



A Guide to Starting School

When will my child start full-time education?

All children *must* start full-time education from the term after their fifth birthday, although children in Sheffield are offered a school place earlier than this. The month of admission into the reception class at primary school depends on your child's birthday and is currently: -

| Date of 5 th birthday | Month of admission into school |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1st September – 28th (29th) February | September |
| 1st March – 31st August | January |

Who is responsible for admissions into Primary Schools?

In Sheffield, the School Pupil Admissions team (part of the Children and Young People's Directorate in the City Council) is responsible for processing admissions into community and voluntary controlled schools. The admissions criteria take a number of factors into consideration including special educational needs, catchment areas and arrangements for siblings. Private (fee paying) and aided schools are responsible for their own admissions and you should contact them directly. Sheffield Information Link (SIL) holds a list of private schools in Sheffield.

How do parents apply for a place at a community or voluntary school?

All parents are sent a letter informing them of the application process, in the autumn before the school year in which

their child is due to start school. They need to take this letter to any primary school in order to collect an application pack. Parents must then complete the application form stating three preferred schools and reasons for their preference and return this by the **31st January**. However, this does not guarantee your child a place, even if you are applying for your catchment area school. Applications can also be made online.

How do I find out the catchment area school for my address?

The School Pupil Admissions team can tell you. (Their number is included in the list of useful contacts at the end of this factsheet.) You can also get this information on the council's website if

you have access to the internet:
www.sheffield.gov.uk

A child can only use one address on the application form. For children who spend time with more than one parent or carer at different addresses, this should be the address where they spend most time.

Where can I get further information about individual schools?

All schools produce a free prospectus containing a range of information, including Key Stage attainment figures. Most schools also have their own website. Links to these can be found on the council's website. The City Council produces a booklet called 'A Guide for Parents' which has up-to-date contact details for all community and voluntary schools in Sheffield. It also outlines the admissions criteria in detail. SIL has reference copies of these guides, or parents can collect a copy from

Primary School Admissions based at Howden House, Union Street or copies can be downloaded from the Council website (www.sheffield.gov.uk).

Ofsted reports can be obtained direct from the school or downloaded from the Ofsted website and Primary School Performance Tables on the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website (see list of useful contacts).

Independent choice advice for parents/carers

There is a service available called the Choice Advice Service and is based at Howden House (see 'useful contacts' details at end of factsheet). This service aims to support parents and carers through the school admissions procedures and to provide independent objective advice and guidance on any aspect of the processes involved - so that parents can make informed decisions when applying for school places. Please note however, the Choice Advisor cannot guarantee a place in any primary or secondary school.

What should I look for when I visit a school?

Decide what is important to *you* before you visit. Try and visit during a typical school day to observe the teachers and children 'in action'. The headteacher should be happy to answer any questions you have. The following are just some ideas:

- **Environment** Does the building feel safe, welcoming, looked-after and friendly?
- **Equipment/resources** Is there sufficient equipment for music, art, science, computing?

Teaching/Learning Opportunities How is homework organised? How do

- teachers and classroom assistants relate to the children? How are the needs of children with special educational needs met?
- **Parental Involvement** How can parents contribute to the life of the school? Ask for a copy of the home-school agreement.
- **Policies** Is there a uniform or dress code? How accessible to parents is information about the school's anti-bullying stance, for example?

What happens if I change address whilst places are being allocated?

The decision will be made on the basis of your address at the closing date for the submission of forms. Put any change of address details in writing to the Admissions team and include evidence (e.g. a letter from your solicitor or landlord). Parents should be aware that moving into the catchment area of any school won't guarantee your child a place if it is very popular and over-subscribed.

When will I hear if my application has been successful?

The school will send you a letter outlining the enrolment arrangements, normally by the end of March before your child is due to start school.

What can I do if my child doesn't get a place at my preferred school?

If you don't get a place at your preferred school you won't automatically get a place at the school in your catchment area, as these places may have already been allocated. Parents have the right to appeal against any decision to an independent appeal panel. The Appeals Procedure is outlined in 'A Guide for Parents' and further guidance about this can be obtained from Pupil Admissions.



Will my application be considered if it's late?

Applications received after the deadline will be considered as soon as possible *after* those forms that arrived on time. If you are applying for a school outside of your catchment area it is therefore very important that you submit your form by the deadline. *However, there is no benefit in getting it in any earlier than this.*

Will I get free transport for a school outside my catchment area?

No. The Council will only provide home-school transport in very exceptional circumstances. For more information contact Home to School Transport – see 'Useful contacts' below.

What financial help is available to parents of school-age children?

Families on income support, income-based Job Seekers Allowance or receiving Child Tax Credit, but not receiving Working Tax Credit and your annual income does not exceed £15,575 can apply for free school meals, this also includes school milk. Forms can be obtained from First Point, Schools or by contacting the Free School Meals Team (see 'useful contacts' below).

Many schools have their own shop selling uniform, equipment etc. It may be possible to purchase these items second-hand at a reduced cost.

Useful contacts and information

Advice & Conciliation Service

Tel: (0114) 205 3939

Floor 5, Derwent House, 150 Arundel Gate, Sheffield, S1 2JY

Email: ed-adviceandconciliation@sheffield.gov.uk

Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/conciliation-services/advice-and-conciliation

This independent service offers support to parents/carers who are dissatisfied with the service they have received from either the education service or from a school.

Choice Advice Service

Tel: (0114) 273 5233 • Mobile: 07812 738006

3rd Floor, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2SH

Email: angie.mcloughlin@sheffield.gov.uk

Offers independent advice to parents/carers about all aspects of school admissions for Entry – Reception, Year 2 – Year 3 (if the primary and junior school are separate) & Year 6 - Year 7 transitions.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Website: www.dcsf.gov.uk

For information on school performance tables.

Home to School Transport

Tel: (0114) 273 5831

3rd Floor, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2SH

Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/school-transport

For information on criteria for help with school transport costs.

Ofsted

Tel: 0845 640 4040

www.ofsted.gov.uk

For access to school inspection reports.

Primary School Pupil Admissions

Tel: (0114) 273 5766

3rd Floor, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2SH

Monday – Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm, Friday 9.00am – 4.45pm

Email: ed-primary.admissions@sheffield.gov.uk

Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/admissions

For information on school admissions processes in Sheffield.

SIGN Information Service

Tel: (0114) 266 9476

Ryegate Children's Centre, Tapton Crescent Road, Sheffield, S10 5DD

Monday – Friday 10.00am – 1.00pm, drop in and phone service

Email: sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Free information on significant health needs, disabilities and special educational needs for children, young people and their families. SIGN can help with your enquiries about education and other issues for children with disabilities and special needs.

SIL Library

Tel: (0114) 275 6699

11 Leopold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GY

Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.30am – 5.30pm; Weds 9.30am – 6.00pm; Fri 9.30am – 4.00pm

Email: info@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Holds a wide range of information relevant to the education of your child, including information about home education. The library is open to the public during normal service hours.

Free School Meals Team

Tel: (0114) 273 5705/6401

Children's & Young Peoples' Contract Services, First Point, Howden House, 1 Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2PH

Email: cypcs@sheffield.gov.uk

Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/educationschoolmeals



Sheffield
Information
Link



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



This Factsheet is available in other formats upon request, please call 0114 275 6699 for more details.

© Sheffield Information Link 2007. May not be reproduced without permission. We try to ensure the accuracy of information in this factsheet but this cannot be guaranteed.