

SPARK EDUCATION TRUST SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY

ADOPTED IN LINE WITH STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL FOR ENTRY IN

SEPTEMBER 2027

Introduction

Spark Education Trust is the admission authority and has formally adopted Stockton Borough Council's admissions arrangements for the 2027 intake for schools in the Borough. This policy applies to **primary school admissions** for schools within Spark Education Trust for entry in September 2027. These arrangements mirror those consulted on by Stockton Borough Council. No separate consultation was required as no changes have been made.

All governing bodies are required by Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to admit to the school a child with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan that names the school. This is not an oversubscription criterion. This relates only to children who have undergone statutory assessment and for whom a final Education, Health and Care Plan has been issued.

Where there are more applications for a school than there are places available, places will be allocated in order using the oversubscription criteria in this policy.

CRITERIA

(In priority order)

1. Looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order).

EXPLANATORY NOTES

A 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school.

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see Section 46 adoption orders).

Child arrangements orders are defined in Section 8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by Section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order.

See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

2. Pupils who have a brother or sister permanently living at the same address, who are still at the school when the pupil begins. Please note, this only applies to siblings who are of compulsory school age, not younger siblings who attend a nursery setting attached to a school (Primary applications only).

We define brother or sister as follows:

A brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, adopted brother or sister, or children of partners who are permanently living at the same address as a family unit. In all cases, the parent who receives the Child Benefit for those children must permanently live at that address with the children.

We will consider brothers or sisters who live in separate households because the parents are separated and have shared responsibility for the children under conditions covering exceptional social or medical reasons. This does not include separate families living together in the same property.

If there are other family situations where there are different carers, for example, aunts,

uncles or grandparents, each case will be considered individually.

3. Pupils permanently resident, for example, the address at which the child is registered for child benefit, who has named the school as a preference on the Common Application Form (proof of address may be required) within the admission zone who have returned a common application form by the closing date (15 January for primary applications).
4. Pupils who live closest to a particular school measured in a straight line "as the crow flies". Where distances are equal, random allocation will be used as a tiebreaker, supervised by an independent person and independent of the school and the admission authority.

When a school is oversubscribed with in-zone applications for example, there are more applications from children living in the admission zone of the school than there are places available, we will allocate places:

- to children permanently living in the admission zone (Criterion 3) according to their distance from the school measured in a straight line "as the crow flies"

The Local Authority uses a Geographic Information System, known as GIS, to identify and measure the distance from the central point of the home to the central point of the school. The distance is measured electronically from the central point of the school taken from the council maintained Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) (the same point for all applications) to the central point of the home (including flats) also taken from the LLPG. The GIS undertakes all measures in the same way for every applicant, to ensure consistency and fairness.

The oversubscription criteria will be available on Stockton Borough Council's website in September for parents for admission in September 2027.

Please note, for primary schools, attendance at a school nursery does not guarantee a place in the reception class of that school.

Appeals

The student and/or parents of students who are not offered a place, have the right to appeal against non-admission. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the admission authority. Appeals will be heard by an independent appeal panel (independent of the school and the admission authority) in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code.

False Information

Where a school offer has been made based on a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application which has effectively denied a place in the school to a student with a higher level of priority, the offer of a place will be withdrawn.

Primary Co-ordinated Admissions Timetable (2027-2028)

Date / Period

Activity

Week commencing 9 November 2026 Online applications go live. Common application forms and information issued to parents.

15 January 2027 Closing date for online applications and return of common application forms.

Week commencing 18 January 2027 Lists of applications sent to voluntary aided schools, academies, free schools, and other local authorities.

Week commencing 1 March 2027 Voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools return ranked applications based on oversubscription criteria. Other local authorities confirm preferences they can allocate.

Early March 2027 Liaison between admission authorities to resolve offers.

Week commencing 16 March 2027 Allocations finalised and further liaison as required.

16 April 2027 Allocation letters sent to parents (or next working day). Emails sent to online applicants. Reasons for refusal and appeal rights included.

June-July 2027 Appeal hearings held.