



# Choosing a secondary school:

**A step-by-step guide to  
understanding the primary to  
secondary school transfer  
process in Cambridgeshire.**

All parents want to give their child the best possible start to secondary school and choosing which school you would prefer your child to attend is a very important decision.

This booklet will help you understand the system and collect the information to make the best decision for you and your child.

## Useful contact details:



[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



Cambridgeshire County Council,  
Castle Court, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

### Admissions: *(for applying to schools)*



[admissions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



North team: 01223 717916 / South Team: 01223 717391

### Choice Adviser: *(information and advice for parents of children moving from primary school to secondary school)*



[choiceadviser@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:choiceadviser@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



01223 718099

### Parent Partnership Service: *(information and advice for parents and carers of children with special educational needs)*



[pps@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:pps@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



Confidential Advice Line: 01223 714111 (Term time only  
10am-12noon and 2pm-4pm)



01223 718154

### Elective Home Education *(information about educating your child at home)*



01223 718619

## 1. Start thinking about schools early

Secondary school applications are made in the Autumn Term of Year 6, so start thinking about secondary schools when your child is in Year 5.

Think about:

### ***What does your child want?***

- *What aspects of school are most important to your child?*
- *Are there special things your child likes to do? (Does your child want a school with good sports facilities, or after school music clubs?)*
- *Does your child want a certain school because all their friends are going there?*
- *Does size of school matter to your child?*

### ***What do you, as a parent, want?***

- *Is it important that your child attends a local school or can you provide transport for your child?*
- *Does your child have any Additional Educational Needs?*
- *Do you need a school which provides extended services, e.g. breakfast club or after school activities?*

Make a list of all these things (and anything else you can think of) and put them in order of priority. There is space to write notes in the centre-pull out.

**Think for yourself – it is important that you visit the school and make your own mind up. Don't just listen to what other people say!**

## 2. Collect information and visit schools

In Year 6 your child will receive an 'Admissions to Schools in Cambridgeshire' Guide. This contains information about your local schools and how to apply.

Phone the schools you are interested in for information and ask for their prospectus. If you have internet access, you can also do some research on the web about schools and find out about the Ofsted reports. Look at [www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk](http://www.schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk) for information.

Make the most of open days/evenings at secondary schools – you must visit schools to see what they are actually like and ask the questions that are important to you and your child. If you can't attend the open evenings, then phone or go into the school and make an appointment to visit at another time.

**Remember - visiting the school is the only way you will be able to make a decision about it!**

Have a look at the centre pull out in this booklet – there is a checklist for you to take with you when you visit a new school to help you remember some of the questions you may like to ask.

### **Remember**

- Don't forget about the social aspects of choosing a school – your child will learn more if they are happy!
- If you choose a school that is not local, then you are responsible for organising and paying for transport – this includes after school clubs and seeing friends!

If you want to apply to a school outside of Cambridgeshire, you still have to apply to Cambridgeshire Admissions Team and they will forward your application to the relevant local authority.

### **Centre pull-out:**

#### **Useful questions to ask when visiting a new school**

These centre pages contain questions you might want to ask when visiting a school. Pull this centre page out and make notes on it when you visit the schools.

**You can have as many copies of this centre pull-out as you need – just ask the Choice Adviser for more! (contact details are at the back of this booklet)**

**Name of School:**

**Address of School:**

**Phone number of School:**

**Name of Head Teacher:**

**Date of your visit:**

### **First impressions:**

- Do staff and pupils look happy?

### **The school's facilities:**

- What facilities does the school have for:
  - sport?
  - learning a musical instrument?
  - information technology?
- What activities are held outside school hours?
- What selection of meals is available at lunchtime?

### **In the classroom:**

- What size are the classes for each subject?

**In the playground:**

- How is supervision for lunchtime and breaks arranged?
  
- What activities / equipment is available at breaks
  - inside?
  
  - outside?

**The school's policies:**

- How does the school deal with:
  - bullying?
  
  - discrimination?

**Parental involvement:**

- How do parents get involved in school life?
  
- How does the school help parents to help their child?  
(e.g. with homework)

**Practicalities:**

- How will your child get to and from school?

**Planning for the future:**

- What choice of subjects at GCSE / what other national qualifications or vocational courses does the school offer?
  
- What advice / help does the school offer about careers, training or further education?

**Other notes / things that are important to you:**

### 3. Check if you are likely to get a place

You have the right to name 3 schools you would prefer your child to attend. This does not mean you are guaranteed a place at one of your preferred schools - the law just says you have a right to express a preference. The Admissions Team will do their best to meet your preferences.

Check the admission policy and criteria of your preferred schools – this can be different for each school. This information is in the ‘Admission to schools in Cambridgeshire Guide’ and on the website ([www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions))

**If the Local Authority has to decide which children are given places at a particular school, the order of priority may look like this:**

1. Children who are looked after, or have particular medical needs or have a Statement of special educational need
2. Children who live within the catchment area
3. Children with a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission
4. Children who attend a primary school in the catchment area
5. Children who live closest.

**These priority lists are often called over-subscription criteria.**

#### Remember:

- Be realistic – there is no point using all 3 of your preferences on schools you are unlikely to be offered.
- If you do not put your catchment school down as one of your preferences, you may be responsible for organising and paying for your child's transport to and from school.
- Ask for more information if you are not sure. Your Choice Adviser or the Admissions Team will be able to help you – although they cannot make your decisions for you!

### 4. Apply!

You can apply online ([www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions)) or use the paper form in the ‘Admission to schools in Cambridgeshire Guide’.

#### Remember

- Make sure you have read and understand the instructions in the ‘Admission to schools in Cambridgeshire Guide’.
- Check the deadline for applications and make sure your preferences will be received on time!
- Attach all necessary documents (e.g. proof of address)
- If you change your mind and have made your application online, make sure you press the **submit** button again, otherwise your form will not be re-sent!

### 5. Wait!

Everyone in the country is offered a school place on the same date. This is the first working day in March. You can check this date in ‘Admission to schools in Cambridgeshire Guide’ or on the website: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions).

- The Admissions team will process all applications according to each schools admissions criteria.
- Admissions will try and give every child their 1<sup>st</sup> preference where possible.
- All children will be offered a school place, even if their preferences cannot be met.

## What happens if your application form is late?

If you are late sending off your form, you still need to send it. If you have a very good reason why your form is late, tell the Admissions Team – they may be able to help you.

If your form is very late then the Admissions Team will already have started to allocate places and your preferences will not be considered until everyone else has been allocated a school place. Admissions will then consider all late applications and try and meet preferences. If preferences cannot be met, then you will be given a place at the nearest appropriate school that has available places.

## What happens if you do not get what you wanted? (Appeals)

If your child is not offered a place at the school you wanted and you are unhappy with what you have been offered, then you have the right to appeal. Speak to the Admissions Team (contact details are at the front of this leaflet) and ask for an appeal form.

The Local Authority holds reserve lists for all schools until September. Your child will automatically have been put on the list for your preferred schools. Remember that you might be moved down the reserve list if there is another child who has a higher priority according to the over-subscription criteria. You can contact the Admissions Team if you want to know where your child is on the reserve list.

Parents are legally required to ensure their children receive an education. Most parents meet this requirement by sending their children to school. But schooling is not compulsory and some parents choose to home educate their children. If you do wish to home educate your child please contact the County Council's Elective Home Education Office (contact details inside the front cover).

Please ask for copies of this leaflet in Braille, on audio cassette or in a different language.

Prosimy pytać u nas o kopie niniejszej ulotki w języku Braille'a, w wersji audio lub w innym języku.

Prašome mūsu pasiteirauti šio informacinio lapelio kopijos Brailio raštu, įrašo audiokasetėje arba kopijos, parašytos įvairiomis kalbomis.

Por favor, peça-nos cópias deste folheto em Braille, cassete áudio, ou num idioma diferente.

এই প্রচারপত্রটির কপি ব্রেইল, অডিও ক্যাসেটে বা অন্য কোন ভাষায় পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে আমাদের নিকট অনুরোধ জানান।

اٹیوکیسٹ یا کسی مختلف زبان میں چاہیں تو  
انگریز کو اس کتابچے کی نقول بریل،  
براہ مہربانی ہم سے بات کریں۔

请向我们索取本小册的其他版本，包括盲文、  
录音带或另一种语言的译本。

For further information about this booklet, contact the  
Cambridgeshire Choice Adviser (Secondary Transfers):



01223 718099



choiceadviser@cambridgeshire.gov.uk