

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. How do the Local Authority Admissions Departments decide which school to allocate my child to?

All applications are processed using parental preference and the schools' admission criteria (the admissions criteria are also referred to as over-subscription criteria or rules). Each school's should list their admissions criteria in their Admissions Policy or Admissions Arrangements Document. All schools should make a copy of their Admissions Policy or Admissions Arrangements Document available to parents and carers, usually by posting it on their website.

When the Local Authorities receive a child's application, they will apply the admissions criteria of the schools included to the child concerned to see which establishments have a space for them. Once they have identified which schools have spaces, they will allocate the child concerned to the highest school on the list that has a space.

2. What happens if I put The Downs School first on my child's application, but they are not allocated a place there on 1 March?

After the initial allocation, if your child has not been offered a place at The Downs and it is higher on your preference list than the school, to which your child has been allocated, you will automatically be added to our waiting list.

Parents and carers of children living in Oxfordshire will need to complete a Continued Interest List request form and return it to Oxfordshire's Admissions Department to confirm that they wish their child to remain on the waiting list. If you do not do this, Oxfordshire Admissions may advise West Berkshire's Admissions that you no longer want a place at The Downs School. Oxfordshire will explain how to do this when they send your child's initial allocation.

If a place becomes available at The Downs and your child is at the top of the waiting list, West Berkshire's Admissions Department will ring you directly to offer you the place. This is the case whichever Local Authority you live in. If you accept the place, West Berkshire will let the Admissions Administrator at The Downs know, and your child will be added to our allocation. If you decline the place, your child will be removed from the waiting list.

All children on the waiting list are ranked according to our admissions criteria. Your child's place on the waiting list can go up and down, depending on whether other children join or leave it.

Whereas, we cannot guarantee exactly what will happen this year, there is usually movement on the waiting list, with children being allocated places from 1 March onwards. West Berkshire will keep your child on the waiting list until the end of Year 7 if needs be. They will then ring you to ask if you want to remain on the waiting list for Year 8.

3. Can I find out where my child is on the waiting list?

After 1 March, you can ring either West Berkshire's Admissions or The Downs School's Admissions Administrator to find out where your child is on the waiting list. It is worth noting that West Berkshire will have the most up to date information.

4. Can I appeal an admissions decision?

You have the right to appeal. All parents and carers wishing to do this will need to contact West Berkshire's Appeal Clerk, regardless of which authority they live in. Details on the appeals' procedure, including the form itself can be found on West Berkshire Council's website via the following link:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/admissionappeals>

The closing date to submit an appeal in the normal admissions round is 30 March 2021. This will ensure that your appeal is heard on the main appeal round. Rising Year 7 appeals are normally heard in May depending on the volume of appeals that are received.