TOWER HAMLETS CHILDREN AND CULTURE

PROPOSED COORDINATED SCHEME FOR IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS (2024/25)

Version:	1.0
Date issued:	TBC
Prepared by:	Pupil Access and School Sufficiency Children and Culture Directorate
Review Date:	January 2024

TOWER HAMLETS

The best of London in one borough

Tower Hamlets Council
Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
E14 2BG

THE TOWER HAMLETS LA SCHEME FOR CO-ORDINATED IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS IN 2024/25

DEFINITIONS

"the LA"	the Local Authority
"the Maintaining LA"	the LA which maintains a school to which an applicant has applied
"the Home LA"	the LA (local authority) in which the applicant/parent is resident
"the Application Year"	the academic year in which the parent makes an application i.e. in relation to the academic year of entry, the academic year preceding it.
"The LA In-Year Admission Form"	this is the LA form that all parents must use to make their applications, set out in ranked order
"the Equal Preference System"	the model whereby all preferences listed by parents on the In-Year Admission Form are considered under the over-subscription criteria for each school without reference to parental rankings. Where a pupil is offered a place at more than one school, the rankings are used to determine the single offer by selecting the one ranked highest of the places offered
"the Code"	the School Admissions Code 2021 imposes mandatory requirements on LAs and Councils in England and refers to statutory requirements which all admission authorities must comply with. A copy can be found at School admissions code - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
"the Local Admission System (LAS)"	the IT module for administering admissions and for determining the highest offer within Tower Hamlets
"the Notification Letter"	the agreed form of letter sent to an applicant that communicates any determination granting or refusing admission.
'Own Admission Authority'	Schools that are responsible for setting their own admissions criteria and determining admissions themselves i.e. voluntary aided, academies and free schools.

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the co-ordinated In-Year school admissions arrangements in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for the 2024/25 academic year. These arrangements are set out in accordance with the mandatory requirements in the School Admissions Code 2021 and apply to admission arrangements for admission in the school year 2024/25.

In line with changes in the school admission regulations, the Tower Hamlets co-ordinated admission arrangements no longer require **own admission authority** (i.e. academies, free and voluntary aided schools) schools to receive their in-year applications via the LA. However, following consultation with its Admission Forum, the LA believes that co-ordinating in-year admissions is the most effective way for ensuring that children out of school are tracked, monitored and placed in education as quickly as possible. This safeguarding element has been a particular strength of in-year coordination since its introduction and there is a substantial risk that vulnerable children and young people may 'slip through the net', if the LA reverts back to a system whereby applications are made direct to individual schools. **Own admission authority** schools are therefore urged to abide with the LA's procedures for co-ordinating the application stage of the process, whilst being able to issue the outcome direct to the applicant and notify the LA accordingly.

Tower Hamlets Local Authority will therefore continue, as far as possible, to coordinate in-year admissions as the maintaining Local Authority. Full details of the scheme are below, but the key features are as follows:

- Applicants wanting to apply for schools and academies within Tower Hamlets **must** apply using the LA's Common Application Form. Applicants can name up to three schools in order of preference.
- Tower Hamlets residents wishing to apply for schools in other boroughs **must** apply according to that borough's admission arrangements. This may involve applying directly to the relevant admission authority or via Tower Hamlets.
- The formal notification of the application outcome is made by the maintaining LA/**own admission authority** school.
- The Tower Hamlets Admissions Service will continue to directly administer community and voluntary controlled school admissions, including waiting lists for community schools.
- **Own admission authority** schools will continue to administer their own waiting lists and determine whether a place can be offered. VA schools and Canary Wharf College Free Schools will retain a supplementary form (for applicants applying for a place on faith grounds).
- It is critical for the Admissions Service to hold up-to-date information about school vacancies so that correct advice can be provided to parents. Schools must update their roll numbers directly on the system using SAMs (School Admission Module). The Admissions Service will also, collect data from its schools using secure data exchange methods to confirm the roll numbers and other details for each year group.
- All Schools, including own admission authority schools are reminded that they are legally obliged to fill vacancies in any year group where the number of pupils on roll is below the published admission number irrespective of their admissions criteria.

- Unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. Own admission authority schools must make arrangements for hearings although the LA will be able to facilitate this for them for a charge.

ADMISSION NUMBERS

The admission numbers of all primary and secondary schools are set out in the LA's composite prospectus.

APPLICATIONS

1. This scheme applies to all applicants for maintained schools, academies and own admission authority schools within Tower Hamlets.

2. Applications must be made on the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form**, which will be available from the Admissions Service, Tower Hamlets schools and academies, and the Tower Hamlets website.

3. Applicants will be able to express a preference for up to three maintained schools, academies and own admission authority schools within Tower Hamlets.

4. Applicants must return the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form** to the Admissions Service.

5. Any preferences made for own admission authority schools in Tower Hamlets will be available for schools to see using SAMs. If an own admission authority school receive applications directly, they must notify the Admissions Service immediately and advise the applicant they must complete the application form issued by the LA.

6. The order of preference given on the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form** will not be revealed to individual schools.

7. **Own admission authority schools** within Tower Hamlets may use supplementary information forms where there is not sufficient information on the LA Form for consideration of the application against the published oversubscription criteria. **This must only be in circumstances where schools require additional information relating to membership of a particular faith.** The supplementary form should be completed and returned to the school concerned. The LA will seek to ensure that supplementary forms only collect information that is required by the published oversubscription criteria, in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021.

8. Where an own admission authority school in Tower Hamlets receives a supplementary form, it will advise the parent/carer to complete the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form** to formally register their application.

9. Tower Hamlets LA will notify the Home LA of all applications submitted for children who are not borough residents, in accordance with the agreed protocol for the exchange of information between London LAs. This procedure is to ensure the Home LA has an overview of children without a school place and school to school transfer requests and retains its safeguarding responsibilities.

10. Tower Hamlets LA will confirm the status of any resident child for whom it receives a Common Application Form stating s/he is a child looked after, became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order, and will notify the Home LA if the child is not resident in Tower Hamlets.

PROCESSING

11. To determine the availability of places, all Tower Hamlets schools and academies will be required to provide the Admissions Service, on request, their roll number, vacancies and waiting list numbers (own admission authority schools) for each year group. Schools will also be required to maintain an accurate record of their roll numbers across all year groups using the School Admission Module application (SAMs).

12. The Admissions Service will carry out the following functions to process applications for schools and academies:

    - Where the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form** is not fully completed, the applicant will be notified the application is invalid until all the information is received. If the child is without a school place then an offer or allocation will be made whilst the relevant information is obtained.

    - Use a secure means to exchange data with its schools, academies and other LAs.

13. Where an applicant has expressed a preference for one or more schools/academies outside of Tower Hamlets, application details will be passed to the maintaining LA to process for the schools applied for in that borough. Some maintaining LAs will require that applications are made directly to them or to the admissions authority. The Admissions Service will advise parents if this is the case.

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME:

CHILDREN WITHOUT A SCHOOL PLACE

14. The Admissions Service will aim to notify the outcome of an application made for community and voluntary controlled schools by letter within **10 school days.** The letter will advise the following:

    a. The name of the school at which a place is provisionally offered

    b. The procedure and documentation required for the parent(s) to accept the offer including the requirement for them to provide the schools with the necessary proof of address and guardianship.

    c. If applicable, the reasons why the child is not being offered a place at any of the other schools they named on the application form, the opportunity to be added to a waiting list and details of their right of appeal.

15. Where it is evident that more than one school place can be offered, the Admissions Service will eliminate all but the highest ranked offer where an applicant has ranked schools in order of preference on the **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form**. Any lower preferences will be withdrawn at this point.

16. Where it is evident that more than one school place can be offered as a result of liaison with applications made to school(s) in other LAs, the Admissions Service will contact the family to establish which offer will be accepted and free up any potential multiple offers.

17. Parents of Tower Hamlets children who cannot be offered a place at any of their preferred schools will be advised of the school at which a place has been reserved, which may be a community, voluntary or academy school.

Where the LA is not the admission authority, notifications can be made in the following ways:

18. **Own admission authority schools** can notify parents/carers direct on the outcome of applications referred by LA. However, they will need to advise the Admissions Service beforehand so that decisions are co-ordinated and that the LA is able to ensure that children are not missing education.

19. Where a child is resident in **another borough**, the Admissions Service will notify the parent of the outcome and, where necessary, advise about the waiting list and their right of appeal. The Home LA will be informed of the outcome of the application, in accordance with the agreed protocol for the exchange of information between London LAs.

20. All Tower Hamlets schools (including **own admission authority schools)** must also adhere to the requirement to admit children referred by the Admissions Service under the provision of the locally agreed Fair Access Protocol, as required by S3.14-3.22 of the School Admissions Code 2021.

CHILDREN WHO ARE CURRENTLY IN SCHOOL (SCHOOL TRANSFER)

21. In most cases, school to school transfers will take place at the start of each school term, according to the LA's published transfer timetable. Exceptions may be made on cases where children are making an unreasonable journey to a school or where there is an exceptional medical or social need for early transfer, but these will only be agreed following discussion with all parties involved.

22. Where an offer can be made for a child currently on roll at another Tower Hamlets school, the Admissions Service will notify the child's current school in accordance with the transfer timetable.

POST OFFER

23. Schools and academies are required to admit children within **10 school days** of the date of the notification letter except in cases of transfer between schools in Tower Hamlets. In these circumstances, the transfer should take place at the beginning of the proceeding term.

24. Where a child does not take up the place within the relevant timeframe the school must notify the Admissions Service. Admissions Service will then make effort to contact the family to find out whether or not they wish to accept the place, and notify the offered school. Only where there is no response, and it can be demonstrated that every effort has been made to contact the family, will the offer of a place be withdrawn.

25. In cases where an offer of a school place has been rejected and it is evident that no alternative provision has been arranged for the child by the parent/carer, the Admissions Service Team will carry out a home visit or refer the family's details to the Attendance and Welfare Service or the Home LA, if the child is not resident in Tower Hamlets. The LA will expect schools to attempt to contact families by all means available, including email and letter to the family if there is no response before taking the appropriate action.

26. Once a school offer is made, any other applications/preferences will be withdrawn and families will need to reapply if they wish to be added to the waiting lists for any further schools.

27. If a family refuse more than two transfers in an academic year, without reasonable justification, then their application will be withdrawn and they will not be considered for any further transfers in that academic year. If the application has previously been awarded priority (such as Medical/social or Children who are out of school) on a waiting list, and the family then refuse the offer, the priority status may be removed.

28. For children not in receipt of education, delay in a straightforward admission to a school where a vacancy has been identified should be avoided. The Admissions Service will work closely with its schools to place the child on roll as soon as reasonably practical.

29. Where Admissions Service receives notification of an accepted offer for a child not resident in Tower Hamlets, this information will be shared with the Home LA.

APPEALS

30. Parents have the right of appeal against the refusal of a place at any of the schools for which they have applied. **Own admission authority schools** must therefore ensure they inform parents of their right of appeal, and the arrangements for doing so, if they are unable to offer a place.

31. **Own admission authority schools** should also notify the Admissions Service of all appeals that are lodged for the school along with the outcome, as soon as this is determined**.**

32. Where the Admissions Service receives notice on the outcome of an appeal for a school in its area, this information will be shared with the Home LA for a child not resident in Tower Hamlets.

WAITING LISTS

33. The waiting lists for all Tower Hamlets **community and voluntary controlled** schools will be held and administered by the Admissions Service for all year groups and will be ordered in accordance with the published admission criteria. Parents/carers that approach community schools direct, that want to be added to a waiting list, will be required to complete **LA In-Year Application/Transfer Form**.

34. **Own admission authority schools** will maintain their own waiting lists. When a place can be offered, the school will provide the Admissions Service with the details of the child that they have determined as the next eligible child on the list in accordance with their published admission criteria. Where necessary, the child's current school will be notified of the offer by the Admissions Service and the child will transfer at the beginning of the next half-term.

35. Children who are subject of a direction by the local authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in accordance with the Fair Access Protocol must take precedence over those on a waiting list.