

Changing schools or joining a Somerset school mid year.

Introduction

The in-year application process is for children seeking to change schools during the academic year. Sometimes a change of school is unavoidable, such as when a family moves house. However, if you are considering changing your child's school for other reasons, there are a several things that you should consider. Changing schools is a very important step and can have a significant impact on your child. This can be unsettling for a child, as it involves leaving existing friendship groups, making new friends, settling with new teachers, and getting used to a new environment. It may also affect the progress that they are making at school. For example research has shown that English and Maths results for pupils within Key Stage 2 can drop by around 12% with just one in year move.

If you are thinking about transferring your child to another school for reasons other than moving house, you should:

- Talk through any issues or concerns you may have with the current school.
- Be aware that, although there is a national curriculum that every child is expected to follow, each school delivers parts of this curriculum at different stages and times during the school year. If you transfer your child's school mid-year, they might miss out or repeat a part of the scheme of work at the new school. Secondary schools often follow different curriculum, use different examination boards, and offer different GCSE options that could present significant difficulties for your child in completing their GCSE's. Transferring a child in Years 10 or 11 (and more often even Year 9), when children have started their GCSE course, can be particularly problematic.
- Consider any transport implications. If you transfer your child to another school, you may be responsible for transporting your child to and from school and any costs involved.

How do I find a new school?

The online school's directory, available on the Local Authority website. The 'find a school' webpage gives details of all Somerset schools, including details on phase of schooling, links to each school website, Ofsted reports, admission criteria and contact information.

It is important that you arrange visits or speak with the schools that you are considering. Remember, every child's needs are different, so a school which may be suitable for your friend's children may not offer or have the support your child requires. You should contact the head teacher of the school to arrange a visit and to get a copy of the school prospectus.

How to apply for an in-year school place?

If you would like your child to join a new school, you can do this by contacting your preferred school/s directly and we suggest you apply for several at a time to speed up the process of securing a school place.

If you are moving within or perhaps into Somerset then proof of address is normally required and when sufficient proof is supplied with your application will ensure the Admission Authority are able to process the application swiftly. If you are purchasing a property then signed exchange of contracts or confirmation of completion is usually sufficient. If you are renting the property then a tenancy agreement signed by landlord and tenant is often sufficient. Admission Authorities may request further proof of address as necessary to confirm the permanent home address of the child. If you are moving in with somebody who already resides in the property then you may consider supplying a drivers license, child benefit letter, or a copy of your council tax bill.

If your application is refused by the school or Local Authority, they will issue a letter (perhaps via email), and you must be given the right of appeal.

Further information about the appeals process is available on our website and a link will likely be included in the letter you receive.

How long will it take?

The length of time it takes to process an application varies in each individual case however you will receive an outcome within 15 school days of a completed application or when all evidence or additional information required is received.

Important points to note

- Infant class size legislation limits class sizes to a maximum of 30 pupils by law in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, which may cause difficulty in moving children or securing places in these year groups.
- The majority of schools only accept applications where the preferred start date is within six weeks or half a term in advance of being required. You should check the school's admission arrangements first. The only exception is for service personnel who are being posted to Somerset; these families can apply up to a year in advance of the place being required as long as they provide evidence of the posting. Proof of address may still be required unless the base address is to be used for the purpose of processing the application.
- Please note any place offered must be taken up within 6 (school) weeks unless specified otherwise in your outcome letter, or it may be withdrawn and offered to another applicant

Children with an Educational Need or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

If your child has an EHCP or the process to agree one has been started then a change of school must be discussed with the Special Educational Needs Team. The in year admissions process is not applicable in this situation. If you need further information or advice regarding your child's EHCP, you can contact the Special Educational Needs Team on sendreviewinghub@somerset.gov.uk

Somerset Fair Access Protocol

The Fair Access Protocol may be used to identify a school place for those who move into the area and have difficulty in securing a school place locally. In this instance the Local Authority would expect that the parent had applied for their catchment school and nearest school as a minimum. The Fair Access Protocol will not be initiated if there are places at a school within the statutory walking distance, 2 miles for children under 8 years old and 3 miles for a child aged 8 and above. The Fair Access Protocol does not take any account of parental preference and therefore if a particular school(s) is wanted, the appeals process is likely to be the suggested route to follow.

Please note that children already on roll of a local school or registered as receiving Elective Home Education cannot be considered for placement using the Fair Access Protocol.

What if my child has been permanently excluded?

If your child has been permanently excluded then it is likely the Preventing Exclusion Team will become involved and support your child's next step in continuing education via the Fair Access Protocol Panel. If your child is moving to Somerset and was receiving alternative provision, e.g. attending a Pupil Referral Unit, or was permanently excluded just prior to moving please make contact with the Preventing Exclusion Team for the area you are moving into.

You still have the legal right to follow the standard in year admissions process however you and your child may be better supported in accessing an appropriate educational placement through the Fair Access Protocol Panel.

Preventing Exclusion Team contact details - PreventingExclusion@somerset.gov.uk

Notification regarding the processing of any personal data supplied in the application form

Data Controller: Somerset Council (SC)

DPO contact: informationgovernance@somerset.gov.uk

Purpose for processing: The information that you give on the form will be used by the Admission Authority for the purpose of processing your application for a school place for your child.

Legal basis for processing: The School Admissions Code 2014 which is statutory guidance for Local Authorities states that Local Authorities must provide a common application form that enables parents to express their preference for a place at any state funded school and Schedule 5 of the Deed of Development Consent.

Legitimate Interests: For the prevention and detection of crime (Fraud Act 2006) and to help improve services.

Data Sharing: the personal data provided will be shared with early years settings, health authorities, schools, academies and free schools and may also be shared with other SC service providers, the Department for Education, Somerset Councils software supplier and School Appeal Panels. If you are applying for a school outside of Somerset it may be shared with other Local Authorities and schools and academies in their area. Data may be shared by schools with a private admissions provider. If you indicate you are moving to work at the Hinkley Point site; statistics may be shared with EDF Energy but no personal data will be shared. SC will not disclose this information to any unauthorised person or body.

Transfers abroad: this data is held within the EU and is accessible by the approved application provider.

Data Retention: The personal data supplied on the form will be retained for as long as is necessary to meet our statutory requirements and legitimate interests and it will be disposed of in a manner appropriate to its sensitivity. Your Rights: You have the right to ask Somerset Council for a copy of your data, the right to rectify or erase your personal data, and the right to object to processing. However these rights are only applicable if the Council has no other legal obligation concerning that data. You also have the right to complain to the regulator, <https://ico.org.uk/>