

School Admissions and related funding

As an international student bringing your family with you to the UK, one of your main concerns will be organising schooling for your children.

The school system in Bournemouth is structured as follows:

Primary School	Age 5-11	Reception Year and Years 1 – 6
Secondary School	Age 11-16	Years 7 – 11
Sixth Form or College	Age 17-18	Years 12 – 13

The school year starts at the beginning of September and finishes towards the end of July. There is a two week holiday for Christmas (December) and Easter (March/April), plus a one week “half-term” holiday in the middle of each term. School term dates are usually different to university term dates, so take this into consideration when planning childcare.

Normally, children are expected to start attending school in the September after their fourth birthday. School is compulsory from the age of 5 until 16. From the age of 16 – 18, children are expected to be in some kind of education or apprenticeship.

As a new international student, your circumstances will probably mean that you miss the usual deadlines for school admissions and therefore need to make an “in-year application”. This means that many of the most popular schools will already be full and operating waiting lists.

The towns of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have one combined local council which deals with school applications for the whole area. You can find a [list of local schools on BCP Council website](#).

Things to consider when choosing a school:

- Is there much suitable rental accommodation available nearby? (Remember, town centre accommodation is often more expensive)
- How will you travel to and from home, school and university? Are there convenient bus routes?
- What kind of school is it? Do you want your child to attend a church school or not? What kind of school is your child used to at home?
- What do the performance data and school inspectors tell you about the school? You can [compare school statistics and OFSTED reports online](#).

Applying for a school for your child:

1. Call BCP Council School Admissions team (+44 (0)1202 123333) to find out which schools currently have places available in the correct year group for your child
2. Apply as soon as possible, using [the online application form](#). (You can do this even before you have an address in Bournemouth.)
 - a. You can list up to 4 school preferences on your application form
 - b. If you have a preferred school that does not currently have spaces, you can still include this as one of your 4 choices so that you will go onto the waiting list and you could move your child there if/when a place becomes available.

- c. It normally takes *3 school weeks** to process your application, so you should apply as early as possible.
(* “school weeks” are weeks during term-time. In the school holidays school admin staff are not always working and this will result in a longer turnaround time for applications. Most UK schools have holidays from the end of July until the beginning of September and also for the last two weeks of December.)

3. If your address in Bournemouth changes, you must contact BCP Council and tell them. (This might move you higher up the waiting list for schools close to your new home.)

You can find more details about the application process and policies in the [Parents Guides](#) on the BCP Council website. (Just select ‘Primary’ ‘Junior/Middle’ or ‘Secondary’ school.)

Funding:

Schooling is free, however there are related costs such as school meals, travel and uniform.

You may be entitled to some financial help with those, depending on your circumstances:

- **School Meals:**

All children in Reception and Year 1 get a free school meal at lunchtime. For children in Year 2 and above, you may be eligible to apply for free school meals if you are a student visa holder and your household income is less than:

- £22,700 for families outside of London with one child
- £26,300 for families outside of London with two or more children

You can find more information about this on the [BCP Council website](#). Please use the [application form specifically for families with ‘no recourse to public funds’](#).

- **School transport:**

If you are not able to get a place at your preferred school and the school place that your child is given is not close to your accommodation, [you may be entitled to help with transport costs](#). This will not be offered to you automatically - you have to apply for it if you want it.

- **School uniform:**

School uniform can be expensive if you buy it new, but you can almost always buy second-hand uniform from your school. Ask the school office for details. It is a good idea to check with the school which items of uniform need to come from the school outfitters (or second-hand from school) and which can just be plain. For primary school children you can usually buy most of the uniform from the supermarket - all major supermarkets sell school uniform at reasonable prices in a selection of colours.

- **Holiday clubs:**

Most schools operate some kind of holiday clubs to help parents with childcare during the school holidays. In some cases, you can send your child to a holiday club that is being run at another school. There is normally a fee attached (between approx £20 and £40 per day), but sometimes there are free places available and eligibility for this is usually linked to your entitlement to free school meals. You can find more information about this on the [family information section of the BCP website](#).