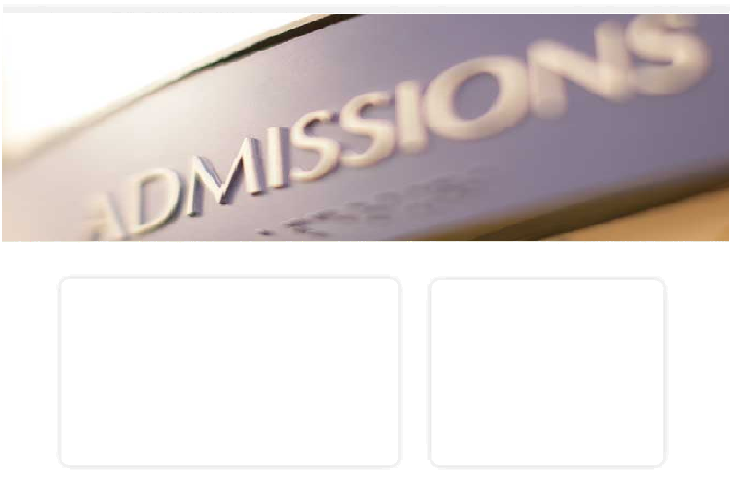


**TOWER HAMLETS CHILDREN AND CULTURE**

**Proposed Admission Policy for**

**Community Nursery Classes and Schools**

**(2026/27)**



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| **Prepared by:** | Pupil Access and School Sufficiency  Children and Culture Directorate |
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| 1. | Introduction | |
| 1.1 | Nursery education is provided in a range of settings in Tower Hamlets. This policy is for nursery education provided in community schools. Children will normally attend either a nursery school or a nursery class attached to a primary school. Some schools provide nursery education in an Early Years Unit attached to their school (EYU). The EYUs accept children aged from three to five years inclusive. All of these schools offer a mixture of part time places and full-time places. | |
| 1.2 | In this policy the term ‘school’ refers to a nursery school, a nursery class attached to a primary school or a school with an EYU. | |
| 2. | Nursery Entitlement | |
| 2.1   2.2 | All children aged three and four are entitled to 15 hours a week free nursery education during school term times (38 weeks a year), from the term following their third birthday until they reach compulsory school age i.e. the term after their fifth birthday.  Working parents may be able to access additional 15 hours (30 hours in total) if they meet the eligibility criteria. Parents must earn at least the national minimum of living wage for 16 hours a week and less than £100,000 a year. | |
| 2.3 | Parents considering sending their child to a playgroup as well as a nursery class may wish to think about what impact this would have on their child and how they would cope with the two environments. The adjustment is often very demanding and confusing for children of this age and much of the benefit from either setting could be lost. Once children take up a nursery place, it is in their interests to remain at that school until they have to move on because of their age. Children take at least a term to settle and can find it very upsetting to move at this stage. Transfers are only considered if a family has moved from the area or on exceptional grounds. | |
| 3. | **Age of Admission to a Nursery School/Class** | |
| 3.1 | Parents who would like a nursery place for their child should contact the preferred school when the child reaches the age of two. | |
| 3.2 | The actual age at which a child can start will depend on the number of places available but will not be before the term after they turn three. In exceptional circumstances a child may start in the term they turn three, but this will need agreement from the Local Authority. | |
| 3.3 | Parents of children born between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023 can apply for a part-time Nursery place in September 2026 through the coordinated admission scheme. | |
| 4. | Applying for a Place | |
| 4.1 | Applications can be made by parents or carers with parental responsibilities who are residents of Tower Hamlets and professionals with parents’ agreement. | |
| 4.2 | How to apply for a primary school place is set out in the Local Authority’s school admissions booklet, ‘Starting Nursery in Tower Hamlets.’ Applications are then co-ordinated for all the schools in the Tower Hamlets area in accordance with the Authority’s published scheme. The scheme can be viewed on the following webpage: [School admissions (towerhamlets.gov.uk)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/schools/school_admissions/school_admissions.aspx) | |
| 4.3 | The closing date for applications is **14 February 2026** and the date on which families are sent notification of the outcome is **7 May 2026.** | |
| 5. | **How Decisions are Made** | |
| 5.1 | Decisions on applications for nursery places are made in accordance with the criteria and arrangements set out below. Children who attend a school’s nursery class do not have priority for admission to the reception year as decisions on primary school admissions are taken separately. | |
| 6. | Oversubscription Criteria | |
| 6.1 | If a community school receives more nursery applications than places available, the decision on whether or not a place can be offered will be made in accordance with the admission criteria set out in priority order below:  1. Children looked after by the local authority including adopted children who were previously looked after, children who leave care under a special guardianship or residence order and adopted children who were previously in state care outside of England **(See Note 1)** 2. Children for whom it is deemed there is strong educational, medical or social reason to attend the school applied to. This can include the parents,’ carers’ or other family members’ medical conditions and the family’s social needs. Parents must complete the relevant section on the application form and attach medical and/or social reports from a suitable professional (e.g. a doctor or social worker) to support the application. **(See Note 2)**; 3. Children living within the catchment area who have a sibling attending the school (including separate infants and junior schools) and who will continue to do so on the date of admission **(See Note 3)**; 4. Children whose parent is a member of staff who has been employed at the school concerned for two or more years at the time of application and/ or children of a member of staff who has been recruited to fill a vacancy for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage (**See Note 4**); 5. Children who live within the catchment area of the school and for whom the school applied for is their nearest community school within the catchment area (**See Note 5**); 6. Other children from within the catchment area of the school; 7. Children living outside of the catchment area with a sibling at the school; 8. Children living outside of the catchment area of the school applied to. | |
| 6.2 | In the event of oversubscription within categories 2 to 8 above, priority will be given to children who live closest to the school by the shortest walking distance **(See Note 5)**. | |
| 6.3 | Should two or more children live an equal distance from the school, including instances where more than one child lives in a multi-occupancy building, the offer of a place will be decided by random allocation. | |
| 6.4 | **Note 1:** Confirmation of a child’s looked after status will be required.  A child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Parents must provide documentary evidence of both adoption and that the child was in state care for the local authority to consider.  **Note 2:** Applications under this category are considered by the Primary to Secondary Transfer Committee, comprising a Headteacher, a senior member of the Attendance and Welfare Service and a medical professional. The Committee will decide whether the application should be given priority under this category.  **Note 3:** Sibling refers to brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, stepbrother or sister, or the child of the parent/carer’s partner. In every case, the child should be living in the same family unit at the same address. The address used should be the one that the child usually lives at and attends school from.  **Note 4:** Priority will be limited to one place for each nursery class. The staff applicant must complete the relevant section on the application form and attach documentation supporting admission on these grounds. It is the staff applicant’s sole responsibility to provide this information. Without the provision of the relevant documents, the child will not be considered on these grounds.  **Note 5:** A digitised ordnance survey map is used to measure the distance from the home address to the school’s designated official entrance.  **Note 6:** Private, independent, academy and voluntary aided school nurseries have their own admission policy. | |
| 7. | **Catchment Area** |
| 7.1 | The school catchment area is the defined area in which a school is located. It is generally bounded by major roads and/or railway/canal. The catchment area for each Tower Hamlets Community school is set by the Local Authority and designed to ensure that each address in the borough falls into the catchment area of local school. Details of community schools within the catchment area for a particular address can be viewed on the Local Authority’s website: <http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/equalchance>. |
| 8. | **Part-Time and Full -Time Places** |
| 8.1 | All children will be considered for a part-time place (15 hours per week). Working parents may be able to access additional 15 hours (30 hours in total) if they meet the eligibility criteria. Parents must earn at least the national minimum of living wage for 16 hours a week and less than £100,000 a year. For more information on this and other support towards childcare cost we suggest you visit [**Childcare Choices**](https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/).  Working parents who wish to be considered for a full-time place will need to check their eligibility. This can be done online at [Check what help you could get with childcare costs - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator). Eligible parents will receive a code which must be given to the school once a part-time place has been offered. Additional hours re subject to availability and eligibility.  Parents who are not eligible can purchase additional hours. You will need to contact the nursery for information concerning the cost of additional hours and any additional charges. Full-time places will be subject to availability. |
| 8.2 | It is important that the Common Application Form is completed online and all relevant information is provided to support the child’s application. The information on the form will determine admission to the school. |

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| 9. | **Late Applications** |
| 9.1 | Applications received after the **14 February 2026** will be treated as late applications unless there is evidence to show that the application or amendment could not reasonably have been made on time. A new preference or change in the order of preferences will not be accepted after the closing date unless the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional. Late applications will be dealt with after all on time applications have been considered. Where a school is oversubscribed late applications will be refused and placed on the waiting list in accordance with the admission criteria. |
| 9.2 | Where the Local Authority has determined there are exceptional circumstances for the late submission of an application it will be treated as ‘on time’ and, where possible, considered alongside existing applications. |
| 10. | **Waiting List** |
| 10.1 | All children will automatically be added to the waiting lists of higher preference nurseries than the one offered unless parents ask to remove their child from a waiting list. |
| 10.2 | Waiting lists for tower Hamlets community nurseries will be kept and maintained by the Local Authority in line with the oversubscription criteria. |
| 10.3 | Waiting lists for own admission authority schools i.e. voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, will be kept and maintained by the school itself. |
| 10.4 | If parents wish for their child to remain on the Nursery waiting list **after December**, they must complete an [In-Year Application](https://education.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Synergy/Admissions.aspx). Please note that transfers take place at the beginning of each term. Full details, including the timetable can be viewed on the [Council website](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/schools/school_admissions/in-year_admissions.aspx). |
| 10.5 | If a vacancy arises, it will be offered to the first applicant on the waiting list. |
| 10.6 | Proximity to school will determine priority where there are competing claims to a place under each of the criteria. |
| 10.7 | Distances will be measured by the shortest walking route from the home address to the nearest available pupil entrance in constant use to the school, using a computerised digitised map. |
| 10.8 | Should two or more children live an equal distance from the school, including instances where more than one child lives in a multi-occupancy building, the offer of a place will be decided by random allocation. |
| 11. | **Twins and Multiple Births** | |
| 11.1 | For applications made in the normal admission round, if the last child to be offered a place is a twin and their sibling cannot be offered initially, the school will ensure both twins are offered a place. In the case of triplets or other multiple births, if the majority of children can be offered a place initially, the school will offer places to the remaining children. For example, if two triplets can be offered a place, the remaining child will also receive an offer of a place. | |
| 12. | **Parents wishing to make representation about nursery decisions** | |
| 12.1 | Parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the nursery application should contact the headteacher of the school in the first instance. If they remain dissatisfied then they should contact the Head of School Admissions. | |
| 12.2 | Parents do not have the statutory right of appeal against the decision to refuse their child a nursery place. | |

