

Tameside Council Nursery Education Admissions Policy 2026 - 2027

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy was written with reference to Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on 'Early Education and childcare. (April 2024) and applies to all community and voluntary controlled school maintained nurseries in Tameside. Governing bodies from these schools must follow this policy so as to ensure consistency for parents in applying for nursery places. The policy has been written in conjunction with headteachers from the Nursery Admissions Consultation Group.

2 Purpose

- To provide clear guidance for Governing Bodies on Nursery Admissions in all maintained nurseries.
- To ensure a consistent approach to Nursery Admissions throughout the authority

3 Entitlement to Nursery Education Places

3.1 All children are entitled to a free part-time nursery education place. That entitlement is from the term **after** their third birthday. However, provision is made by a range of providers and the local authority aims to provide places in the year before they enter Reception. Some places may be available for three year olds in the term after their 3rd birthday if there are places available.

3.2 Each child is entitled to a maximum of 15 hours free early years education per week from the term following their third birthday. This entitlement can be delivered flexibly by the school (where it is able to do so and in response to parental demand). If the free entitlement is taken flexibly, it must be no more than 10 hours per day. The full 15 hours entitlement should be over no fewer than 2 days.

3.3 Entitlement to 30 Hours Free Childcare - Families of 3 and 4 year olds who meet the eligibility criteria may also be entitled to an additional 570 hours of free childcare, giving a total of 1140 hours e.g. 30 hours per week for 38 weeks. Not all early years providers are participating in the offer of 30 hours so please talk to your provider to find out if they are offering this and for details as to how places will be allocated as this will be a separate process..

4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Local Authority will:

- distribute Tameside's policy for nursery admissions to all appropriate Governing Bodies
- provide schools with a standard nursery admissions application form
- disseminate information about nursery education providers via the Family Information Service
- provide guidance and support for Governing Bodies offering Nursery provision
- publish timescales for Nursery Admissions annually
- measure distances by request (Please note a charge may apply)

4.2 The Governing Body / school should:

- keep a record of all parents expressing an interest in a nursery place for their child
- send out application forms to parents of children, who have expressed an interest according to LA timescales.
- make it clear on all correspondence to parents that a place in nursery does not guarantee a place in Reception
- inform parents in writing of an offer or a refusal according to LA timescales

- provide copies of the following leaflets/factsheets to parents who have been refused a place:
 - Free entitlement funding - Directory
 - Admissions to Nursery Classes 2026/27
 - How to claim your free early education place

4.3 Parents / Carers are expected to:

- register their interest in a particular school by contacting that school
- complete and return an application form according to given timescales
- confirm acceptance of a place

4.4 Additional Notes for Voluntary Aided Schools

This policy has been written in conjunction with headteachers from the Nursery Admissions Consultation Group. The Group included headteachers from voluntary aided primary schools. The recommendation from the Nursery Admissions Consultation Group was that voluntary aided schools should adopt Tameside Council Nursery Education Admissions Policy 2026 – 2027 in its entirety. This will ensure consistency for parents and carers when choosing a maintained nursery setting for their child as all schools will have the same admission criteria. It also maintains a separation between nursery and Reception provision.

4.5 Therefore, the Governing Bodies of voluntary aided schools must:

Either

formally adopt the Tameside Council Nursery Education Admissions Policy 2026 – 2027

or

formulate their own admissions policy which may include faith criteria

and

ensure that their nursery admissions policy complies with all relevant legislation including Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Early Education and Childcare, April 2024.

5 Allocation of Nursery Places

5.1 Places will be allocated to Tameside residents who will be 4 years old between 1 September 2026 and 31 August 2027 in the first instance.

5.2 Places should be offered to children who will become 4 years old between 1st September 2026 and 31st August 2027 (and therefore born between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023).

5.3 Where a school receives less applications from Tameside residents who will be 4 years old between 1 September 2026 and 31 August 2027 than there are places available, all must be offered places. Where a school receives more applications from Tameside residents who will be 4 years old between 1 September 2026 and 31 August 2027 than there are places available the following over subscription criteria must be applied in order:

1. Children in Public Care (Looked After Children)

2. Children with Exceptional Medical Needs or Home Circumstances and / or Special Educational Needs

Written evidence must be provided from a doctor or other agency that he/she has exceptional needs which means that admission to a particular school nursery is essential. A panel of governors will make a decision as to whether to admit a child under this criterion using the evidence provided. All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

It is anticipated that the total number of children allocated places according to these criteria would form only a small proportion of the total number of children attending the Nursery.

3. Siblings: this will apply where the applicant is 4 years old by 31st August 2027 and has brothers or sisters attending the school at the time of application, who will still be attending at the time of admission. Within the sibling tiebreaker, preference will be given to pupils living nearest to the school.*

The sibling criterion includes; natural sisters/brothers; half-sisters/brothers; step sisters/brothers; adopted sisters/brothers; sisters/brothers of fostered children, and in each case living at the same address. This allows for the admittance of children whose siblings will still be attending the preferred school.

4. Age

Priority will be given to children in the following order:

- 1 Children who will be 4 years old by 31st December 2026
- 2 Children who will be 4 years old by 31st March 2027
- 3 Children who will be 4 years old by 31st August 2027

5.4 Where over subscription occurs in applying criteria 4.1, 4.2 or 4.3, a tiebreaker will be applied to all applications remaining within the criteria. Priority will be given to applicants who live closest to the school.

5.5 Distance will be measured as a straight line from the child's home address to the main gate to the school property using the LA's school admissions data mapping software, which uses a Geographical Information System based on Ordnance Survey.

5.6 The address from which distance will be measured will be the permanent residential address, at the time of application, of the parent with whom the child lives. Where a child lives with parents with shared responsibility, each for part of a week, the home address is the address from which the child travels to school for the majority of school days per week. If the number of days is exactly equal the home address will be that of the parent who receives the Child Benefit.

5.7 In the event of distances being the same for 2 or more applications where this distance would be the last place/s to be allocated, the place will be allocated to the pupil that is nearer using walking distance as measured using the local authority's school admissions data mapping software.

6 Allocating places to Tameside resident children applying after the main allocation procedure has been completed

6.1 Where a school still has nursery places available after the main allocation process has been completed, the Governing Body should offer places to subsequent applicants on a 'first come first served basis', as long as that child is of the correct age i.e. will become 4 years old between 1st September 2026 and 31st August 2027 (and therefore born between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023) and lives in Tameside. Should a Tameside resident parent request a place after the allocation process and the school has places available, a place should normally be offered.

7 Waiting Lists

7.1 Where a school has allocated all its nursery places, it may operate a waiting list. If a place becomes available, it should be allocated to a child on the waiting list according to the over subscription criteria.

8 If a school still has nursery places available after the summer half term 2026, the following will apply

8.1 Offering places to children who do not live in Tameside. Where a school still has nursery places available after the summer half term preceding the September that applicants wish to be admitted, these can be allocated to children who do not live in Tameside and who will become 4 years old between 1st September 2026 and 31st August 2027 (and therefore born between 1st September 2022 and 31st August 2023), according to the over subscription criteria.

9 If a school still has nursery places available after the start of term in September 2026, the following may apply

9.1 Offering places to children who will become 3 years old between 1st September 2026 and 31st December 2026 who live in Tameside. The governing body may decide that it will offer empty places to Tameside resident pupils who will become 3 years old between 1st September 2026 and 31st December 2026 if there are still places available after the start of term in September 2026. Pupils will not be able to start in the nursery until the beginning of the term **after** they become 3 i.e. January 2027 at the earliest. Pupils accepted into the nursery in this category will not be required to apply for a place in September 2027 as they will automatically continue in the nursery. Places must be offered using similar criteria as for the main allocation:

1 Children in Public Care (Looked After Children)

2 Children with Exceptional Medical Needs or Home Circumstances and / or Special Educational Needs

3 Age

Children who will be 3 years old by 31st December 2026 to start in January 2027

Tiebreaker - Siblings and Distance

Where over subscription occurs in applying criteria 1, 2 or 3, a tiebreaker will be applied to all applications remaining within the criteria. Priority will be given to applicants who have a sibling in the school at the time of admission followed by applicants who live closest to the school.

10 If a school still has nursery places available after the start of term in January 2026, the following may apply

10.1 Offering places to children who will become 3 years old between 1st January 2027 and 31st March 2027 who live in Tameside. The governing body may decide that it will offer empty places to Tameside resident pupils who will become 3 years old between 1st January 2027 and 31st March 2027 if there are still places available after the start of term in January 2026. Pupils will not be able to start in the nursery until the beginning of the term **after** they become 3 i.e. after 1st April 2027 at the earliest. Pupils accepted into the nursery in this category will not be required to apply for a place in September 2027 as they will automatically continue in the nursery. Places must be offered using similar criteria as for the main allocation:

1 Children in Public Care (Looked After Children)

2 Children with Exceptional Medical Needs or Home Circumstances and / or Special Educational Needs

3 Age

Children who will be 3 years old by 31st March 2027 to start after 1st April 2027

Tiebreaker - Siblings and Distance

Where over subscription occurs in applying criteria 1, 2 or 3, a tiebreaker will be applied to all applications remaining within the criteria. Priority will be given to applicants who have a sibling in the school at the time of admission followed by applicants who live closest to the school.