

THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

PRIMARY SCHOOLS NATIONAL OFFER DAY 2019

Discovering that your child has been offered a place at a school which you don't want is devastating.

It is hard enough parting with your four-year-old at the school gates for the first time – but the thought of doing so at a school you have not chosen is extremely distressing. So if you have been offered a reception place you are not happy with, what can you do?

The first thing to do is take a deep breath and think carefully about your options. Don't do anything in a panic. Instead follow our step-by-step guide in this booklet.



If you are a parent who's disappointed with their primary school offer but uncertain what to do next, *The Good Schools Guide* recommends the following:

Although it may go against your instincts, **you must not turn down the place you have been offered.** If you do, you will be taken out of the system and the local authority will have no obligation to you. You can reject the school at a later stage if you get another place you are happier with. Check the deadline and send in your acceptance in time.

Do not convey your distress to your child. In the worst case your child may end up going to this school, and it can only get her off to a bad start if she hears her parents are fearful about her going there. Try to talk positively about the school in front of your child.

Consider whether you have grounds to appeal. This is highly unlikely because, unlike at secondary school level, when it comes to reception places, appeals can only be won on technical, legal grounds.

Visiting the school may well assuage your fears. Schools can have an outdated reputation based on an out of date Ofsted report or local gossip. In particular, if there has been a recent change of head the school may have changed significantly. You might well find the school is happy and vibrant, and although not your first choice, will do a perfectly good job.

If you are really not happy with the school you have been offered, look at others in the area. Ring the schools themselves or your local authority to **find out where there are any remaining places**, and see whether you might like to apply to those schools instead.

You can ask to **go on the waiting lists for all other schools** that you would prefer. You are then in the running if a place becomes available further down the line



Primary school appeals

To win an infant class appeal in the normal admissions round you need to show that an error was made in implementing the school's admission arrangements and that a place ought to have been offered; or that the admission authority's decision to refuse a place was not one which a reasonable admissions authority would have made in the same circumstances.

This latter one regularly trips parents up because it does not mean a reasonable decision in terms of taking into account an individual family's circumstances; rather it means an unreasonable decision in the sense of an admissions authority making a bizarre decision such as to admit children who lived 20 miles away ahead of those nearby.

In reality only a tiny percentage of people are successful in infant school appeals where they can show maladministration. Circumstances which may well seem unreasonable to you - such as that the school you have been offered doesn't fit with your commuting journey/won't enable a grandparent to pick up/will mean you have children at different schools - would not be admissible grounds.

If you are sure that the admissions authority has made a technical error and you should have been offered a place, you will find details on how to appeal on their website.

Parents can play their part

It's worth remembering that especially in the early years of school, a parent's input will go a long way to cover for any deficiencies in the school. Reading with your child every night, keeping them supplied with library books, taking them to stimulating places, chatting over the dinner table, encouraging their curiosity will all do a great deal to promote your child's learning.



Get involved with the school in whatever way you can, even if it wasn't your chosen school. Go in to help with reading or messy activities, help the PTA with fundraising, volunteer to accompany school trips, consider becoming a governor – work from the inside to improve it, and as you get to know more about it, you might find it actually has a lot of strengths you weren't aware of.

It's not over in September

Don't see a door clanging shut on your child from the beginning of September until they move to secondary seven years later. If you continue to be unhappy with the school you have been allocated, you can keep trying to move your child elsewhere, and when they reach junior school (and infant class sizes are no longer a key concern) you will have more scope to mount an appeal.

Make a move

If the school you have been offered is truly unpalatable, and your work and other commitments make it possible to move house, think about whether you would like to investigate schools in a new area. In particular, there can be pressures on places in inner city schools, and if you are able to move out to the country you might have more choice. The Good Schools Guide has a consultancy service which can help to investigate your options – see www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/advice-service/our-services

Take your child out of the state system

If everything we've suggested draws a blank, moving to a different area is simply not an option and you're still waking up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat at the thought of your child going to THAT school, paying to go private is an option for a lucky few. Fees at pre-preps are often at the lower end of





the scale and so, if you had thought that you might one day be willing to pay school fees, maybe now is a good time to look into it. It's possible that *The Good Schools Guide* carries reviews of junior schools in your area so take a look at our **school search**. Also, if you would like the help and support of an experienced guiding hand, arrange a time to speak with one of our education consultants. Phone 020 3286 6824 or email consultants@goodschoolsguide.co.uk - for more information please visit: <https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/consultants>


It won't be as bad as you think

While it is upsetting not to get the school you have carefully chosen, there are very few truly terrible infant schools in the country. The chances are that with your support, your child will thrive wherever he or she starts school. And in our experience, if you are determined enough, you will eventually be able to find a place elsewhere if you still want it. But a surprising number of families end up happy with the school they were given.


A little about The Good Schools Guide...

The Good Schools Guide is the leading, impartial source of information on schools in the UK, helping parents with every aspect of choosing the best education for their children. Its website and range of publications provide a comprehensive collection of advice and education data on state, independent, boarding, selective and non-selective schools, tutors, special needs, university choice and much more. *The Good Schools Guide Education Consultants* offers tailor-made help and support on all educational issues and regularly advises parents on how to find the right schools for their children. Visit our website for more information - <https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk>

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