



Applying for a school or college place for Hampshire Looked After Children.

A brief guide for social workers.

The Virtual School is here to support you

If you need support with any part of this process, contact the Virtual School. For complex cases, it is likely an Education Planning Meeting will be called to discuss the young person and their education needs. If the child has an EHCP, SEND will lead on finding the most appropriate setting.

Email: virtuelschool@hants.gov.uk

Legislation

It is vital that we ensure that Hampshire's CiC receive the best education provision to meet their needs and secure good educational outcomes. Appropriate provision for CiC is defined within the statutory guidance for LAs (Promoting the education of looked-after children, Department for Education (DfE) (P11)

[Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/P11-2019-2020.pdf)

'Mainstream schools must give the highest priority to the admission of a looked-after and previously looked-after child.'

'Schools cannot refuse to admit a looked-after child on the basis of challenging behaviour or refer a child for action under the Fair Access Protocol on this basis.'

[School admissions code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/P11-2019-2020.pdf) which also contains the Protocol for the processing of in year admissions for children in care 2020/21 and the Admissions Code Ref 1.7, 3.21.

How to apply for a statutory school place (Reception to Year 11, age 4 to 16)

This application needs to be completed by the social worker. If child is S20 best practice is for social worker to complete the application in consultation with parents/guardians.

Use this link [to the Department of Education website](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/P11-2019-2020.pdf) to find the closest suitable school to the child's placement.

Schools should be judged by Ofsted to be Good or better; every school has their latest Ofsted report on their website.



Considering Education Provision and Ofsted Inspection Outcomes

If you are considering applying for a place in a setting (school, college or early years provider) that has previously been judged as *Requires Improvement* or *Inadequate*, or where recent Ofsted inspection information indicates areas of significant concern, please contact the Virtual School. The Virtual School will use its professional judgement and, where necessary, seek the views of other professionals and relevant bodies to advise on the suitability of education provision.

Any decision to place a child in a setting with identified weaknesses or concerns will be based on what best meets the child or young person's needs, following consultation with the appropriate professionals. This will need to be agreed by the Social Care District Manager and the Virtual School Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

The rationale for the decision must be clearly recorded on Mosaic by the child's social worker in partnership with the Virtual School. This applies equally to specialist settings. If the child has an EHCP, the SEN caseworker will provide the relevant information and obtain confirmation from Social Care and the Virtual School before a placement is agreed.

Since September 2024, Ofsted no longer issues an overall effectiveness judgement for schools, and from November 2025 inspections are reported through a report card system which assesses a range of areas, including achievement, attendance and behaviour, personal development and well-being, inclusion, and safeguarding. Existing schools inspected under the previous framework may continue to hold historic judgements such as *Outstanding*, *Good*, *Requires Improvement* or *Inadequate* until their next inspection. Consequently, placement decisions should not be based solely on historic Ofsted grades but should take account of the most recent inspection findings, the school's strengths and areas for development, local intelligence, and the individual needs of the child or young person.

If you need any further guidance please contact the virtual school shared inbox.

virtualschool@hants.gov.uk

Choice of school

The choice of the education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child. It should be based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make maximum progress.

[Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-and-previously-looked-after-children)

It is imperative to secure education as soon as possible, preferably as soon as the new address is known. It is good practice for the child or YP to visit the school and be involved in decision making if possible.

For a young person in Year 6, 10, 11 or 12, the Virtual School should be involved in discussion around any possible school move.

Moving Schools within the Academic Year

If a school place is needed during the school year, then an in-year transfer application should be completed. This is different for each LA so scrutinise schools' admissions process to ensure application is correctly made into either the LA or direct to the school. This is



especially relevant for academies. Copy-in your Virtual School inbox: virtualschool@hants.gov.uk and the Hampshire Admissions Team's Inbox admissions.team@hants.gov.uk when submitting applications. You should do this for in and out of county admissions.

Applying for a Reception/Year 3/Year 7 place for the following September

This is usually managed by the Admissions Department in an LA. The Common Application Form (CAF) should be completed. You should only name one preference of school for a looked-after child, unless advised otherwise by the Virtual School or a member of the admissions team. Check the schools' Admissions Policy found on their website and make the application as advised. Some schools also require a supplementary form to be completed.

Starting School (Year R): Closing Date 15th January 2027

Secondary: Closing date 31st October 2026

Primary: Closing date 15th January 2027

When a child has an EHCP.

You do not need to complete an application if the child has an EHCP. SEND lead on finding the most appropriate setting to meet the needs of the child as outlined in their plan. Any placement changes must be communicated to the SEND Officer for the child. If the child is out of county, their residing local authority's SEND Officer will consult with schools for a place and Hampshire SEND will approve the funding. If you need support with this process, you should contact The Virtual School.

Remember to hold a PEP meeting for a child within 10 days after a school move.

Out of County Admissions

Where the young person has been placed out of county, you must apply directly to the admissions service of the county or borough they are placed within. There will be an admissions process that mirrors our own so please check their website. As with all academies, please check the academy website where there will either be a link to the LA admissions process or details on the academy's own process.

Colleges: For any college, you apply directly on the college website.

Copy in your Virtual School inbox virtualschool@hants.gov.uk and the Hampshire Admissions Team's Inbox admissions.team@hants.gov.uk when submitting applications. You should do this for in and out of county admissions.

Applying to a Faith School

If you name a faith school and the looked-after child is of that faith, then they are given the highest priority for admission into the school. However, if the looked-after child is not of that faith, you should consider naming other schools also (applies to both in year and new round



applications) as they may not be offered a place since faith schools are allowed under the Admissions Code to give priority to faith children before non-faith LAC/PLAC.

Remember to hold a PEP meeting for a child within 10 days after a school move

Late applications

Applications for looked-after children received after the closing dates may still be accepted by a local authority. Check the 'late for a good reason' closing dates which will be published by the local authority.

Interim Education

All looked-after children of statutory school age have the right to be educated in a suitable place of education. It is the expectation of the Virtual School that an urgent application will be made for a place in a suitable educational setting. Children and young people without a place must not have the application delayed except in exceptional circumstances. Where a child is not in receipt of any education, social workers can request interim education two weeks after an application for a school place has been made. Please contact the Virtual School Inbox to make a request.

For children with an EHCP – social workers should make this request to their child's SEND caseworker.

Remember to hold a PEP meeting for a child within 10 days after a school move.

Academies

Every academy has its own admissions policy. This means that, for in-year applications, you will need to go onto the academy's website & find out whether you need to apply directly to them or through that LA's admissions team.

For new round applications for the following September, see below.

You can apply to more than one Academy at once. Once the young person has joined a school/education setting, please email the Virtual School Inbox to inform them of the Designated Teacher's name and email address in order to gain access to their EPEP.

Outcome

Once the school has received the in-year application, a decision should be made within 10 working days. Allow 15 days for consultation with Special Schools although the young person's SEND Caseworker will be leading on this process if they have an EHCP. We must not allow drift or delay in this process. Contact Admissions (SEND) and alert the Virtual School if this deadline has passed.

Direction

Hampshire Local Authority will use its powers of direction where a school has not observed the law and is refusing to admit a child without robust reason. The LA will consider direction once the timescale for response has expired. In the week that follows, liaise with Admissions and consult the Virtual School. The Virtual School will escalate to direction or suggest an alternative strategy.



Post-16

The onus is on the young person to apply directly to the college, with whatever support is necessary from foster carers, social worker or the Virtual School. In county our young people

are supported by The Education Participation Team who are part of Hampshire Futures. If you are unsure of local provision (especially for UASC) then don't hesitate to contact the Virtual School.

UASC

For a statutory-age UASC the application process is no different. If you are considering a 14-16 college place, then you must apply through the Local Authority admissions team and make that clear. Do not apply directly to the college in this instance.

Application Forms

The Hampshire Admissions application form can be found on the admissions website. Please see [Hampshire's In-Year and New Round Admissions](#).

If you need any support with any part of this process contact the Virtual School.

Email: virtualschool@hants.gov.uk