



SURREY

Getting ready for school

Information for families about starting primary or infant school



Surrey Family
Information
Service

No matter how young your child is, it's never too early to think about what will happen when they start primary or infant school. This booklet can help answer your questions, explain the application process and give you information and tips on how you can help your child prepare for school.

If you have a question or need help finding a suitable school, get in touch with us.

- Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/fis
- Email surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk
- Call 0300 200 1004 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)
- @SurreyFIS on Twitter
- SurreyFIS on Facebook



**Surrey Family
Information
Service**

We're a free, impartial
information service for
families with children
aged 0 to 25.

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Applying for school

When to apply

In Surrey, you can apply for a primary or infant school place between 31 October (in the year before your child is due to start school) and 15 January (in the year your child is due to start school).

Date of birth	Apply between
1 September 2012 – 31 August 2013	31 October 2016 – 15 January 2017
1 September 2013 – 31 August 2014	31 October 2017 – 15 January 2018
1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015	31 October 2018 – 15 January 2019
1 September 2015 – 31 August 2016	31 October 2019 – 15 January 2020

Children can start school in the September after their fourth birthday and you can decide whether they start as part time or full time.

If you want to delay your child starting school, you will still need to apply for a school place at the normal time. The statutory school age for when your child legally has to start school is the beginning of the academic term immediately following their fifth birthday.

Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions for more information.

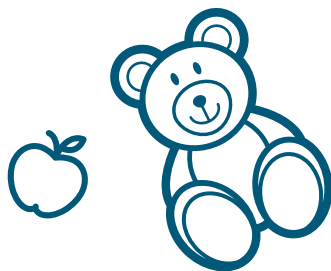
Choosing a school

You can search for schools in your local area at www.gov.uk/find-school-in-england and you can see reports for schools you're interested in at reports.ofsted.gov.uk

There are several types of schools in Surrey which are run in different ways. You'll find details about the number of available places and the criteria used for allocating places in each school at www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions

Schools hold open days so you can have a tour around the school and meet some of the staff, including the head teacher. Open days are a great opportunity to get a feel for the school and ask any questions you may have, for example:

- How long is the waiting list?
- What time does school start and finish?
- What is their settling in process?
- How will the school communicate with you?
- Is there a Parent and Teacher Association (PTA)?
- What support do they offer children with a special educational need or disability?
- How do they support the behaviour and the social and emotional development of the children?
- How do they use IT to support learning?
- What's their packed lunch policy?
- Is there a breakfast club or after school club?
- Do they offer extra curricular activities?



How to apply

If you live in Surrey you must use the Surrey application process even if your preferred school is outside of Surrey.

Go to **www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions** and follow the step by step guide to apply online. If you'd like a paper copy of the application form, email **schoolbooklets@surreycc.gov.uk** or call **0300 200 1015**.

If you'd like help filling in the application form, your local children's centre can help. Find your nearest one at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/childrenscentres**

Increase your chances

You can name up to four schools on your application form. It's important to name as many as possible to increase your chances of being offered a place at a preferred school.



After you've applied

You'll get sent a letter offering you a school place and you must accept or decline it by the deadline given.

We strongly recommend you accept the place you're offered, even if it's not for the school you wanted, as it will make sure your child has a school place in September. You can still go on waiting lists for other schools or appeal.

If you decline the offer and you have no alternative place you will be responsible for finding your child another school. The place you decline may be offered to another child so may not be available later if you change your mind.

Go to **www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions** to find out more.

Once you've accepted an offer of a place, you'll start to get information from the school. They'll usually send you the term dates and all of the information you need to know well in advance.

Educating your child at home

Educating your child at home, rather than at school, is called elective home education. If you're interested in elective home education, you can find out more including the legislation, Surrey County Council's policies and the support available at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning**

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

In Surrey, around 20% of children starting school have a special educational need or disability. Most of these children will go to a mainstream school.

Mainstream schools support children with special educational needs and disabilities. The support they offer will vary according to your child's needs but may include one to one or small group support from a teaching assistant. The school may provide more support at certain times of the day if your child needs it, such as at lunchtimes. You may want to ask about the support available when you're looking at schools.

To apply for mainstream schools, follow the admissions process explained on page 6.

For some children their level of needs mean that it would be better for them to go to a specialist school and this might be something you're considering. Usually a specialist panel will make this decision, based on a recommendation from a professional who is already involved with you, such as an educational psychologist or special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). These children will usually be in the process of applying for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

To apply for specialist schools, there's a panel process and during which you can specify which school you would like your child to go to. You should be consulted throughout this process. In case your child is not given a place at a special school you should **also** apply for a mainstream school by following the admissions process explained on page 6.

Find out more at www.surreysendlo.co.uk

Does your child have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

Children with a high level of need may be assessed for an EHCP. This plan is a legal document that sets out the support your child will get. Around 2% of children with SEND in Surrey have an EHCP when they start school.

If your child has an EHCP, you must apply for a school place via the SEND admissions process. Find out more at www.surreysendlo.co.uk



Things to think about in the weeks before school

It can have a big impact on your family when your child starts school. You and your child will have to manage new routines and cope with all the emotions that come with a big change.

Family Lives has online guides with advice about what to expect and how to manage this change, for example making friends and school routines. You'll find them at www.familylives.org.uk

Preparing your child for school

There are many ways you can help prepare your child for school, most importantly by building their confidence and independence skills. The teacher will give your child lots of support at school but it's helpful if they can do some things for themselves.

You can help your child by:

- teaching them to use the toilet on their own, you can get advice and tips on how to do this at www.eric.org.uk
- choosing clothes and shoes for their school uniform that are easy for them to get on and off, such as shoes with Velcro, trousers or skirts with stretchy waistbands and t-shirts rather than shirts with buttons
- choosing a lunchbox they can open on their own and giving them time to practice opening all the pots and packets you'll put inside.

Although the school won't expect your child to be able to read, write or count, there are things you can do to support these areas of development at home and get them ready for learning more at school. For ideas, go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/earlylearning

Uniform

You'll find out about uniforms when you visit the school and it'll be in the school prospectus. Remember to label everything with your child's name.

Lots of schools have second hand uniforms for sale. You can find out about help with paying for school uniforms at www.surreycc.gov.uk/familyfinance

School lunches

You may want to think about whether you'd like your child to take a packed lunch or have a school meal when they start school.

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will get a free hot, nutritious meal at lunchtime. Take a look at the school meals provided by Surrey Commercial Services, including a sample menu at www.myschoollunch.co.uk/surrey

If your child will be taking a packed lunch, the school may provide guidance for healthy lunches. You can also find sample menus and ideas on how to keep lunchboxes fun, tasty and healthy at www.change4life.co.uk



Getting to school

Some children aged four to 16 years old can get free home to school travel support if they live in Surrey. You can find out if you're eligible at www.surreycc.gov.uk/schooltransport

You could ask your school if they have a walking bus. This is a group of parents, organised through the school, who volunteer to walk children to school. There are usually different pick up points and adults and children wear bright reflective jackets for safety.

Planning your journey to school?

You can go to www.travelsmartsurrey.info and use the journey planner to get an idea of how long the journey might take walking, cycling or using public transport.

Helping the school get to know your child

Most schools will ask you to fill out a form about your child before they start school, including what they like and don't like. You may also want to talk to the school about anything else they might need to know to help them support your child, such as:

- special educational needs and disabilities
- English as a second language
- twins and multiple births – for example whether your children will be in the same class
- life at home.

Childcare

The school will send you your child's start date and information about the settling in process. Most schools like to ease children in slowly so your child might not go for full days at first. It's worth noting in case you need to arrange childcare for these times.

You may also need to arrange childcare before or after school or during the school holidays. There are lots of different, good quality childcare options available.

Type of childcare	Description	Age of children
Childminders	Look after other people's children in their own home. Many offer care before or after school and in the school holidays.	Any age.
Nannies	Provide childcare in your home. They can live-in or come to your home on a daily basis. They often work flexible hours so can be a good option if you work shifts or unsociable hours.	Any age.



Au pairs	Au pairs are young people who have come to the UK on an au pair scheme. They usually come to learn English. They're entitled to free board and lodging at your home and their duties can include childcare and light housework.	Any age (but they're not permitted to have continuous sole charge of children under two years old).
Breakfast clubs	Most breakfast clubs open between 7.30am and 8am and run until school starts. They provide play opportunities and many can provide a healthy, low cost breakfast.	Normally school age children, up to 12 years old.
After school clubs and activities	Run from the end of the school day to around 5.30pm or 6pm. They'll usually be at the school or in a local community hall or building. They can provide care and play activities, sports or supported study.	Normally school age children, up to 12 years old.
Holiday playschemes	Run in the school holidays and can offer a wide range of activities such as sports, outdoor and indoor games, arts and drama.	Normally school age children, up to 12 years old.

To find out more about childcare and the different types available, go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/choosingchildcare

Looking for childcare?

You can search for childcare in Surrey using our Childcare Finder at www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarefinder

Help paying for childcare

Working parents may be able to get help towards childcare costs through childcare voucher schemes or the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit. You can find out more about these at www.surreycc.gov.uk/familyfinance



At school

Attendance at school

By law, you must make sure that your child gets a suitable, full time education. It's important your child goes to school regularly and on time, otherwise Surrey County Council can take legal action. This can include issuing a penalty notice, prosecution or applying for an education supervision order.

If your child is off school, you must let the school know the reason that day or as soon as possible. Your child may only be off from school if they:

- are ill
- are observing a religious holiday
- have permission from the head teacher.

Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools for more information or speak to your child's school.

Education welfare officers

All schools in Surrey have an allocated education welfare officer. Their job is to support schools and parents to make sure that every child goes to school regularly.

Education welfare officers can get referrals or act on enquiries from schools, parents, other agencies or members of the public when a child is not going to school.

Ask the school for their contact details or call Surrey County Council on **0300 200 1004**.

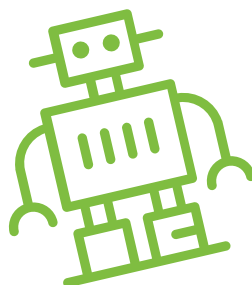
School Nursing Service

Every school has access to the School Nursing Service. The School Nursing Service will offer your child a school entry health review. It's an opportunity for you to talk through any concerns you may have and get more information. Your concerns could be anything from bedwetting, worries about your child's behaviour or managing a health condition at school.

You'll have other opportunities to meet the School Nursing Service, either through the routine childhood immunisation programme or at the drop in sessions they offer to schools. You can find out more about the childhood immunisation programme at www.nhs.uk/vaccinations and find advice about children's health at www.nhs.uk

What your child will learn at school

Children in Reception class follow the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children learn through play to give them the skills they need to progress through school and future life. You can find out more about the Early Years Foundation Stage and how to support your child's learning and development at home at www.surreycc.gov.uk/earlylearning



Time for you

Employment

If you get income support and your youngest child will be starting school, you may need to think about the money you'll get as your payments may change. You can find out more about income support at **www.gov.uk/income-support**

Lots of employers offer flexible working or part time hours. You can find out more about flexible working at **www.gov.uk**

If you're looking for a job, try the Universal Jobmatch tool at **www.gov.uk/jobsearch** for jobs in your local area. Or find your nearest Jobcentre Plus at **www.gov.uk** or by calling **0345 604 3719**.

If you're interested in a career in childcare, you can find out about the different roles available at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/workwithchildren** or look for local jobs at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/childcarejobs**

Further education

If you want to go back to education or just learn something new, you can:

- find out what's available at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/adultlearning**
- search for local colleges at **www.surreycc.gov.uk/directory**
- get free, impartial advice from Learn Direct at **www.learndirect.com** or by calling **0800 101 901**.

Volunteering

You could volunteer at your child's school. Most schools welcome the help and there are lots of things you could do, such as listening to children read, preparing art and craft materials, going on school trips or talking about your job, culture or festivals.

If you want to volunteer regularly, you may need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check. The check is free for volunteers and is in place to protect children and vulnerable adults. Go to www.gov.uk/db to find out more.

Volunteering can be a great way to use your skills to help others, learn something new and meet new people. And there are many local and national organisations that would welcome a few hours of your time. Search for volunteering in the Family Information Directory at www.surreycc.gov.uk/directory to see what's available locally.





Surrey Family Information Service

 surrey.fis@surreycc.gov.uk

 0300 200 1004

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**Families First
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This booklet was accurate when
it was printed in November 2016.

11.16.ST.CS3454.