Determined Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme 2017-18

Part one – Statutory basis

1 Background

1.1 This scheme meets the requirements for a scheme for co-ordinating admission arrangements under the School Admissions Code (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, made under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, for the area of Cheshire West and Chester Council.

1.2 Applications for school shall be determined in accordance with the provisions set out in this scheme for admission in the school year 2017-2018 and for subsequent years, subject to any review.

1.3 The co-ordination scheme applies to all maintained schools, academies, studio and free schools in Cheshire West and Chester and to preferences expressed by parents and carers of children resident within the authority's administrative area, including preferences for schools in other English Local Authorities. Admissions to independent schools and special schools will not be covered by this scheme.

1.4 Cheshire West and Chester Council will be responsible for managing the admission of all pupils who are resident within its administrative area for the normal admission rounds and will also be responsible for the monitoring of in year school transfer applications administered by Cheshire West and Chester maintained schools and academies.

1.5 Parents and carers making applications as part of the normal admission round for schools maintained by other authorities with a different age of transfer (middle and upper schools) will also be included within these arrangements.

2 General information – normal admission round

2.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council, as the admission authority for its community and voluntary controlled schools, will be responsible for ranking the preferences for these schools in accordance with the council's published admission arrangements.

2.2 For schools or academies not maintained by Cheshire West and Chester Council, the relevant authority will be responsible for ranking their preferences in accordance with their published admission arrangements.

2.3 For academies and schools with voluntary aided, foundation or trust status, decisions on applications will normally be made by the governing body. The exception to this will be where the governing body has made arrangements for another body (including the maintaining authority) to consider the application and to determine by reference to the school's admission arrangements the criteria to be assigned.

2.4 The admission arrangements for schools maintained by Cheshire West and Chester Council will be published on the council's website and in its information booklets. Admission arrangements for schools with voluntary aided, foundation or trust status are available on the school or academy's website, in line with the requirements set out in the School Admissions Code (December 2014).

2.5 All parents and carers resident in Cheshire West and Chester will be asked to make their application on the common application form provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council (as the home local authority) either online or by paper. Parents and carers making applications on a maintaining authority's application form will be advised to contact their home authority. Parents and carers seeking places at independent i.e. fee paying schools, must apply direct to the school. Applicants not resident in an English authority or resident abroad should apply directly to Cheshire West and Chester Council if they wish to be considered for a school or academy in the Cheshire West and Chester area.

2.6 Applications for places sent direct by parents and carers to individual schools cannot be accepted and will be sent back to the local authority for inclusion within these arrangements.

2.7 The common application form will invite parents and carers resident in the Cheshire West and Chester area to express three school preferences ranked in order of priority.

2.8 Parents and carers will be provided with the opportunity to give reasons for their preferences and can, if appropriate, provide any additional documents in support of their preference.

2.9 Parents and carers will be asked to provide details of any siblings attending the preferred school at the time of application and who will be attending at the time of admission, and details of the current school attended where applicable.

2.10 If a parent or carer expresses a preference for a school designated as having a religious character (faith school) they will be asked to state the religious denomination of their child on their application form. Parents and carers will be advised to contact the school as they may also be required to complete a supplementary information form. Forms will be available on the council's website or direct from the school, which requests information in addition to that provided on the common application form. Such requests must be made in accordance with paragraph 2.4 of the School Admissions Code (December 2014). Examples of additional information that can lawfully be requested include membership of, or relationship with the church, or a reference from a priest or other religious minister as proof of religious commitment.

2.11 Where a school receives a supplementary information form, this local authority will not consider it to be a valid application unless the parent or carer has also listed the school as a preference on their home local authority's application form. Supplementary information forms should be returned direct to the school concerned.

2.12 When a parent or carer has submitted their application on the local authority's common application form but has not submitted a supplementary information form, where relevant, the admission authority must nevertheless consider the application in accordance with legal requirements (Paragraph 4.3 of Section 86(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). In circumstances where a supplementary information form has been received the admission authority must confirm with the local authority that there is also an application, in order for the preference to be considered.

2.13 In circumstances where a supplementary information form has not been completed the application will be assessed on the basis of the information submitted to the governing body on the home local authority's common application form.

2.14 All preferences will be considered on the basis of the equal preference model for allocating places, in accordance with legal requirements. This means that in the first instance, all preferences will be considered against the relevant oversubscription criteria only, i.e. without reference to the preferred ranking. Thereafter, where a pupil can potentially be allocated more than one school place stated on the application form, the single offer, determined by the home authority, will be for the school ranked highest by the parent or carer.

2.15 Preference ranking will not be shared with schools or academies in accordance with the School Admissions Code (December 2014) as this cannot lawfully be used when applying oversubscription criteria.

2.16 All preferences made in accordance with the local authority's admission arrangements will be met except where this would prejudice efficient education or the efficient use of resources e.g. where the year group in question is full. The duty to comply with parental preference is, however, removed for a period of two years where a child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools from the date on which the latest exclusion took place.

2.17 For admission as part of the normal admission round places will normally only be offered up to the published admission number, which applies to the normal year of entry. A child cannot be refused admission to the normal year of entry on the grounds of prejudice to the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources unless the published admission number has been reached. In respect of admission to year groups other than the normal point of entry, it is expected that the admission number will continue to be applied. However, if circumstances have changed since the year of entry, a place may be refused even if the admission number has not been reached.

2.18 In some circumstances the local authority, as the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools, may agree with the school that admitting further pupils, i.e. above the published admission number, will not adversely affect the school in the longer term. In such circumstances, a preference will be met, even where the year group is full. The local authority will ensure, where relevant, that the duty to comply with infant class size legislation is not compromised.

2.19 The Department for Education has confirmed that the operation of in year fair access protocols is outside the arrangements of co-ordinated admissions and as such the statutory duty to comply with parental preference does not apply in those circumstances. Therefore, this scheme does not apply to children who fall under the authority's in year fair access protocol; such children will continue to be considered for admission in accordance with the procedures outlined in the authority's agreed protocol.

2.20 If the pupil is a Cheshire West and Chester resident and Cheshire West and Chester Council is not able to offer any of the preferences stated on the form a place will be allocated at the nearest Cheshire West and Chester school with vacancies using a straight line measurement from the centrally plotted Basic Land and Property Unit of the child's home address to the centrally plotted Basic Land and Property Unit of the school as defined by Local Land and Property Gazetteer. This will include allocating vacancies at voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies.

2.21 Where a preference has been received from a parent or carer resident in another authority and a place cannot be offered Cheshire West and Chester Council will not allocate an alternative school place.

2.22 Offers will be made by Cheshire West and Chester Council in accordance to the dates stated in 'part two' in its role as the home authority, on behalf of the admissions authority for the school allocated as follows:

Admissions authority	**Category of school**
Cheshire West and Chester Council	All community and voluntary controlled schools in Cheshire West and Chester
Maintaining local authority	All non-Cheshire West and Chester community and voluntary controlled schools
Governing body of the school	All aided, foundation and trust schools, academies, studio and free schools

2.23 Schools must not notify parents or carers that a place has become available but must inform their maintaining local authority in order that an offer can be made by the home authority.

2.24 Parents and carers will be informed in writing of their legal right of appeal against any decision not to offer them a place at a school stated as a preference on their application form and their right to be supported by a friend or adviser. Further information on the appeals process will be available on the council's website and by contacting officers of the local authority.

2.25 Parents and carers can submit an appeal in respect of each school for which an application has been refused. All appeal applications should be sent to the admission authority for the school for which the application has been refused within 20 school days of the refusal notification (paragraph 2.22).

2.26 The timetable for appeals against decisions on applications made during the normal admission rounds is listed in part two.

2.27 Waiting lists must be held for the normal admission rounds (entry into a reception class and year seven in September) until the 31 December 2017. The waiting list will be held in criteria order and not on a 'first come, first served' basis. Placing a child's name on a waiting list does not affect the statutory right of appeal. Waiting lists for oversubscribed schools will consist of any child refused a school place, those for whom an appeal has been received together with any late applicants.

Where a vacancy arises, a place will be allocated to the child held on a waiting list with the highest criteria on the day the place becomes available

Waiting lists will be prepared according to the dates specified in part two.

3 Application process

3.1 Children reach compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Under the council's policy, children normally start school in the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. For transfer to secondary school, children will usually transfer at the beginning of the autumn term following their eleventh birthday.

3.2 Parents and carers can request that the date their child is admitted to the primary school is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age in that school year. Applications for deferred admissions must be made by the published closing date. Parents and carers will not, however, be able to defer admission beyond the academic year for which their original application was accepted or beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday.

3.3 To help younger children adjust to school, schools may propose to phase full-time admission admitting these children on a part-time basis. However it should be noted that parents and carers have the right to insist on full time education from the start of September.

3.4 Where parents and carers wish, children may attend part-time until the child reaches statutory school age.

3.5 In exceptional circumstances requests can be made for early or late transfer to secondary school. Parents and carers considering such a request must in the first instance speak to the head teacher of the child's primary school. If parents and carers wish their child to be considered for either a deferred entry or early transfer, they should apply for a place as normal but accompany their application with their request and any supporting documentation. This is to ensure that if their request is not agreed that the child will be part of the process.

3.6 Parents and carers will be able to make their application from 1 September in the year preceding the admission year.

3.7 For secondary transfer only, the council will have records for all children resident within its area, who attends Cheshire West and Chester primary schools. In order to make sure that all resident pupils are included in the co-ordinated admission process, this authority will also request data from neighbouring authorities and from independent schools in the area at the end of the summer term in the year preceding admission for details of resident pupils who attend their schools who are eligible for secondary school transfer.

3.8 The authority's information booklets will be available electronically on the council's website from 1 September or will be obtainable by request from the council from the 12 September. Reference copies will be available to view at all maintained schools, academies, studio and free schools.

3.9 Booklets will include information on the application process including key dates, details of Cheshire West and Chester schools and allocation data relating to applications for the previous year, in compliance with School Information (England) Regulations 2008.

3.10 Parents and carers will be asked to submit their completed application directly to this council by the statutory closing dates as specified in part two.

4 Changing preferences

4.1 After the closing date for applications, the local authority will not accept a change of preference unless it is satisfied that there is a genuine reason for doing so, such as a recent house move.

4.2 A panel of officers will consider information presented in support of the late change of preference. The parent or carer will be notified of the decision.

4.3 Full details must be provided to the authority for consideration by the deadline for receipt of supporting documentation as stated in part two. Any changes received after the deadline will be too late for consideration as the allocation process will have begun.

4.4 In the case of a recent house move, confirmation of disposal of previous property, exchange of contracts, completion of sale, tenancy agreement and utility bills must be provided. In addition, proof that the child resides in the new property will be required i.e. child benefit or child tax credit documentation or equivalent.

4.5 Any parent or carer wishing to change a preference after the closing date for applications without a genuine reason for doing so in the opinion of the local authority will be advised that the application will be treated as a late application.

5 Processing applications

5.1 The following actions will be implemented in accordance with the dates stated in part two.

5.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council will exchange information electronically with all relevant local authorities of applications made by parents and carers of pupils resident in Cheshire West and Chester requesting places for schools in other local authorities.

5.3 Cheshire West and Chester Council will provide details of applications to its voluntary aided, foundation, studio schools, academies and free schools for consideration by governing bodies in accordance with the school's own published admission arrangements via the school admissions module.

5.4 Cheshire West and Chester voluntary aided, foundation, studio schools, academies and free schools will provide the local authority with a list of all their preferences in criteria order in accordance with their admission arrangements via the school admissions module.

5.5 Cheshire West and Chester Council will exchange information with other local authorities of the outcome of the applications received for pupils resident within their boundaries and request details of the decisions they will be making to Cheshire West and Chester pupils, the exchanging of data will continue until allocations are finalised.

5.6 If at any time following determination of the published admission number, a voluntary aided, foundation, studio school, academy or free school decides that it is able to admit above its published admission number, to comply with the School Admissions Code, it must notify the local authority in good time to allow the authority to deliver its co-ordinated responsibilities effectively. Therefore, notification of the number of additional places that can be offered should be notified to the authority by the dates as specified in part two.

5.7 The local authority will finalise allocations on the basis of equal preferences in line with the agreed dates in part two, as far as possible.

6 Notifying parents and carers of decisions

6.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council will notify all applicants of pupils resident in Cheshire West and Chester the outcome of their application, including the decisions of applications made for schools in other English authorities. A letter will be posted on the published offer day to applicants who applied via a paper application form and an email will be sent to online applicants. Also online applicants will be able to log into their account after 12.30am on the published offer day to view the decision.

Children resident within another English authority will be notified of the decision by their home local authority. Children resident outside England will be notified of the decision by Cheshire West and Chester council.

7 Late applications

7.1 Applications received after the closing date will be recorded as late and considered after all on-time applications unless the local authority accepts that the reasons submitted in support of the application justify the application being considered alongside on-time applications, for example, exceptional medical reasons preventing an earlier application or late removal into the area. Reasons must be presented at the time of application and supporting documentation must be provided by the deadline for receipt of supporting documentation as specified in part two.

7.2 In the case of a recent house move, the authority will require supporting evidence to show that the place of residency has changed as stated in paragraph 4.4.

7.3 In respect of medical reasons preventing an earlier application, a letter of confirmation from a medical professional will be required.

7.4 Application forms and supporting documentation received after the published deadline for receipt of supporting documentation will be considered as late and processed after all on-time applications, even if there are good reasons for the late submission.

7.5 Late applicants will be considered together with those on the school or academy's waiting list and will be advised of the outcome of their application by email (if an email address is provided on the application) or by letter on the date specified in part two.

8 Moving house

8.1 Parents and carers must inform the local authority immediately of a child's change of address, even if details of a future change of residency were included on the application form. The authority will require supporting evidence to show that the place of residency of the child has changed as stated in paragraph 4.4.

8.2 Supporting evidence must be received by the deadline for receipt of supporting documentation as specified in part two, to allow the new address to be used when considering the assigning of oversubscription criteria to the application.

8.3 The local authority cannot use a new address when supporting evidence is received after the published dates to assign a higher oversubscription criterion for admission, but will be used for correspondence purposes.

9 Accepting and declining places

9.1 Parents and carers will be required to accept or decline the school place offered by the dates published in part two.

9.2 The local authority reserves the right to withdraw places not accepted by this date.

9.3 Late applicants will be required to accept or decline the place offered within ten school days of their offer date.

10 Waiting lists

10.1 Waiting lists will be administered in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraphs 2.27.

11 Admission appeals

11.1 The decision letter will explain the parents' right of appeal and how appeals may be made.

11.2 The timescale for the appeals process for on time applicants is outlined in part two.

11.3 Parents and carers can submit an appeal in respect of each school for which admission has been refused.

11.4 Appeals for late applications will be heard within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.

11.5 All appeal applications should be sent to the admission authority for the school or academy for which admission has been refused (paragraph 2.22).

In year admissions

12 Application process

12.1 All parents and carers, irrespective of where they reside who are seeking an in year school transfer for schools and academies in Cheshire West and Chester, will be required to apply direct to the school or academy.

12.2 Cheshire West and Chester parents and carers wishing to transfer to a school in another local authority must contact the relevant authority for information on how to apply for a school place.

12.3 Parents and carers of children who are seeking a transfer to an alternative school for reasons other than a house move will be strongly advised to discuss the proposed transfer with the current school before submitting an application.

12.4 Parents and carers are required to complete a common in year application form for a school or academy place no more than 20 school days before the school place is required. The in year application form can be obtained from both Cheshire West and Chester authority and the school or academy.

12.5 On the common in year application form parents and carers will be required to state their Cheshire West and Chester preference school and will be invited to provide additional information in support of their application, including any supporting documents.

12.6 The completed in year application form and any supporting documentation must be returned to the preference school.

12.7 A place will normally be considered to be available at a preferred school if the number on roll is below the planned admission number for the year group, unless it would lead to a breach of infant class size or the prejudice of efficient education and efficient use of resources in a school with mixed age group teaching.

12.8 A school place is not available until the school is able to remove a child from roll according to the local authority's safeguarding protocol.

12.9 In respect of applications made during the course of the year, i.e. outside the normal admission round, children may also be admitted above the published admission number as part of the authority's in year fair access protocol or as a transitional measure in the case of a closing school.

12.10 Upon receipt of an application, if the school or academy has a vacancy, subject to the provision in paragraph 12.7, in the relevant year group, a place must be allocated.

12.11 If the school receives multiple applications on the same day for an in year transfer into a particular year group, which would result in the published or agreed admission number being exceeded, the admission authority will determine the order of priority for admission by reference to the school's oversubscription criteria.

12.12 The preference school must notify the parent or carer in writing of the outcome of their application within five school days using the local authority's letter templates.

12.13 If the school place can be offered, a notification letter will be sent to the parent or carer confirming the offer of the school place and stating the start date that has been agreed with the parent or carer.

Admission will normally take place within 20 school days of the offer date, or exceptionally, at the start of a half term where agreement with the school has been reached.

12.14 The school will inform the previous school that a place has been offered and the agreed start date.

12.15 The school or academy must place the child on roll on the agreed start date.

12.16 If the child does not attend on the agreed start date the school or academy must follow the CME process.

12.17 If the school place cannot be offered, a notification letter will be sent to the parent or carer stating the reason why the school place cannot be offered, informing them of their legal right of appeal and the appeal process and directing the parent or carer to the local authority for information on school vacancies.

12.18 Schools and academies in Cheshire West and Chester must notify the local authority of all in year applications received and the outcome via the school admissions module. Where the place has been refused, the reason stated to the parent on the refusal letter must be also stated on the notification to the authority via the school admissions module. Where an offer has been made the start date should be included in the notification.

12.19 Schools and academies in Cheshire West and Chester must inform the local authority of their current numbers on roll by updating the school admissions module as and when a change occurs, both when a child is taken off roll or admitted. This is to ensure that the local authority meets its statutory duty of informing parents and carers of where there are vacancies in the borough.

13 Waiting lists

13.1 From 1 September waiting lists for reception and year seven entry will become in year waiting lists and they must be held until the end of December each year for all schools and academies.

The holding of these waiting lists past the end of December for voluntary aided, foundation, free schools, academies and studio schools will be determined by the school or academy.

For community and voluntary controlled schools, waiting lists will continue to be held by the schools in oversubscription criteria order and not on a first come first served basis. The schools will be responsible for administering and updating their waiting lists.

Waiting lists for all other year groups for community and voluntary controlled schools will be held by the schools in criteria order and not on a first come first served basis. Waiting lists for oversubscribed schools will consist of any child refused a school place, those for whom an appeal has been received together with any new applicants.

Schools must be clear to parents and carers as to how the waiting lists will be operated on an annual basis.

The holding of waiting lists for other year groups for voluntary aided, foundation, studio, free schools and academies will be determined by the school or academy.

14. Admission Appeals

14.1 In year admission appeals will be administered in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraphs 2.25 – 2.26.

In year admission appeal hearings and appeals against decisions on sixth form applications will be heard within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.

Part two – Normal admissions round key dates for 2017-2018

Process	Secondary transfers	Primary admissions
Application process starts online and paper application form and composite prospectus available.	1 September 2016	1 September 2016
Closing date for applications	**31 October 2016***	**15 January 2017***
Deadline for receipt of supporting documentation	**15 December 2016**	**24 February 2017**
Notification from schools and academies of temporary admittance above the published admission number	by 11 November 2016	by 23 January 2017
Preferences forwarded to other English local authorities	15 November 2016	31 January 2017
Aided, foundation, free schools and academies to have completed entering criteria to their preferences on the school admissions module	14 December 2016	17 February 2017
Provisional allocations of places at Cheshire West and Chester schools sent to other local authorities for their residents	13 January 2017	15 March 2017
Allocations to be finalised	15 February 2017	31 March 2017
Offers released	**1 March 2017****	**18 April 2017****
Deadline for accepting or declining places	15 March 2017	2 May 2017
Waiting lists prepared and vacancies re-allocated	after 15 March 2017	after 2 May 2017
Notification of decisions for late applicants	after 15 March 2017	after 2 May 2017
Deadline for Appeals against the local authority or governing body decisions	29 March 2017	17 May 2017
Appeal s received by the deadline for the normal admissions round will be heard by	16 June 2017	19 July 2017
Appeals received after the deadline for the normal admissions round will be heard	Within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged	
Appeals received for In Year applications	Within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged	

* National closing date

** In accordance with regulations which state that offers must be posted out on these dates except where these dates fall on a Saturday or Sunday and offers must be posted on the next working day

All dates will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with National guidance.