



School Standards and Framework Act 1998

1998 CHAPTER 31

PART III

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

CHAPTER I

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Parental preferences

86 Parental preferences.

- (1) A [^{F1}local authority] shall make arrangements for enabling the parent of a child in the area of the authority—
- (a) to express a preference as to the school at which he wishes education to be provided for his child in the exercise of the authority's functions, and
 - (b) to give reasons for his preference.

[^{F2}(1ZA) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to—

- (a) sixth form education, or
- (b) any other education to be provided for a child who—
 - (i) has ceased to be of compulsory school age, or
 - (ii) will have ceased to be of compulsory school age before the education is provided for him.]

[^{F3}(1A) A [^{F1}local authority] in England shall provide advice and assistance to parents of children in the area of the authority in connection with the preferences expressed or to be expressed by them in accordance with the arrangements made under subsection (1).]

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(2) Subject to ^{F4}subsection (3)] and section 87 (children excluded from two or more schools), ^{F5}the admission authority for a maintained school] shall comply with any preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under subsection (1).

^{F6}(2A) Arrangements made under subsection (1) may allow the parent of a child to express preferences for more than one school; but nothing in this section requires the admission authority for a maintained school for which a child’s parent has expressed a preference to offer the child admission to the school if, in accordance with a scheme adopted or made by virtue of section 89B, the child is offered admission to a different school for which the parent has also expressed a preference.]

(3) The duty imposed by subsection (2) does not apply—
(a) if compliance with the preference would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources; ^{F7}or]
(b) ^{F8}
(c) if the arrangements for admission to the preferred school—
(i) are wholly based on selection by reference to ability or aptitude, and
(ii) are so based with a view to admitting only pupils with high ability or with aptitude,
and compliance with the preference would be incompatible with selection under those arrangements.

^{F9}(3A)

^{F10}(3B)

(4) For the purposes of subsection (3)(a) prejudice of the kind referred to in that provision may arise by reason of measures required to be taken in order to ensure compliance with the duty imposed by section 1(6) (duty of ^{F11}local authority] and governing body to comply with limit on infant class sizes).

^{F11}(5) No prejudice shall be taken to arise for the purposes of subsection (3)(a) from the admission to a maintained school in a school year of a number of pupils in a relevant age group which does not exceed the number determined under section ^{F12}88C or] 89 as the number of pupils in that age group that it is intended to admit to the school in that year; but this subsection does not apply if the conditions set out in subsection (5A) are met in relation to the school and the school year.

(5A) Those conditions are—
(a) that the school is one at which boarding accommodation is provided for pupils; and
(b) that the determination under section ^{F13}88C or] 89 by the admission authority of the admission arrangements which are to apply for that year includes the determinations mentioned in ^{F14}section 88D(2)(a) and (b) or 89A(2)(a) and (b)].

(5B) Where the conditions set out in subsection (5A) are met in relation to a maintained school and a school year, no prejudice shall be taken to arise for the purposes of subsection (3)(a) from either of the following—
(a) the admission to the school in that year as boarders of a number of pupils in a relevant age group which does not exceed the number determined under section ^{F15}88C or] 89 as the number of pupils in that age group that it is intended to admit to the school in that year as boarders;

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- (b) the admission to the school in that year otherwise than as boarders of a number of pupils in a relevant age group which does not exceed the number determined under section [F1688C or] 89 as the number of pupils in that age group that it is intended to admit to the school in that year otherwise than as boarders.]

F17(6)

- (7) Where the arrangements for the admission of pupils to a maintained school provide for applications for admission to be made to (or to a person acting on behalf of) the governing body of the school, a parent who makes such an application shall be regarded for the purposes of this section as having expressed a preference for that school in accordance with arrangements made under subsection (1).
- (8) The duty imposed by subsection (2) in relation to a preference expressed in accordance with arrangements made under subsection (1) shall apply also in relation to—
- any application for the admission to a maintained school of a child who is not in the area of the authority maintaining the school, and
 - any application made by a parent as mentioned in section 438(4) or 440(2) of the M1 Education Act 1996 (application for a particular school to be named in a school attendance order);
- and references in [F18subsection (3)] to a preference and a preferred school shall be construed accordingly.
- (9) Where admission arrangements for a school [F19, F20 ..., provide for all pupils selected under the arrangements] to be selected by reference to ability or aptitude, those arrangements shall be taken for the purposes of this section to be wholly based on selection by reference to ability or aptitude, whether or not they also provide for the use of additional criteria in circumstances where the number of children in a relevant age group who are assessed to be of the requisite ability or aptitude is greater than the number of pupils which it is intended to admit to the school in that age group.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in Act substituted (5.5.2010) by The Local Education Authorities and Children's Services Authorities (Integration of Functions) Order 2010 (S.I. 2010/1158), art. 1, **Sch. 2 para. 10(2)** (with Sch. 2 para. 10(4))
- F2** S. 86(1ZA) inserted (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(2)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F3** S. 86(1A) inserted (27.2.2007) by Education and Inspections Act 2006 (c. 40), **ss. 42**, 188(3); S.I. 2006/3400, art. 7(b)
- F4** Words in s. 86(2) substituted (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(3)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F5** Words in s. 86(2) substituted (8.1.2007 for E., 30.6.2008 for W.) by Education and Inspections Act 2006 (c. 40), **ss. 43(2)**, 188(3); S.I. 2006/3400, art. 2(a); S.I. 2008/1429, art. 3(1), Sch. Pt. 1
- F6** S. 86(2A) inserted (1.10.2002 for E., 31.5.2005 for W.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), s. 216(4), **Sch. 4 para. 3(3)** (with ss. 210(8), 214(4)); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with art. 4, Sch. paras. 3, 4) (which transitional provisions in Sch. para. 4 are substituted (6.3.2003) by S.I. 2003/606, art. 2 and (4.12.2003) by S.I. 2003/2992, art. 3); S.I. 2005/1395, art. 4, Sch. (with art. 5(1))
- F7** Word in s. 86(3)(a) inserted (1.10.2002 for E., 31.5.2005 for W.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), s. 216(4), **Sch. 4 para. 3(4)(a)** (with ss. 210(8), 214(4)); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with art. 4, Sch. paras. 3,

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- 4) (which transitional provisions in Sch. para. 4 are substituted (6.3.2003) by S.I. 2003/606, art. 2 and (4.12.2003) by S.I. 2003/2992, art. 3); S.I. 2005/1395, art. 4, Sch. (with art. 5(1))
- F8** S. 86(3)(b) repealed (1.10.2002 for E. otherwise prosp.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), ss. 51, 215(2), 216, Sch. 4 para. 3(4)(b), **Sch. 22 Pt. 3** (with ss. 210(8), 214(4)); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with Sch.)
- F9** S. 86(3A) repealed (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), Sch. 1 para. 54(4), **Sch. 2**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e)(f) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(e) (with art. 4)
- F10** S. 86(3B) repealed (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), Sch. 1 para. 54(4), **Sch. 2**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e)(f) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(e) (with art. 4)
- F11** S. 86(5)-(5B) substituted for s. 86(5) (1.10.2002 for E., 1.2.2006 for W.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), ss. 47(1), 216(4) (with ss. 210(8), 214(4) and S.I. 2006/173, reg. 4); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with art. 4, Sch. paras. 3, 4) (which transitional provisions in Sch. para. 4 are substituted (6.3.2003) by S.I. 2003/606, art. 2 and (4.12.2003) by S.I. 2003/2992, art. 3); S.I. 2006/172, art. 4, Sch.
- F12** Words in s. 86(5) inserted (2.12.2008 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(5)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 3(b) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F13** Words in s. 86(5A) inserted (2.12.2008 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(6)(a)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 3(b) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F14** Words in s. 86(5A) substituted (2.12.2008 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(6)(b)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 3(b) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F15** Words in s. 86(5B)(a) inserted (2.12.2008 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(7)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 3(b) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F16** Words in s. 86(5B)(b) inserted (2.12.2008 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(7)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 3(b) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F17** S. 86(6) repealed (1.10.2002 for E., 1.2.2006 for W.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), s. 216(4), Sch. 4 para. 3(6), **Sch. 22 Pt. 3** (with ss. 210(8), 214(4)); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with art. 4, Sch. paras. 3, 4) (which transitional provisions in Sch. para. 4 are substituted (6.3.2003) by S.I. 2003/606, art. 2 and (4.12.2003) by S.I. 2003/2992, art. 3); S.I. 2006/172, art. 4, Sch.
- F18** Words in s. 86(8) substituted (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), **Sch. 1 para. 54(8)**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(d) (with art. 4)
- F19** Words in s. 86(9) substituted (1.10.2002 for E., 31.5.2005 for W.) by Education Act 2002 (c. 32), s. 216(4), **Sch. 4 para. 3(8)** (with ss. 210(8), 214(4)); S.I. 2002/2439, art. 3 (with art. 4, Sch. paras. 3, 4) (which transitional provisions in Sch. para. 4 are substituted (6.3.2003) by S.I. 2003/606, art. 2 and (4.12.2003) by S.I. 2003/2992, art. 3); S.I. 2005/1395, art. 4, Sch. (with art. 5(1))
- F20** Words in s. 86(9) repealed (26.1.2009 for E., 31.3.2009 for W.) by Education and Skills Act 2008 (c. 25), s. 173(3)(4), Sch. 1 para. 54(9), **Sch. 2**; S.I. 2008/3077, art. 5(e)(f) (with art. 6); S.I. 2009/784, art. 3(e) (with art. 4)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 86 modified (temp. from 22.4.1999) by S.I. 1999/1064, **reg. 3**
 Ss. 86-87 restricted (29.3.1999) by S.I. 1999/1016, art. 6, Sch. 4 paras. 1, **2(1)**
 S. 86 applied (with modifications) (18.10.1999) by S.I. 1999/2666, **reg. 8**, Sch. paras. 1(c), **2-8**.
 S. 86 applied (with modifications) (1.9.1999) by S.I. 1999/2800, **reg. 7**, Sch. paras. 1, **2-8**.
- C2** S. 86 applied (with modifications) (8.5.2003) by The New School (Admissions) (England) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/1041), regs. 1(1), 9, **Sch. para. 1(b)**

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- C3** S. 86 amendment to earlier commencing S.I. 2002/2439, Sch. para. 4 (4.12.2003) by The Education Act 2002 (Commencement No. 2 and Savings and Transitional Provisions) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2003 (S.I. 2003/2992), arts. 1, **3**
- C4** S. 86 excluded (1.9.2005) by The Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2005 (S.I. 2005/2039), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 2 para. 1**
- C5** S. 86 applied (with modifications) (1.2.2006) by The New School (Admissions) (Wales) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/175), regs. 1(1), 9, **Sch.** (with reg. 2(2))
- C6** S. 86 excluded (23.4.2007) by The Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (Wales) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007/1069), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 2 para. 1**
- C7** S. 86 excluded (E.) (1.2.2008) by The Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007/2979), reg. 1(1), **Sch. 2 para. 1**
- C8** S. 86(1) applied (with modifications) (1.9.1999) by S.I. 1999/1812, reg. 8, **Sch. 2 para. 5(b)**
- C9** S. 86(1)(2) excluded (prosp.) by Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (c. 41), **ss. 36(5)(a) (10)**, 162(2) (with s. 159)
- C10** S. 86(5)-(5B) modified (E.) (25.5.2007) by The School Admissions (Alteration and Variation of, and Objections to, Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007/496), regs. 1(3), **4(5)**

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1996 c. 56.

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- s. 86(1)(2) excluded by [2002 c. 41 s. 36\(5\)\(a\)\(10\)](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 14(3)(aa) inserted by [2011 nawm 7 s. 16\(2\)](#) (Amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#) - s.16(02) of 2011 nawm007 omitted by 2013 nawm001 s. 100(4), Sch. 5 para. 13(2); S.I. 2014/178, art. 2(f) (with art. 3) prior to commencement)
- s. 18B inserted by [2011 nawm 7 s. 16\(3\)](#) (Amendment not applied to [legislation.gov.uk](#) - s.16(02) of 2011 nawm007 omitted by 2013 nawm001 s. 100(4), Sch. 5 para. 13(2); S.I. 2014/178, art. 2(f) (with art. 3) prior to commencement)
- Sch. 22 para. 5(1B) inserted by [2023 c. 55 s. 235\(4\)](#)