

September 2023

To: The Heads of all Infant/Primary Schools

Dear Colleague

Starting school in the Reception Year Group – September 2024

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The start of the autumn term sees the beginning of the process for admission to the Reception Year Group in September 2024. A number of information leaflets 'Starting school in September 2024 – entry to the Reception year group' for parents/carers have been sent via the schools portal. They will also be available from Cumberland Council's Website, at the address shown below.

You will also find on the portal a copy of the Local Authority's (LA's) booklet 'Starting school in Cumberland - September 2024'. These copies are for reference or for parents/carers to view. This booklet is also available on the council's website - which is explained to parents in the leaflet.

Parents are asked to make their application online (up until the closing date of 15 January 2024) by visiting their Local Authorities website: www.cumberland.gov.uk. Parents need to apply via the Local Authority in which they live/pay Council Tax to.

There are several benefits of applying online, including:

- it's quick and easy.
- applicants receive an acknowledgement by e-mail; and
- applicants find out which school their child has been allocated by 9am on 16 April 2024, before letters are sent out to applicants who applied using a paper form.

For those families who are unable to apply online, the common application form [SA1] is available on our website or by contacting the School Admissions Team on the email

address at the top of this letter. We have asked parents completing the paper copy of the form [SA1] to return it to you as soon as possible, **but no later than 15 January 2024**. Please make parents aware of the closing date. **We would be grateful if you could send any completed forms to the School Admissions and Appeals team on a weekly basis as and when you receive them.** The deadline for forms to be returned to us by first class post is **18 January 2024**.

It is particularly important that records are kept as application forms are received in order to avoid any disputes with parents where, for example, parents say they have returned a form to their child's school, but the LA has not received it. In the past, there have been a number of parents who did not complete a form or submitted one some considerable time after the closing date. This causes problems, particularly if a school is oversubscribed because the child is unlikely to be offered a place even though they may live in the catchment area and would have had priority for admission had an application been received on time.

We would also be grateful if you could check the details entered on each form returned and, if possible, the child's place of residence. If these details do not match with your records, please let us know.

There is a box on the common application form [SA1] "To be completed by child's preferred school". It is important that you complete this to confirm the date the form was received in school.

PLEASE NOTE

Families **must** be given accurate advice. In the recent years there have been a number of instances where parents expressed an expectation that they would have higher priority for a place at their preference schools than they actually did, for example by not understanding the measuring system used to prioritise applications, or if their children attended a nursery unit within the school associated with the school. One result of this was that there were a number of successful appeals.

If there is a nursery attached to or associated with your school, please make it clear to parents that **Cumberland's Admissions Policy for community and voluntary controlled schools does not give priority to children attending a nursery associated with a school**. For your information, a copy of Cumberland's Admissions Policy can be found in the 'Starting school in Cumberland - September 2024' booklet. If any parent or carer has any queries about the starting school process, please refer

them to the booklet and/or contact the School Admissions Team by email to school.admissions@cumberland.gov.uk.

If you have any parent/carers who have difficulty in completing the preference form or in understanding the information provided, for example if they have literacy problems, please contact the School Admissions Team.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your assistance in this very important matter.

Yours sincerely

School Admissions