

Northumberland County Council Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools - 2026-27

Admission to First and Primary Schools (Reception)

Introduction

These are part of the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled first and primary schools.

NB If you are applying for a school that manages their own admissions e.g academies, please review their admissions policy/arrangements via the school website.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

In line with current legislation, the Local Authority has drawn up a co-ordinated admissions scheme to coordinate admissions to maintained schools and Academies within Northumberland and neighbouring authorities for the main admissions round.

Published Admission Numbers

The admission number the Local Authority will publish for each community and voluntary controlled school is shown below.

Rationale for proposal to reduce the PAN into The Sele First School from September 2026

Background

Northumberland County Council is the Admissions Authority for community and voluntary controlled schools in the county and allocates the planned admission number (PAN)¹ and catchment area² for these schools. The Council also sets the transport eligibility areas for all schools and academies within Northumberland in relation to Home to School Transport. The Council has a key objective of enabling as many students as possible to attend local schools within or as close to their home communities. Its process for supporting this objective is set out in the School Organisation Plan 2021-24 and this is through the management of surplus places in schools. While surplus places in schools enable parents to have a wider choice of schools to send their children, they can have a serious impact on the sustainability and viability of schools, particularly small, rural schools. One of the Council's 3 key approaches to managing the impact of surplus places within a school partnership is to review the Planned Admission Number of those schools where it far exceeds the needs of its own community and is potentially impacting the viability of other local schools.

Hexham Partnership and Surplus Places

In 2023/24, there were 23% surplus places in first schools in the Hexham Partnership; this was in spite of pupils attending from other Northumberland partnership areas and from out of county (e.g. in 2022/23, 172 pupils in Hexham first schools lived outside of catchment). The reason for the high surplus places in Hexham first schools and their ability to offer places to children living outside of the partnership area is due to the continuing fall in the birth rate in the area. For example, in September 2022 the number of children living in the Hexham Area who were able to join Reception classes was 187; in September 2027, the

number of children joining Reception classes will be 117. The number of actual places available in Hexham first schools in Reception classes currently totals 274 and is far in excess of the needs of the local communities within Hexham Partnership. Without the removal of some of these excessive surplus places, pupils will be spread much more thinly across schools, with the sustainability and viability of some schools likely to be put at greater risk.

The Sele First School

In light of the increasing surplus places as a result of the continuing fall in pupil numbers in the Hexham Partnership set out above, it has been identified that the viability and sustainability of all schools in the partnership would be supported by a reduction in the number of surplus places. However, it is important that this process is managed in a phased way in order to avoid causing disruption to parental choice across the partnership. Therefore, it is proposed that for the intake year 2026/27 that this first phase of management of surplus place is limited to the reduction of the PAN of The Sele First School, as it is envisaged that the school will continue to thrive, and be viable and sustainable with an annual intake of 60 pupils.

The Sele First School is located in the heart of Hexham town and attracts around 70% of pupils from its own community. Based on 2022/23 data, these students make up only around 65% of the students on roll, with 35% of pupils living in other school catchments within Hexham Partnership, other Northumberland partnerships and a small number from out of county. Around half of these non-catchment pupils live in the catchments of very small, rural schools and undertake significant daily car journeys to attend The Sele, passing other schools along the way. This does not support the Council's policy to reduce car journeys to schools and lessen the impact on the environment.

The Sele's current PAN is 84. The most recent birth data for The Sele set out in the table below indicates that there is a continuing fall in the number of children being born in the school's catchment area.

R (2027)	R (2026)	R (2025)	R (2024)	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6	Yr7				
Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7	Age 8	Age 9	Age 10	First School	PAN	CAPACITY	
01.09.22	01.09.21	01.09.20	01.09.19	01.09.18	01.09.17	01.09.16	01.09.15	01.09.14	01.09.13	01.09.12				
To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To	To				
31.08.23	31.08.22	31.08.21	31.08.20	31.08.19	31.08.18	31.08.17	31.08.16	31.08.15	31.08.14	31.08.13				
36	42	47	59	38	63	52	68	60	67	61	The Sele First	84	420	

The above data indicates that a PAN of 84 is no longer appropriate to meet the needs of the community served by The Sele. It is proposed that a PAN of 60 (2 forms of entry) should be implemented at the school for the September 2026 Reception intake onwards; this would enable the school to meet the needs of its catchment area pupils, as well as continuing to have in region of 20 places that could be offered to pupils outside of catchment. Furthermore, whole forms of entry are more common in first and primary schools and are generally preferred as they make it easier for schools to manage staff and curriculum planning. The Sele First School is rated 'Good' by Ofsted, as are the other first schools in the Hexham Partnership.

If you have any views either in support or against the above proposals to reduce the PAN of these schools, please submit them to schooladmissions@northumberland.gov.uk before 16th Dec 2024 as your views will be considered when making recommendations to the Council's Cabinet who are the decision makers for the admission arrangements for Local Authority Maintained schools .

School Name	Published Admission Number (PAN)
Acomb First School	15
Allendale Primary School	24
Amble First School	30
Amble Links First	30
Beaconhill Community Primary School	30
Beaufront First School	15
Bedlington Station Primary School	30
Bedlington Stead Lane Primary School	30
Bedlington West End First School	30
Belford Primary School	30
Berwick St. Mary's C.E. First School	30
Branton Community Primary School	6
Broomhill First School	15
Burnside Primary School	60
Cambo First School	8
Cambois Primary School	15
Choppington Primary School	15
Cragside C of E Primary School	60
Cramlington Eastlea Primary School	30
Ellington Primary School	30
Felton C of E Primary School	15
Grange View CE First School	30
Greenhaugh County Primary School (as will be)	8
Guidepost Ringway Primary School	30
Hareside Primary School	60
Hexham First School	30
Hipsburn Primary School	15
Holywell First School	30
Horton Grange Primary School	90
Kielder Community Primary School (as will be)	8
Linton Primary School	8
Longhoughton C of E Primary School	15
Lowick C of E VC First School	10
Morpeth First School	60
Mowbray Primary School	30

New Delaval County Primary School	45
New Hartley First School	30
Newsham Primary School	60
Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E First School	10
Northburn Primary School	30
Otterburn Primary School	10
Pegswood County Primary School	30
Red Row Community First School	29
Rothbury First School	20
Scremerston First School	10
Seahouses Primary School	21
Seaton Delaval First School	30
Seaton Sluice First School	30
Seghill First School	30
Shanklea Primary School	45
Shilbottle Primary School	15
Slaley First School	10
Spittal Community First School	30
Stakeford Primary School	30
Stamfordham Primary School	15
Stannington First School	20
St Mary's C of E Primary	15
Swansfield Park Primary School	45
Swarland Primary School	17
The Sele First School, Hexham	60 (previously 84)
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School	30
Tweedmouth West First School	30
Whittingham Primary School	15
Wooler First School	27

The Local Authority Admissions Policy for 2026-2027

This admissions policy will be used to allocate places at those schools which are oversubscribed. It is attached below for entry to a Reception class.

Admission Policy – first and primary schools

This policy applies only to Local Authority maintained schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

The County Council is obliged to admit all applicants to a particular school provided these do not exceed the school's Published Admission Number (PAN).

Children with an Education Health and Care Plan where the school is named in the statement will be admitted.

Rationale for proposal to remove 'Greater Catchment' and Greater Catchment with Sibling' from the oversubscription criteria.

Greater catchment:

'The greater catchment area for a school is the catchment area of the high or secondary school'.

The use of greater catchment related to a previous time when all secondary/high schools had catchment areas, and these were determined by the Council as the Admissions Authority to ensure there was a pattern across the local authority covering all addresses.

As of September 2024, the Council is only the Admissions Authority for 2 out of 16 secondary/high schools, The remaining 14 schools have a variety of arrangements including some secondary schools with no use of catchment areas in their policies. As such it is no longer appropriate or relevant to have 'greater catchment' within the oversubscription criterion of the Council's Admissions Policy.

Oversubscription Criteria

Where there are more applications than places available the following oversubscription criteria will be applied, strictly in order of priority:

1. Looked After Children (as defined by Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) including a child who was previously "looked after" but immediately after being "looked after" became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order. Children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. Children living within the catchment area of the school and those on whose behalf firm evidence is presented that they will be living in the catchment area by the appropriate admission date.

The following link provides information re: catchments relevant to the 2026/27 academic year: [Digital catchment maps](#)

3. Children with an exceptional social or medical reason that means that they can only attend that specific school (for example, where the child or one or both parents has a disability that means that the child can only go to one school).

Strong supporting evidence must be provided from a professional body involved with the family or the child. The professional must be independent of both the family and the school. The evidence must relate specifically to the school for which the application is being made and must demonstrate clearly why it is the only school that can meet the child's needs. No assumptions should be made that the submission of the relevant evidence will, in itself be sufficient to allocate a place.

NOTE: You will not be allocated a place under this criterion if you omit to send to School Admissions Team a written statement from a professional third party by 16 January 2025.

4. Children who have a sibling* who already attends the school and who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission.

* For the purpose of admissions siblings are deemed to be brothers and sisters, stepsiblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children who reside permanently in the household and are treated as siblings.

5. Other children

Tie Breaker

Should it prove necessary, because places are limited, to distinguish between children in any given category priority will be given to those who live nearest to the school, measured in a direct line ('as the crow flies') using the LA's computerised measuring system (GIS). Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Applicants refused admission are entitled to an appeal which is determined by an independent panel.

GENERAL

Parents may be asked to provide evidence of residency if the requested school is oversubscribed.

Applications on behalf of children who are resident in other Local Authority areas will be considered in the same way as applications from Northumberland residents.

Children with disabilities will be treated no less favourably than other applicants for admission. Schools are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with disabilities are not placed at a substantial disadvantage, and no child will be refused a place on the grounds of disability. A pupil has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Those parents whose application to a school has been unsuccessful will be notified of their right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, gives this right to all parents whose application for a school has been unsuccessful. The decision of an Appeal Panel is binding on both the Admission Authority and the school. The School Admission Appeals Code can be found on the DfE website at: www.gov.uk/dfes.

Definitions used under the policy

'**Parents**' include all those people who have a parental responsibility* for a child as set out in the Children's Act 1989. Where responsibility for a child is 'shared', the person deemed to be the person responsible for completing the application is the person receiving Child Benefit and whose address will be used for admission purposes.

*Parental Responsibility, unless otherwise determined by a court order:

- Mothers automatically have parental responsibility.
- Fathers also have parental responsibility if the father is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth. This continues after any divorce/separation/remarriage even if the child lives apart from them.
- An unmarried father can obtain Parental Responsibility by:
 - marrying the mother
 - having his name registered or re-registered on the birth certificate if his name is not already registered**
 - entering into a Parental Responsibility Agreement with the mother
 - obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order from the court
 - having obtained a Residence Order prior to 22.4.2014
 - by being named as the resident parent under a Child Arrangements Order
 - becoming the child's guardian on the mother's death

******The law has changed so that unmarried fathers who registered or re-registered their name on their child's birth certificate *after* 1st December 2003 will have Parental Responsibility for their child.

Therefore:

- If an unmarried father has a child after 1st December 2003 and he is registered on the birth certificate he WILL have Parental Responsibility.
- If a child's birth was registered before 1st December 2003 and the father was not named on the birth certificate, the birth can be re-registered to include the father's name. Once this has been done, the father WILL have Parental Responsibility.*
- If an unmarried father's name is already on the birth certificate and the child was registered before 1st December 2003, the law has not changed this situation so the father WILL NOT have Parental Responsibility. (Unless obtained by other means).

Same-sex parents

Civil partners

Same-sex partners will both have parental responsibility if they were civil partners at the time of the treatment, eg donor insemination or fertility treatment.

Non-civil partners

For same-sex partners who are not civil partners, the 2nd parent can get parental responsibility by either:

- [applying for parental responsibility](#) if a parental agreement was made
- becoming a civil partner of the other parent and making a parental responsibility agreement or jointly registering the birth

Address to be Used in Determining Priority for Admission

The address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term time, will be used in the allocation process.

In some cases, for example where shared parental living arrangements are in place, a child's address may be difficult to determine. In these circumstances the Local Authority will firstly ask both parents which address they would like to use for admissions purposes. If further information is required, the address used for child benefit purposes or the address on the NHS medical card can be used.

Fraudulent Applications and Withdrawal of a School Place

The Local Authority will not withdraw the offer of a place unless it has been established that the offer was obtained through a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application. Where an offer is withdrawn on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information, the application will be considered on the basis of correct information, and parents or carers will have the right of appeal where no place can be offered.

The local authority may seek to withdraw the offer of a school places if it is established that a fraudulent application was submitted.

Where parents or carers are found to have made a fraudulent application for a school place and the admission authority decides not to withdraw that place in the best interests of the child, should a school place be sought for any other sibling, or siblings, the sibling criterion will not be considered.

If a place is withdrawn it will be offered to those with a greater right to the place as of National Offers Day, ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.

Parental disagreement

The management of school applications may be severely delayed during the main admissions round where separated parents* of the child each submit an application for different schools or one parent does not agree with the application made by the other parent. The School Admissions Code states that only one offer of a school place per child can be made by the Local Authority. In this situation the Local Authority asks that parents and/or carers resolve matters between themselves before informing the Local Authority in writing of which application should be processed/their agreement to an application. In case of dispute between parents, where more than one parent has parental responsibility and they do not agree to an application being made to a particular school, a temporary school place will be offered until any dispute is resolved by both parents as a personal matter and this will be based on the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term-time.

Late Applications

Normally applications submitted after the relevant published date will not be considered until after allocations for those parents who applied on time have been made unless in exceptional circumstances. If the LA considers your reasons are exceptional your application will be considered along with those received on time. Examples of what may be considered as exceptional circumstances are a family who have just moved into the area (proof of ownership or tenancy agreement will be required). Any evidence submitted after the relevant date to support a late application or change of preference will not be considered. Affected applicants will not receive an offer with other parents on National Offers Day, instead receiving one on 're-allocation day'.

Waiting Lists

Once places have been allocated, children refused a place will continue to be considered for any vacancies which become available. Vacancies will always be allocated by applying the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria of the school; length of time on the waiting list will not be considered. Each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. The LA will hold all waiting lists for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and where requested for VA, Trust and Academies. Waiting lists for the normal year of entry will be kept open until 31 December 2026.

Twins and Siblings of Multiple Births

Where places are available for some but not all children from multiple births (including twins) the Local Authority will exercise discretion offered by the School Admissions Code to offer all the children a place, even if this breaches the published admission number for the year group.

Catchment Areas

Catchment areas are a tool used to apply the over subscription criteria when a school has more applications than places. Catchment areas have no separate legal identity outside of

the application of the admissions policy. Details of catchment areas are available on request or by following the links on the County Council's webpage to the interactive mapping system (see above)

Distance Measures

Distance measures will be undertaken using the Local Authority's computerised Geographical Information System (GIS). This measures a straight-line measure from the central visual point of the dwelling to central visual point of the school. Distance checking is an integral function within the school admissions software ensuring consistency in measurement. Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Admission of Children below Compulsory School Age and Deferred Entry

Children are entitled to start school full time the September following their fourth birthday. This is when most children start school. However a parent does not have to send their child to school until they reach compulsory school age. A child will reach compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. Children must receive full time education from this point. For children under compulsory school age, once a school place has been offered and accepted, parents may decide that they would like their child to attend school part-time until later in the school year, or start full time, later in the school year, but not later than the start of the summer term. If you would like your child to attend school part time or start school later in the school year, you must contact the local authority and school following receipt of your offer letter.

Admission of Children outside their Normal Age Group

A request may be made for a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Any such request should be discussed with the head teacher of the school and made in writing to the local authority. The local authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the local authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Summer Born Children

The parents of a summer born child, i.e. a child born between 1 April and 31 August can also choose to defer entry as above but they can also request that the child be admitted out of their normal age group, to the reception class in the September following their fifth birthday and that the child will remain in this cohort as they progress through school.

Parents who want to make this request should make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time. The application to the local authority should include this request. The local authority will liaise with the school and the relevant admission authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher, who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the

school, the relevant admission authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Parents will be informed of the outcome of the request before primary national offer day.

If the request is agreed, the application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If the request is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

Where a parent's request is agreed, they must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools. If a child who has not reached compulsory school age has been allocated a Reception place and their parent or carer wishes to delay their child's entry to school, the place will be held open. The place must be taken up in the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age.

Admission to Nursery Schools and Infant/Primary Schools Offering Nursery Education

These arrangements do not apply to the admission of nursery children. Nursery admission arrangements are determined separately. **Attendance at a school's nursery does not guarantee admission to the school's Reception group nor is it a factor in allocating places in most cases.**

All parents must apply for a place in a Reception class.

The Admissions Timetable

The timetable for the September 2026 application and allocation processes will be in line with the co-ordinated admissions schemes in accordance with the timetable detailed below.

Admissions timetable

1 November 2025:	E-admissions portal opens.
1 November 2025:	Common application forms together with admissions information and school prospectuses are made available for parents.
15 January 2026:	Closing date for applications: E-admission portal closes.
16 April 2026:	Parents notified of the outcome of their applications for school places
2 May 2026:	Last date for refusals by parents

Publication of the Local Authority's Information for Parents (2026/27) Handbook

The Information for Parents publication for September 2026 entry will be available from the beginning of September 2025.

