.18%	1.02%
<b>Tower Hamlets</b>	68.51%	13.56%	6.41%	1.95%	1.07%	0.38%
<b>Waltham Forest</b>	79.91%	10.85%	3.81%	1.17%	0.73%	0.30%
<b>Wandsworth</b>	60.01%	16.61%	7.45%	4.86%	2.26%	1.19%
<b>Westminster</b>	66.29%	14.69%	6.78%	3.39%	1.51%	0.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66.63%</b>	<b>13.89%</b>	<b>6.45%</b>	<b>3.41%</b>	<b>1.82%</b>	<b>1.10%</b>