



An introduction to schools and School admissions

Types of schools

There are different types of schools and the process for getting a place can be different depending on the type of school you are applying to.

Maintained schools also known as **state schools**, are schools where you do not have to pay fees for your child to attend. **Independent** or **private schools** are schools where you do have to pay – you apply direct to these schools for places.

There are further differences between maintained schools, based on:

1. The age of the children in the school

Type of school	Age of children	Year groups	Where next
Nursery schools	3 and 4 years old	Nursery only	A first, infant or primary school
First schools	4 or 5 to 9 years	Reception to Year 4	Middle school
Infant schools	4 or 5 to 7 years	Reception to Year 2	Junior school
Primary schools	4 or 5 to 11 years	Reception to Year 6	Secondary school
Junior schools	7 to 11 years	Year 3 to Year 6	Secondary school
Middle schools	9 to 13 years	Year 5 to Year 8	Upper school
Secondary schools	11 to 16, 17 or 18 years	Year 7 to Year 11, 12 or 13	-
Upper schools	13 to 16, 17 or 18 years	Year 9 to Year 11, 12 or 13	-

Sometimes, first, infant and primary schools have a nursery class, which means they can take children from age 3 or 4.

2. Who owns the land, employs staff and organises admissions

In Hertfordshire, there are five types of school:

- **Community schools** – these are schools which are run by the local authority
- **Voluntary Controlled schools** – these schools are run by the local authority but the school land and buildings are owned by a charity, often a religious organisation
- **Foundation schools** – these schools are run by their own governing body, which employs staff, organises admissions and usually owns the land and buildings
- **Voluntary Aided schools** – these schools are also run by their own governing body. Usually the land and buildings are owned by a charity, often a religious organisation, and these types of schools are often religious schools
- **Academies and Trust Schools** – these schools are also run by their own governing body, which employs staff, organises admissions and usually owns the land and buildings

Hertfordshire County Council co-ordinates the admissions to all these different types of school to make sure that each child only gets one place. However, if you want a place at a foundation or voluntary aided school then you usually have to fill in a separate application form for those schools as well.

3. Whether it is a mainstream or special school

Mainstream schools cater for all children. Special schools cater for children who have significant special educational needs. Each special school supports particular types of need, for example schools for children with learning difficulties or with physical disabilities. You can find out more about support for children with special educational needs at www.hertsdirect.org.

Applying for school

Usually, there are set times when you need to apply for a school place:

- if you want a nursery place for your child
- when your child starts full time school in reception class
- if you are moving from an infant to a junior school or from a first school to a middle school
- when your child moves on to secondary or upper school

At these times, you will be sent information about how to apply. You can apply online or use a paper application form. It is **very important** that you send your application in at the right time. If your application is late, you are less likely to get a place at the school you would like.

Sometimes, children move school at other times. For example, you may move to another area or you may have other reasons for wanting your child to go to a different school. These are called **In-Year admissions**.

To apply for an In-Year admission, you must complete an in-year application form. These are available online at www.hertsdirect.org/admissions or from the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043.

If you need more information about applying for a school place, contact the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043. They may put you in touch with the local Admissions and Transport Team who have specific local knowledge. They cover different areas of Hertfordshire as shown below:



Admissions and Transport Team: East
Farnham House SFAR 109
Six Hills Way,
Stevenage
SG1 2FQ

Admissions and Transport Team: West
Apsley One
Brindley Way,
Hemel Hempstead
HP3 9BF

What to do if you can't get in to the school you want?

Sometimes, the school you want for your child won't be able to offer you a place. This will be because they are already full or because they have had to give priority to other children and there are no places left for your child.

In these cases, you can ask to go on their continued interest list. This means that they will keep your child's name on a list and if a place becomes available at the school, they will offer it to the child who is highest on the list. The school use their admissions rules to decide what order children on the list should be in.

You can also **appeal** for a place at the school. You will need to fill in an appeal form explaining why you want a place for your child. It is important that you give as much information as you can on the form; try to be specific about why it is important for your child in particular to go to that specific school.

When your appeal form has been received, you will be given a date for the appeal. It is helpful if you can go in person as the appeal panel may have questions they want to ask you. You can ask for an interpreter or assistance with any special needs you may have. Appeal forms are available from the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043.

Starting and leaving school

Your child will start full-time education when they are five years old. Hertfordshire schools usually take children in twice a year, as follows:

Child's 5th birthday	Start month
1 September to 28 February	September
1 March to 31 August	January

You may be able to ask for your child to start slightly later than this date. Talk to the school if you would like this. Many children will have started part-time education earlier than this, for example at a pre-school, playgroup or nursery.

At present, a child attends school full time until they are 16 years of age. They can leave school to work, study at sixth form in a school or study at a Further Education College. This extra study can last for one or two years. At the age of 18, people who have the right qualifications can choose to go on to Higher Education, often at university, to get a degree or similar qualification. From 2013, children will need to stay in education or training until they are 17 and from 2015, they will stay in education or training until they are 18.

Going to school

Schools are open for 38 weeks of the year. Each school year runs from September to August and is divided into terms. In Hertfordshire, there are three terms each year. Each term has a one week holiday in the middle called **half term**, and ends with a two week holiday at Christmas and Easter and a six week holiday in July/August.

Most schools start their day between 8.30 and 9.00 a.m. and it usually ends between 3pm and 4pm. Schools for older children have longer days than schools for younger children. Each school day has a break for lunch and at least one shorter break, usually mid-morning.

You will be expected to send your child to school whenever the school is open. Taking your child out of school to go on holiday is discouraged and schools prefer you to make doctor and dentist appointments after school if possible. If your child is sick and cannot go to school, you should tell the school straight away and send a letter into school when your child goes back.

School uniform, school dinners and home to school transport

Most schools in Hertfordshire have a school uniform which they expect children to wear. Wearing school uniform will help your child to fit in. Your child's school will give you information about the uniform and what items your child will need, which can usually be bought quite cheaply from shops and supermarkets. Often, schools will sell second-hand items that other children have grown out of at a reduced price. If you have any concerns about the uniform, please speak to the school.

Children have the choice of taking a packed lunch from home or buying a school dinner at school. School dinners cost between £1.70 and £1.91 each day, depending on how old your child is. Older children have a wider choice which may cost a little more.

You will usually be responsible for making sure your child can get to school. There is help for some families depending on how far away from the school you are or whether you are on a low income. You can get full details at www.hertsdirect.org/admissions. Follow the link for home to school transport.

If you are on a low income you may be entitled to free school meals or help with transport. Please call the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043 or see the leaflet 'Financial Help for Parents'. You can apply online at: www.hertsdirect.org/scholearn/canhelp

Problems and concerns

Most children are generally happy at school and parents are happy with their child's progress. However, there may be times when you or your child are worried or have problems.

Firstly, you should talk to your child's class teacher. They can often explain things to you or your child which will ease your concern or solve the problem. If you are still unhappy, you should talk to the head teacher at the school. They should take your concerns seriously and help reach a solution with you. If this hasn't helped, you can complain to the governing body of the school. The school will give you information about their complaints procedure and who to contact.

For further advice about complaints, contact the Customer Focus Team helpline on 01992 588542.

Finally, it helps the school to help your child if you tell them about anything that may be affecting your child. This information will be treated as confidential.