



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.

Families have the choice of when their child can start school. All four year olds can start from the September after their **fourth** birthday, or, depending on your child's date of birth, there will also be the option to postpone their admission until January or April. This gives parents/carers more flexibility about when their 4 year old starts reception.

If you choose for your child to start in January or April, it is still possible to access a free early learning place in a nursery or early years setting of your choice (15 hours per week term time). Please note that compulsory school starting age remains the same. For more information contact Primary School Admissions (see Useful Contacts at end of factsheet).

Who is responsible for admissions into Primary Schools?

In Sheffield, the Primary School Admissions team (part of the Children and Young People's Directorate in the Council) is responsible for processing admissions into community and voluntary controlled schools. The admissions criteria take a number of factors into consideration such as 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.

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.

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

All parents/carers of children due to start school will be sent a letter inviting them to apply (usually the academic year before they are due to start). They will need to obtain a "Guide for Parents" from their local school or from the council website. This contains full details of the whole application process for you to follow. You will need to complete and return the application form in this by a set date. Applications can also be made online.

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

The Primary School 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

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.

Visit First Point 8.30am to 5.30pm or ring us on 275 6699

8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

First Point is in the city centre at Howden House, Union Street - close to the Peace Gardens.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/firstpoint www.asksid.net



The booklet 'A Guide for Parents', produced by the Council, has up-to-date contact details for all community and voluntary schools in Sheffield. It also outlines the admissions criteria in detail. You can collect a copy from Primary School Admissions based at Howden House, Union Street or copies can be downloaded from the Council website.

Ofsted reports can be obtained direct from the school or downloaded from the Ofsted website and Primary School Achievement and Attainment Tables from the Department for Education (DfE) website (see list of useful contacts).

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?

Your child will be notified of their place by the April before the academic year in which your child is due to start school. Along with this, under the new choices available to you, you will be sent a form which will ask you to choose when your child will take up their school place. This form will need to be returned by a set date.

If you decide not to take up your reception place you will have to re-apply for a place in Year 1.

The school will send you a letter outlining the enrolment arrangements 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 Primary School 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 certain benefits and with an annual income not exceeding a defined amount 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

Sheffield Information Link (SIL)

Tel: 0114 249 8271 (out of hours answerphone)

9 Leopold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GY

Email: info@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Website: www.sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Sheffield's Family Information Service. Additional support for families requiring childcare and other services for children and young people in Sheffield.

SIGN (Sheffield Information Giving Network)

Tel: 0114 266 9476 (out of hours answerphone)

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

Email: sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Monday – Friday 10.00am – 3.00pm, drop in and phone service

Free information for parents and carers with children or young people with special needs or disabilities. SIGN can help with your enquiries about education and other issues for children with disabilities and special needs.

Primary School 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 catchment areas and school admissions processes in Sheffield.

Advice & Conciliation Service

Tel: (0114) 205 3939

Level 3, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PL

Email: ed-adviceandconciliation@sheffield.gov.uk

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

Department for Education (DfE)

Website: www.education.gov.uk/

For information on school Achievement and Attainment tables.

Free School Meals Team

Tel: (0114) 273 5705/6401

School Food Service, First Point, Howden House, 1 Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2PH

Email: schoolfoodservice@sheffield.gov.uk

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

For information on how to apply for free school meals.

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: 0300 123 4666 for complaints or concerns about any service Ofsted inspects or regulates

Tel: 0300 123 1231 about children's services

Helplines available Monday – Friday 8.00am – 6.45pm

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

For access to school inspection reports.

***The information on this factsheet is developed and maintained by
Sheffield Information Link
© Sheffield Information Link 2011***