

New Approach to In-Year Admissions into Northumberland High Schools

Introduction

In-year transfer is the term used when children transfer from one school to another school during the academic year. Not all requests for in-year transfers are due to a child's change of address, in many cases the request will be because a parent has made the decision for a child to change school.

The high degree of mobility of some students is a concern for both the local authority and schools. Research indicates that students who make moves at times other than normal make less progress than their peers.

There is no longer a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to coordinate in-year applications however, Northumberland County Council does coordinate such admissions for the majority of Northumberland schools, including for most academies.

The following local model has been developed for in-year school transfers after consultation with the Head Teachers and Principals of Northumberland High Schools and Academies in order to provide support to both students and schools.

School places are allocated according to whether or not a school is deemed full for that year group. Where the year group is deemed full the requested place will be refused and an alternative place will be offered. Parents/Carers have the statutory right to appeal any decision to refuse a school place. Appeals are heard by an Independent Appeals Panel whose decision is final and binding on all parties.

The independent panel is made up of lay people (those without personal experience of working in education) and people who do have experience in education.

Appeals are administered by Northumberland County Council's Legal Services.

The New Approach

A new approach is being introduced to Admissions into Northumberland's High Schools from October 2015. At the present time there are no proposals to extend this to First, Primary and Middle Schools.

The new approach only relates to students who are not moving house but whose parents express a wish for them to change schools for whatever reason. It does NOT apply to students in the following categories where the "normal" admission arrangements will apply:

- Students who are Looked-After;
- Students who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan;
- Students who are undergoing a Managed Move which has been formally approved by the EOTAS Team;
- Students who have been permanently excluded;
- Students who are moving house but daily travel to their previous school is impractical;

- Students who are home educated;
- Students missing from education who have moved into the Local authority area from other authorities;
- Students for which there are significant Safeguarding concerns assessed by professionals bodies;
- Students coming to live in Northumberland including migrants

The essence of the new approach is that for students wishing to change school for reasons other than those listed above, any move should normally take place only during the first week of every term and that students should remain in their current school until that time.

It is important to note that this revised approach does not change the “guidance” about whether or not a student is to be offered a place in one of Northumberland’s High Schools. It simply alters the date upon which that admission takes place. Consequently, if an application to change school is received in, say, October a decision about admission will be reached within a few days of receipt of a fully completed application form. If the application is successful the parent/carer will be told that the student has been granted a place but that the date of admission is at the beginning of the following term in January. The student must remain in their current school until that date.

This new approach is being adopted by the County Council for all High Schools where it is the Admissions Authority. All Academies are encouraged to adopt a similar revised approach to their admissions.

This new approach will be reviewed during January and February 2016; any changes being made as appropriate from Easter 2016.

a) Parents whose children are already registered at a Northumberland school and who are not moving house.

Parents applying for a local school to school transfer to a Northumberland school **must** contact their child’s existing secondary school to discuss the proposed in-year transfer application in detail. Section B of the application form must be completed by the child’s current school.

The transfer request will not proceed if this section is incomplete.

b) Neighbouring Local Authority residents

Neighbouring Local Authority residents who have not moved home and wish to transfer to a Northumberland Local Authority school **must** comply with the Northumberland Local Authority In-Year Transfer Arrangements. An application form must be submitted in conjunction with their existing school. All the necessary background information requested on the Northumberland Local Authority In-Year Application Form must be provided in order for the application to be considered.

If incomplete information from the existing school is not provided then the application will not be processed.

Normal Admission Arrangements

- a) Parents who are resident in Northumberland and who have recently moved home or are intending to move home within the County where attendance at their child's existing school is no longer practical**

Parents applying for an in-year transfer in these circumstances **must** contact Northumberland Local Authority to ensure that they receive the appropriate guidance. The appropriate in-year application form must be completed by the parent and the previous school. The school transfer should take place within 10 school days of the receipt of the application form providing that the requested school has places available.

If there is not a place available then the parent can appeal the decision to refuse a place.

The Local Authority will offer an alternative school if a place is not available in the requested school.

All complaints regarding delays in the pupil being taken onto roll should be directed to the Headteacher of the receiving school and copied to the chair of governors. The Local Authority does not have the power to accelerate this process.

- b) New residents to the County whose children are not currently registered at a Northumberland School.**

Parents applying for an in-year transfer in these circumstances **must** complete the In-year application form. The child should be placed within 10 school days of the receipt of the application form providing that the requested school has places available.

If there is not a place available then the parent can appeal the decision to refuse a place.

The Local Authority will offer an alternative school if a place is not available in the requested school.

Once a student has been allocated to a school and there is a delay in the student taking up the place then the parent should make a complaint to the Headteacher of the receiving school, sending a copy of the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

The Local Authority does not have the power to accelerate the process of the student being added to the roll of the school.

- c) Northumberland residents applying for a place in a school outside of Northumberland.**

Parents applying for schools outside of Northumberland **must** contact the relevant Local Authority to establish the correct In-year Application procedure in that Local Authority.

The Transfer Process

The following procedure should be followed:

- a) Parents **must** arrange an appointment with the relevant admissions officer at their existing school in order to facilitate a potential in-year transfer.

Schools may wish to discuss with the parent how a managed move may be an appropriate course of action at this point.

- b) The applicant's existing school **must** demonstrate on the in-year transfer form that all options to enable the student to sustain their place at their existing school have been explored. Further background information, such as attendance, attainment and conduct log records must also be provided by the applicants existing school.

NOTE: Detailed pupil records will be supplied to the receiving school once the student has been admitted onto roll; however general information about the pupil's previous history must be provided.

- c) This information will be used by the potential receiving school when they integrate the student into the school. Background information is vital to determine if the transfer process should apply and to support appropriate types of provision at the new school.
- d) If all of the required background information is not provided then the application is not considered valid and cannot be processed in accordance with agreed timescales.

Please note that applications made to avoid exclusion from an existing school or to give a fresh start elsewhere will not be considered as part of this process but should be part of the managed move process.

The relevant admission authority for the school will write to parents to let them know the outcome of their application.

Northumberland Local Authority will act as an information point for all schools and parents regarding general enquiries about the in-year transfer process.

For community secondary schools, the Local Authority, as the admitting authority, will determine in-year admissions applications in conjunction with the school.

For voluntary aided, trust schools and academies, the respective governing body, as the admitting authority, is responsible for determining In-year admissions applications for their school. **The governing body will have to ensure that the school's admission committee can meet as required to determine applications and that evidence of this is retained in the event of any appeals.**

If the year group is full, applicants will usually be refused admission and if parents wish their child's name will be added to the waiting list and they will be informed of the right of appeal.

If the governing body refuse to admit a child they must include an explanation of their decision e.g. the year group is full or on the grounds of a managed move would be more appropriate.

The letter of refusal must be sent to the parent, copied to the local authority and attached to part C of the application form.

If there are more applicants for places than there are places in a year group the school's In-Year Transfer Admission Policy will be used to decide which children are admitted. For

Community Secondary Schools the Local Authority In-year Transfer Admission Policy will be applied.

Allocating Places and Starting Dates

The offer of a place will be made as soon as possible after the school has agreed to admit the child. Admissions Authorities within Northumberland will aim to start the student at the beginning of a new term, however this may be subject to the school or academy's own induction/enrolment procedures.

Students cannot be removed from the roll of a school until they have been admitted to the roll of the receiving school.

Please note that, although the School Admissions Team operates all year round, it is not always possible to allocate school places during school holidays when schools are closed.

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