

Applying for a Primary School Place: Common Myths

Parents of children living in Halton can apply for a primary school place for their child for the September following their fourth birthday. The easiest way to be sure is to follow this rule:

*If your child was **born between 1st September and 31st December**, add 5 to the year they were born, or, if they were **born between 1st January and 31st August**, add 4 to the year they were born, and that will give you the year in which they would normally start school in September (e.g. 01/09/2021 + 5 = **September 2026**)*

Applications open in the September of the year before your child would normally start school and the deadline to apply is 15th January in that year. Offers are then made to parents on 16th April (or earliest working date after this if 16th April is a weekend or holiday).

Starting school can be a very emotive topic and there are many incorrect messages (myths) that circulate playgrounds, social media sites, parent forums and coffee shops each year. Below are some examples of the most frequent, but the key message is to read the Admission to Primary School Booklet which is released on the local authority's website each year. You can also contact your local School Admissions Team if you have any questions or concerns. In Halton the easiest way to do this is to email schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk with your query.

If you only make one preference on your application, you will be allocated that school

MYTH Parents who do so could be seriously disadvantaging themselves by not using all of their permitted preferences. By only making one preference, if your child is not offered a place at that school they will be offered a place at the nearest school with a vacancy, once all other preferences have been considered. This can result in you being offered a place at a school that is some distance from your home or one that you feel is not appropriate for your child, so the best advice is to use all of your available preferences.

Places will be offered to children whose parents have chosen the school as first preference

MYTH The 'first preference first' system has not been lawful for many years now and admission authorities must consider all preferences equally for their school against their published oversubscriptions criteria. With applications being coordinated by the local authority, schools are also not provided with this information, ensuring that the equal preference system is operated. Ranking preferences is simply your way of letting the local authority know the order in which you would like to be offered a place, should one be available for your child in all of your preferred schools.

If your child attends the nursery or pre-school attached to the school you don't need to apply as they will automatically get a place

MYTH Although some schools may have attendance at their attached nursery within their oversubscription criteria, there is no guarantee that this will secure you a place in the school. In recent years there has been a trend away from including this within the oversubscription criteria. The only exception to this would be all-through schools with a Nursery or Pre-School, The Grange School being the example in Halton Local Authority, where children continue on to the next stage at the school if their parents want to do so.

If your child has a sibling at the school you don't need to apply as they will automatically get a place

MYTH Although most schools have the attendance of a sibling at the school as a high priority within their oversubscription criteria (or as a tie-breaker within the criteria), there is no guarantee that this will secure you a place in the school. In some cases, especially where faith schools are concerned, other criteria such as belonging to a certain faith or living within a certain parish can take higher priority within the school's admissions oversubscription criteria, and the school may oversubscribe within these criteria areas.

Website: www.halton.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Email: schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk

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I'm moving so there's no point in applying until that has been finalised

MYTH You can update your address at any time with your home local authority or with the local authority you have moved to if you have applied for a place there. Whilst there will be a cut-off date to supply address changes by for most local authorities (as an address will have to be used for the purpose of allocating a place), you can update your address at any point and if you've been unsuccessful in gaining a place at a school this could have a significant impact on your waiting list position for the school.

The earlier I apply the better the chance I have of my child being offered first preference

MYTH All applications are treated equally and where a school has more preferences than places available the applications are considered against the published oversubscription criteria for that school and ranked accordingly. **The most important message here is to apply before the deadline for applications to be received, being 15th January for primary school admissions.** Late applications received after this deadline will be considered after all of the on-time applications have been considered, being late can damage your chances of being offered a place at your preferred school.

There is no point in applying for my preferred school as it is always oversubscribed

MYTH Whilst it's important to do some research when considering your preferences with regards to the likelihood of being offered a place, there are no guarantees that preferences will remain the same from one year to another. Although it's difficult, try to weigh up whether you will be more disappointed that you have missed out on a place that you could have been offered, against using one of your preferences and not being offered a place. Being refused a school place also entitles you to the right of appeal to an Independent School Admissions Appeals Panel, which you can't be offered if you haven't made a formal application to the school.

My child was born between April 1st and 31st August (summer born child) so I can keep them out of school for another year and apply for a Reception place in the following year

MYTH You are entitled to **request** that your child is educated outside of their normal age group but this is not guaranteed to be agreed to. Upon receipt of such request all admission authorities must make a decision that they believe is in the best interests of your child based on the evidence provided.

If this is something that you wish to consider further you are advised to speak about this with early years or medical professionals involved with your child, and to consider the advice and [this guidance](#) provided by the Department for Education.

You should make this request during the normal primary school applications timeline to ensure that you have all of the information you will need to make a decision about deferring your child's admission to primary school. This will also ensure that you are offered a school place in case your request is refused. Parents of children living in Halton should contact schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk to request the appropriate application form.

I can only apply for places at schools in my local area

MYTH You will make your application to the local authority in which your child lives but this in no way limits you to applying only to schools in that area. It will be important to speak to your preferred schools, if they are not within your home local authority, about their admissions requirements, such as whether or not you must complete supplementary forms (for faith schools normally), but you must make your preference for those schools on your home local authority application system or form. If you are applying online and are having trouble finding a school please contact your local School Admissions Team and they will either assist you with finding it, or will add it to the online application system to enable you to select it as a preference.

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