



Moving up to Secondary School in September 2027

Useful Information for parents and carers

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Key dates

1 September 2026	Applications for school places open
4 September 2026 (midday)	Deadline to register for the Grammar School test
18 September 2026 (23:55)	Deadline to register for Poole High School's Expressly Academic Class test
26 September 2026	Grammar School test date
3 October 2026	Expressively Academic Class test date (Poole High School)
31 October 2026	Deadline for applications to be submitted to BCP Council
1 March 2027	Date of allocation results – online results available and letters posted

Key contact details

Children's Information Service (CIS)	School Admissions and Transport Team
BCP Council Civic Centre Bourne Avenue Bournemouth BH2 6DY Tel:01202 123222 cis@bcpcouncil.gov.uk bcpcouncil.gov.uk	BCP Council Civic Centre Bourne Avenue Bournemouth BH2 6DY Tel:01202 127963 school.admissions@bcpcouncil.gov.uk bcpcouncil.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Neighbouring Local Authorities

Dorset Council School Admissions	Hampshire County Council School Admissions
Dorset Council County Hall, Dorchester DT1 1XJ Tel: 01305 221060 admissions@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/schooladmissions	Children's Services Dept Elizabeth II Court North Winchester SO24 8UG Tel: 0300 555 1377 Admissions.team@hants.gov.uk hants.gov.uk/admissions

Deciding which schools to name

How do I decide which schools to name?

You should be aware that there is currently heavy demand for secondary school places. We recommend that you seriously consider naming your nearest school. There is no guarantee that a place will be available at your local school if you do not name it as it may fill with families who requested it on their application. This means that if you do not name your nearest school, and none of your named schools can offer a place, you may be offered a school further away.

We strongly suggest that you name **four** schools and that you think carefully about the order you request them as this can have an impact upon which one you may be offered. The school you want the most **must** be named as your first preference.

Consider how you will get your child to school and the potential costs involved. Your child will be attending this school for at least five years and you will need to be sure they will be able to get there for the entirety of this time.

If you apply for and are offered a place at a school which is not your local school, you will not usually qualify for free transport and will have to take on the costs yourself.

You may find it useful to look at Ofsted reports and the websites for the schools you are considering. You can also look at the breakdown of [last year's allocation of places](#). This shows how many applications were made for each school, and how many places were refused. The allocation data should only be used as a guide.

You can only apply for a school which has a point of entry in Year 7 or is a school with an intake at year 7. Broadstone Middle School, Livingstone Academy Bournemouth and St Peter's School all have an intake in year 7 and can be named as a preference alongside the secondary schools in the area. If you are interested in a school where Year 7 is not the typical point of entry for the school, you will need to check how to apply.

Please note that independent (fee-paying) schools and special schools are not part of the school application process. You will need to contact independent schools directly or liaise with your Education Health and Care Co-ordinator. You will not be able to add them to your BCP Council application form.

If you are not sure if a particular school is part of our process, please contact the School Admissions Team to check.

Can I name schools outside of BCP Council?

Yes. You can list any schools on your BCP Council application, including those outside of the BCP Council area. Please make sure that the school you are interested in is one which has a point of entry into Year 7.

What has happened in previous years?

You can find detailed statistics for the main allocation for children transferring to secondary school in September 2026 online at [last year's allocation of places](#).

Please remember that this information should only be used as a guide. The allocation figures differ from year to year, for example if there are more/fewer children living in a particular

area. Changes in the popularity of a school (or a neighbouring school) can also affect the number of applications a school receives.

Admission policies can also change from year to year. Therefore, the criteria may not be exactly the same as last year. We strongly recommend that parents check the admission criteria in the policy for the 2027–28 academic year. Each school publishes its current admission policy on their website, and you can also find links to these on the BCP Council website.

If you are unsure about any of the allocation data, please contact us.

Am I guaranteed a place at one of the schools I name?

No. The law is clear that parents have the right to express a preference for a school they wish their child to attend. Preference is not the same as choice. The law does not give parents the right to choose a particular school for their child and to have this choice met.

It is possible that you will not be offered a place at any of the schools you name, for example if you do not live near any of them, or (for church schools) you do not fulfil the school's religious criteria, or (for grammar schools) your child does not pass the entrance test.

This is why we always recommend that you consider naming your catchment or nearest school as one of your preferences. You can add it as your final preference if you prefer other schools.

If none of your requested schools can offer you a place, and you live within the BCP Council area, your child will be offered a place at another school with vacancies. If you live outside of the BCP Council area, you should contact your home local authority to find out what they do.

You should also think carefully about home to school transport when choosing your preferences. Free school transport is usually only available to the nearest or catchment school (if eligibility criteria are met). If your child is offered a place at a school further away, you may be responsible for making your own transport arrangements and covering the costs.

How to apply

How do I apply for my child's secondary school place for September 2026?

If you are a BCP Council resident you must apply to BCP Council, either online or using a paper form. All applications from BCP Council residents (online and paper) must be submitted by 31 October 2026, in order to be included in our main allocation of places.

Please ensure that you apply using your child's legal name, and not a 'known-as' name.

Please take your time. Places are not allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and it does not matter when you apply, as long as you meet the closing date. Please do not submit your application until you are sure of your preferences.

Online applications may be made on [the Parent Portal](#) from 1 September 2026. You will need an email address to create an online account.

Paper applications can be requested from BCP Council from 1 September 2026 and can be emailed to school.admissions@bcpcouncil.gov.uk or posted to the following address:

School Admissions and Transport Team
BCP Civic Centre
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

The online system will continue to accept applications after 23:59 on 31 October, but if submitted after that time will be recorded as a late application. Paper forms will need to arrive by email by 23:59 on 31 October, or received by post by 31 October, to be considered on-time.

Siblings of existing pupils

If your child has a sibling already at the school, make sure that you complete the part of the application which asks for the sibling's details.

Many schools give some priority to siblings of existing pupils. Some also give priority to siblings at a linked school such as a boys' and girls' school.

It is important to check the school's admission policy, as each school may have a different definition of what counts as a sibling.

The application asks you to name one sibling – if you have more than one sibling already at the school, you should name the most relevant one, which will usually be the one closest in age.

I am applying for a school on faith grounds – what do I need to provide?

If you are applying to a school with religious criteria, you may need to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) and/or provide additional evidence (such as a baptism certificate) in addition to your application to prove your religious commitment and be

considered on these grounds. Information can be found on each individual school's website. Any evidence needs to be received at the school by **31 October 2026**. The school will explain where the evidence should be sent.

Please remember that half term is Monday 26 October until Friday 30 October 2026 and the schools will not be open to accept any forms between these dates.

Where do I apply if I am not a BCP Council resident?

If you are not a BCP resident, you must apply to the local authority where you live. You can apply for schools located within the BCP Council area on another authority's form if you wish. Our neighbouring local authorities are Dorset Council and Hampshire County Council.

How will I know if you have received my application?

Online applicants will receive an automatic email confirming the application has been received. This email will list your schools in the order you named them. Please check the preference order is correct. If you do not receive this email, please contact us to check you have submitted your application correctly.

Once your online application has been uploaded by the School Admissions Team, you will receive a second email. Please check your spam and junk folders if you do not receive either of these emails in your usual inbox.

What happens if my child lives part time with each parent?

Only one application and address can be considered for each pupil. If parents are separated, you must come to an agreement about the schools you apply for. Where a child lives at more than one address you will need to check each school's admission policy to see how they will decide which address to use.

If you are unable to come to a mutual decision about your child's application (including the schools or the order they are named), you will need to seek legal advice prior to the closing date. BCP Council will not process applications where we are aware of a parental dispute, and no concessions will be made if an application is late for this reason.

Any application for Home to School Transport assistance will be considered based on the address used for the purpose of submitting an application for secondary school.

Academic Testing

How do I apply for a place at a Grammar School?

If you want your child to be considered for a place at one of the grammar schools, you must name the grammar school as one of your preferences on your Local Authority preference form and submit it by **31 October 2026**. Sitting and passing the test is not an application for a place.

If you are applying for a place at one of the grammar schools in Bournemouth or Poole, your child will need to sit a test. You will need to register for testing. The deadline to register for testing is **12 noon on 4 September 2026**. Registration can be completed on the schools' websites.

The grammar schools use the same test, so if you are interested in any of the grammar schools within BCP Council, your child only needs to sit the test once. You should register with the school where you would prefer your child to sit the test in September.

The tests will take place on Saturday **26 September 2026**, where pupils will be tested in Maths, English and Verbal Reasoning. Results will be posted by the school mid-October 2026 so you will know if your child has passed the test before you need to submit your application.

How do I apply for a place for the Expressly Academic Class at Poole High School?

If you want your child to be considered for the Expressly Academic Class at Poole High School, you will need to register your child for them to sit the test. The deadline for this is **Friday 18 September 2026 (at 23:55)**. No late registrations to sit the test are accepted by the school after this time.

You must also name Poole High School as one of your preferences on your Local Authority preference form and submit it by **31 October 2026**, in addition to sitting the test.

The test takes place on **Saturday 3 October 2026**. Children will be tested in Maths, English and sit a Reasoning Test. For more information about the tests, please contact the school direct.

The Expressly Academic Class comprises students who have been selected as a result of the tests and is limited to 10% of the school's intake in Year 7. Expressly Academic places are allocated to the 32 children who receive the highest marks in tests and who have not been made a higher preference offer by another school.

It is not possible to name a preference **only** for the Academic class at Poole High School. All applicants who are ranked outside the top 32 places offered in the Expressly Academic class are automatically then considered for one of the non-Expressly Academic places.

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

My child has an Education, Health and Care Plan – who do I apply to?

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you should speak to the SEND Inclusion Team on 01202 128880.

You may also contact SENDiass on 01202 128181, they are independent and confidential and offer guidance on issues relating to SEND, exclusions and school admissions appeals.

Late Applications

What happens if my application is late?

If your application is not received by the closing date of 31 October 2026 it will be classed as late.

This means all applications received by 31 October 2026 will be considered before yours and the chance of getting the place you want will be reduced.

For any application received after 31 October 2026 and by 22 January 2027, parents will be notified of the outcome on 25 March 2027.

Applications received from 23 January 2027 will be processed from April onwards, depending on the date of receipt.

Notification Day

When will I receive the outcome of my application?

All on-time applicants who provided a valid email address will receive an email containing a link to a PDF copy of their offer letter on 1 March 2027. Online applicants will be able to log in to their accounts from on 1 March 2027 and accept the offer online. Letters will be posted on 1 March 2027 to any applicants who have not provided a valid email address.

If you applied online, you should accept your offered place online via the Parent Portal. If you are unable to access the Parent Portal, you can respond by email.

If you wish to decline the place, we ask you to do this by email, and to inform us of any alternative arrangements you are making for your child's education.

What if I forget the password to my online account?

BCP Council are unable to help with forgotten passwords so it's important that you remember the one you choose.

If you are unable to log in to your account, you will still receive your notification letter by email on 1 March 2027. You do not need access to the Portal to receive your emailed letter.

What if I do not get offered the school I prefer?

If you have not been offered your preferred school(s), please note the following:

All schools will hold a waiting list. Your offer letter will provide further information on this.

You also have the right to appeal against any school's decision to refuse a place. Again, your offer letter will provide you with further details.

We strongly recommend that you accept the school offered, as it may not be available later if you decline it straight away. If you are offered a different school at a later date (such as at appeal or from the waiting list), you can **then** decline the original offer. Accepting a place at one school will not affect any waiting lists, applications or appeals for any other schools.

You may also request additional preferences at this stage if you wish. These will be processed from April onwards.

Is it possible to lose a school place once it has been offered?

An offered place may be withdrawn if you do not accept the offer within a reasonable timescale. The deadline to respond to the offer will be included on the letter you receive.

A school may also withdraw a place if it was offered based upon a fraudulent or misleading application, such as under a false address.

Home to School Travel

How will my child get to school?

Most children and young people living in the BCP Council area are not eligible for home to school travel assistance because they have access to a suitable school within a reasonable distance from their home. This means that families do not normally receive free travel to school.

Children can be eligible for travel assistance where they attend their nearest suitable school and:

- live more than the statutory walking distance from that school (3 miles for children of secondary school age); or
- could not reasonably be expected to walk to that school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent; or
- would not be able to walk to that school in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent.

There are also 'extended rights' to free travel to school for children from low-income households who are eligible for Targeted Free School Meals. The criteria for these children are:

- aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

This means that, unless you qualify for the extended rights noted above, you will not normally qualify for free travel assistance. If you are offered a school, based on your preference order, that is not your nearest or catchment school. However, you may still be eligible if your nearest or catchment school could not offer a place, or if there were no suitable places closer to home.

If your child is given a place at a school that is not the nearest, but they could have been offered a place at a closer school (if you had listed it), you will usually need to arrange and pay for transport yourself. The council will check this when assessing applications, so it is important to include your nearest or catchment school in your preferences and think carefully before deciding to name a school further away as a higher preference. The same principle is applied when assessing the three nearest available schools for families who do qualify for the extended rights detailed above.

For home to school transport assistance purposes, grammar schools in the BCP Council area are not considered to be catchment schools. Instead, they operate using defined Priority Areas to ensure that children in the surrounding area of each school are given higher priority for at least one grammar school compared to those living further away.

Applications for home to school transport assistance are considered based on the individual circumstances and needs of each child or young person. This means that if you have previously received transport assistance for a sibling of the child or young person that you are applying for, they may not be eligible and/or not receive the same offer of transport.

It is therefore important to read the BCP Council [Home to School Transport Policy](#) that is valid at the time you wish to make an application for assistance.

Travel to School

BCP Council is fully committed to promoting walking, cycling and, for longer distances, greater use of buses for the school journey wherever possible.

Considering how your child/ren travels to school is vital. We would expect that most secondary aged children are able to travel independently to school, whether by walking, wheeling, scooting, cycling or by dedicated school bus or public transport. We would discourage parents from driving their secondary school children to school if possible. The benefits of an active start to the day include enhanced learning in the classroom alongside improved wellbeing and mood.

Talk to your preferred schools about their school site. They can give you best advice on walking, scooting, wheeling or cycling opportunities alongside park and stride suggestions. They will also be able to show you the cycle and scooter parking during open days.

Changes to existing bus routes

Following a consultation, the following changes will be made to school bus services:

- **Route 40** (Hamworthy/Creekmoor to St Mary's and St Edward's Schools) will cease operating at the end of the current term (Summer 2026).
- **Route 425** (serving Wallisdown, Bearwood and Merley to Corfe Hills School and Broadstone Middle School) will continue until the end of the Summer Term 2027, after which the service will be withdrawn.
- From **September 2026**, the **46 and 81 services** (serving Avonbourne Academies) will be combined into a single enhanced service. Route 81 will be incorporated into Route 46, and the new service will operate under the route number **461**.

For further information about school bus services, please visit the [morebus website](#).

Policy Review

BCP Council is currently reviewing its Home to School Travel Policy to ensure it remains clear, effective and aligned with statutory guidance. At this stage, no changes to the eligibility criteria for travel assistance are proposed. As part of the review, the Council plans to undertake a public consultation in September 2026, providing parents, carers and other stakeholders with an opportunity to share their views on the draft policy before it is finalised and implemented ready for the 2027-28 academic year. The consultation will be available online at haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk and paper copies will be available in all BCP libraries.