

●●●● Equal Preference Scheme

How is the allocated School determined?

Every local authority must operate an equal preference scheme; it is a requirement of the School Admissions Code. With each school applied for, what matters is the priority in terms of oversubscription criteria, not whether it is the person's first, second or third preference;

This means that, regardless of whether it is their first, second or third preference school, every applicant is listed for the schools named in the application in the rank order of the oversubscription criteria (e.g. in/out of catchment area, with/without a sibling) by the admission authority. The straight line distance measurement from home to school determines the position of the applicant in the appropriate category of oversubscription criteria. (This may differ in criteria used by some own admission authority schools e.g. children of staff.) Please see the relevant oversubscription criteria listed in this booklet or the school website, to determine the category applicable to you and how the policy is applied at each of the schools you wish to include in your application.

If an applicant names three schools, their child will appear on the list for each of those three schools. The published admission number (PAN) is the number of places each school can offer and the cut-off point for allocated places. If the applicant is ranked high enough in terms of the oversubscription criteria to qualify for one of the places at their first preference school, their name can be discounted from the list of the second and third preference schools. On the list of the second and third preference schools, the next applicant on the list can then move up to fill the gap and qualify for a place.

The local authority has a statutory duty to offer parents their highest possible preference. The percentage of first preferences met is reported to the Department for Education (DfE) every year and these statistics are published by the DfE,

usually at the end of June. If the applicant ranks before the cut-off point for their first preference school, their second or third preference do not need to be considered.

The importance of 3 preferences

It is extremely important for parents to make use of their three preference slots. Whilst the Admissions Team endeavour to meet your first preference request, if you name only one school, your child's name will appear on only one school's list. If you do not rank before the cut-off point, this means that we must make a default offer which will be the nearest school to the home address with vacancies available when all other on-time applications have been considered. By then a school that you might have considered as an acceptable second or third preference may have filled up with applicants who **have** named the school in their application, even if they live further from the school than you. If the school is not named in your application, it cannot be considered as an alternative if your first preference is unavailable, unless it still has places available when consideration of the on-time applications is complete.

In some areas of Shropshire, there may be only one secondary school designated to a wide rural area (e.g. Bishop's Castle) and it is difficult for parents to nominate a second or third preference. However, for most town residents, there are usually a number of schools in close proximity and the opportunity is there for parents to name more than one school. It is strongly recommended that Shrewsbury residents name 3 Shrewsbury secondary schools which may help to avoid disappointment. All four Shrewsbury secondary schools share the same designated catchment area. Shrewsbury residents who apply for their nearest Shrewsbury secondary school are ranked slightly higher in oversubscription criteria for that school than other Shrewsbury residents for whom it is not the nearest school. ([See page 44.](#))

Late applications are considered after all on-time applicants have been allocated. ([See page 54.](#))

●○○○ Case Studies

Case 1

A Shrewsbury resident lives closer to an entrance to Meole Brace School than the nearest Priory School pedestrian entrance (by straight line measurement). They name only one school in application – the Priory School.

In Priory School's oversubscription criteria, this applicant would be considered an in-area applicant but Priory is not the nearest school and with no sibling connection, this comes under priority 6. ([See page 41/42](#)).

The applicant does not rank within 168 in the Priory's list of applicants and therefore the cut-off point comes before this applicant. Having named only one school, the application cannot be considered until all the other on-time applications have been allocated. By this time Meole Brace School is full with applicants who have named it in their application and there is only one school left in Shrewsbury with vacancies. That school is the default offer made to this applicant, even though the parent would have preferred Meole Brace as an alternative preference and the default offer school is some distance from their home.

This may have been avoided by naming three Shrewsbury secondary schools.

Case 2

A parent from outside the Shrewsbury catchment area names 3 Shrewsbury secondary schools. All 3 are oversubscribed.

The applicant is ranked lower in terms of priority than in-area applicants. (Priority 7 for Priory and Meole, 6B for Belvidere, 4C for Shrewsbury Academy.) This applicant does not rank sufficiently high on the list of applicants for a place at any of the 3 Shrewsbury secondary schools.

A place cannot be offered at any of the three schools named in the application and so a default offer has to be made once all the other on-time applications have been allocated. The designated catchment school is

also full by this time with applicants who have named it in their application. The next nearest school with vacancies is offered which is a considerable distance from the home address and the parents will be responsible for transport to this school as they have not applied for their designated catchment school.

This could have been avoided by naming the catchment school as one of their preferences.

Case 3

As in Case 2 a parent names 3 primary schools that are not the designated catchment school. All 3 are oversubscribed.

The applicant is ranked lower in terms of priority than in-area applicants. A place cannot be offered at any of the 3 schools and a default offer is made at the next nearest school with vacancies. Parents will be responsible for transport.

This could have been avoided by naming the catchment school as one of their preferences.

In 2016, not all Shrewsbury primary schools could offer places to all their catchment residents. In 2021 not all secondary schools could offer a place to all applicants for whom it was their nearest school.

Case 4

A parent from Shrewsbury names only one Shrewsbury secondary school – Priory School.

This is their nearest Shrewsbury secondary school, Priority 3 for Priory and 5 for other Shrewsbury secondary schools) but due to high numbers of Priory applicants, they do not rank sufficiently high to qualify for a place.

Having named only one school, a default offer is made as in Case 1. Other Shrewsbury secondary schools are closer to the home but these were not named in application and are now full.

This could be avoided by naming three Shrewsbury secondary schools.