



## Admission of children of crown servants

This explanatory note is to help local authorities and school admission authorities understand the duties and responsibilities imposed on them by the statutory School Admissions Code, about the admission of children of Crown servants. It also aims to advise Crown servant families applying for a school place in England, following their return from overseas.

### Main points

- The School Admissions Code requires that for families of Crown servants<sup>1</sup> returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities must allocate a school place in advance of the family arriving in the area, provided their application is accompanied by an official letter<sup>2</sup> declaring a relocation date.
- Where vacancies exist at the school, we would expect places to be allocated to the family in advance of their move, even if they do not yet have a confirmed address.
- Where a school is over subscribed, the admission authority needs to be satisfied that places are allocated lawfully, in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Admission authorities may expect to have some level of certainty about a family's intended new address, so that they can make sure they allocate a place lawfully.
- Admission authorities are expected to be flexible in what they would accept as confirmation of address, whilst ensuring statutory duties are met.
- Admission authorities must not refuse a child a place simply because the family does not currently live in the area.

### Role of the admission authority

Paragraph 2.18 of the School Admissions Code requires that for families of UK service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area or Crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities must allocate a school place in advance of their move, provided their application is accompanied by an official letter declaring a relocation date and unit address or quartering address.

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<sup>1</sup> Officers employed by departments of the United Kingdom Government, such as FCO, DFID, UKVi, UKTi.

<sup>2</sup> Official Government letter issued by a Government department e.g. FCO, DFID, UKVi, UKTi.

The terms 'unit address' and 'quartering address' are usually understood to apply in relation to the families of UK service personnel. There is no equivalent requirement for admission authorities to allocate places on the basis of a civil service head office address, as this would be unlikely to be helpful to the families involved, particularly if this is a Whitehall address.

However, school places must be allocated in accordance with a school's oversubscription criteria. As school places are often allocated based on the proximity of the child's home address to the school, or residence within a catchment area, using a Whitehall address would be unlikely to be helpful to the parent unless they planned to live in the Whitehall area.

If vacancies exist at local schools, we would expect them to be allocated to the family in advance of their move, even if they do not yet have a confirmed address. The admission authority cannot simply refuse to accept their application. However, if schools are oversubscribed, the admission authority needs to be satisfied that places are allocated lawfully and may expect to have some level of certainty about a family's intended new address, to ensure a place is allocated lawfully.

It is for the admission authority concerned to decide what to accept as confirmation of a new address, but this could be proof of exchange of contracts or a letting agreement. Admission authorities are expected to be flexible in what they would accept as confirmation of address, whilst ensuring statutory duties are met.

## Information for parents

### Admissions timetable

In England, the application process for a child who requires a school place in Reception<sup>3</sup> or Year 7<sup>4</sup> would normally begin up to a year before the start of the school year in which the child would take up the school place, as part of the Normal Admissions Round. The national closing date for secondary applications is 31 October and for primary applications 15 January.

Parents can express a preference for at least three schools but there is no guarantee that a preference will be met. Where a school has sufficient places for every child that applies, then it must admit all applicants. If, however, the school is oversubscribed, places must be ranked in order against its published oversubscription criteria.

For applications in the normal admissions round, parents will receive a single offer of a place at the highest preference school that is able to offer them a place, on National Offer Day. National Offer Day is on or about 1 March for secondary schools and on or about 16 April for primary schools, in the year in which the child will be admitted. Where a child has been refused a school place at a preferred school, the parents will have the right of appeal to an independent appeal panel.

For in-year applications (i.e. September onwards), there is no requirement for local authorities to coordinate applications but a local authority must, on request, provide information to parents about the places still available in all schools within its area. Parents can apply for a place at any time, to any

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<sup>3</sup> Normal point of entry to infant / primary school. Some schools may also have Year 3 this as a point of entry, where children are required to move from the infant to the junior school.

<sup>4</sup> Normal point of entry to secondary school.

school, outside the normal admissions round and apply directly to schools where they are their own admission authority<sup>5</sup>.

## **Confirmation of relocation address**

It is important that parents are able to provide admission authorities with some certainty as to their relocation address, in order to ensure that places are allocated fairly and in accordance with each school's admissions criteria.

Where a parent is unable to provide any confirmation of a relocation address, they are advised to provide an indication of area, narrowed down as far as possible, to which the family intend to return. Parents should keep admission authorities informed of any changes to their planned address during the application process and should note that without being able to provide any confirmation of a relocation address, an admission authority may not be able to process their application.

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<sup>5</sup> The admission authority for a community or voluntary controlled school is the local authority. For a foundation or voluntary aided school, it is the governing body and for academies and free schools, it is the academy trust.