

# School admissions:

## Choice or lottery?

Choosing a school for your child is a difficult job - and getting into the school of your choice can be just as tricky.

Do parents really have a choice, or is it a lottery?

**CHILD** magazine asked the experts - local education chiefs.

**Q** What usually determines if your child gets a place in their chosen school?

**A** When it is time for their child to be applying for school placements, parents are provided with a booklet entitled 'Applying for a Primary/Secondary School Place in Northamptonshire'. This provides them with all the information they will need to go through the selection process. The Secondary one, in particular, gives some detailed information about oversubscription. The booklets list the admission criteria for each school. Depending on the school (and remember the council is not responsible for the criteria at all schools) siblings and proximity will have different weight.

**Q** Is it true that some schools won't consider your application if you don't place them as your first choice?

**A** Yes, some schools look at first preference applications first and if there are more first preferences than places available, second and third preferences will not be considered. This is not the case at all schools.

Some use an “equal preference” system, where all preferences are considered.

**Q** If this is the case, are parents informed of this when applying?

**A** Yes, this is fully explained in the booklets.

**Q** What is the difference between county schools and VA schools and church schools?

**A** At County Schools (now known as Community Schools) the council is the Admissions Authority and is responsible for the setting of the criteria and the allocation of places. At Foundation and Church Aided Schools (VA), it is the Governors who have this responsibility. There is another category of church school (VC) for which the council is responsible. Again, it’s all explained in the booklets.

**Q** How many children get to go to the school of their first choice?

**A** Last year, it was 90% for secondary schools and a much higher figure for primary.

**Q** How many children do not get into any of their three choices?

**A** Very few, less than 2% at secondary and virtually none at primary. Some parents list fewer than three preferences and can then be disappointed with the school allocated. To ensure that one of your preferences is met, it is important to list three preferences, with one ideally being a local school that is not usually oversubscribed.

**Q** Some people have suggested that it is a lottery, which school their child goes to. What would you say to this?

**A** It is a complex process, but it is also a systematic one. There are sets of criteria that the council and the schools apply very carefully.

**Q** How can parents increase their chances of getting their child into the school of their choice?

**A** If parents read the literature carefully, asking for advice on the process if they need it, and then think carefully about the extent to which they meet the criteria for the schools they prefer, they will be able to make better-informed decisions about their order of preferences and are more likely to be allocated an acceptable place.

# APPEALS

**Q** Do you get a chance to appeal, if you get a school you don’t want?

**A** Yes, full details are given in the letter allocating a place.

**Q** What can you do if you fail on appeal, and really don’t want your child to go to the school they have been given?

**A** Contact the council, who will let you know where places are available at other schools. It may be that one of these will be acceptable.

## OVERSUBSCRIBED SCHOOLS IN NORTHAMPTON AREA

### PRIMARY (oversubscribed Sept 04)

- Abington Vale Primary School
- Cedar Road Primary School
- Caroline Chisolm School
- Earl Spencer Primary School
- East Hunsbury Primary School
- Headlands Primary School
- Hopping Hill Primary School
- Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School
- Kingsthorpe Village Primary School
- Lumbertubs Primary School
- Lyncrest Primary School
- Parklands Primary School
- Queen Eleanor Primary School
- Rectory Farm Primary School

### SECONDARY

- Campion School, Bugbrooke
- Caroline Chisolm School
- Moulton School
- Road School
- Northampton Academy
- Northampton School for Boys
- Northampton School for Girls
- Thomas Becket Catholic School