



# SCHOOLS' IT NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026



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### *LA Maintained – IT Services*

#### *Statements for 2026/27*

*All IT Service Statements have now been issued. If your school has not received its statement, please email:*

*[schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk).*

*Thank you to everyone who has already signed and returned their statement.*

*For any statements not yet returned, where no notice has been received, services will automatically roll over until 31 March 2027.*

*We look forward to continuing to support you. If you have any questions about any of the IT Services, please contact us using the email address provided at the end of this newsletter.*



# PARENT PORTAL ACCESS



## What is a primary guardian?

A primary guardian is a status in Arbor which identifies those who have access to the parent portal. It literally means nothing else other than granting access through the portal to view the child's data.

## What is a legal guardian?

A legal guardian is a status that identifies who is financial/legally responsible for a child at the school.

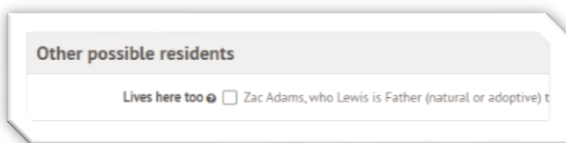
These terms are not the same thing and cannot be used interchangeably.

The parent portal operates on an "all-or-nothing" model. This means settings cannot be customised for individual primary guardians or small groups. Any change made to the portal's configuration will apply to all primary guardian users across your school community.

## So, what to do if the parental figures for a child separate?

A decision should be made as to whether access via the parent portal should be maintained. If the addresses are different then the parent that is living separately cannot see the address of the child. However, if the parental figure that has left is still linked as living with the child, using the move option will affect both parental figures and the linked child.

To unlink a parental figure from a child, **add** a new address rather than using the **move address** option. Adding a new address will automatically close the old one by applying an end date and creating the new record. When entering the new address, please make sure you do not select the option indicating that the parent is living with the child.



(Screen shot from training database and not a live database)

To add an address to a guardian you need to click on the **Add** button for the **Contact Details** in the guardian's profile.

If the separation has been amicable and a parent is asking why they cannot see the child's contact details, please explain that this is controlled by the system, not the school. Because the parents now have different addresses, the system automatically restricts the parent at the separate address from viewing those contact details.



## Scenario: Parent A and Child A have moved home from the family home and Parent B remains in the family home.

This guidance only applies if Parent B will continue to have parent-portal access. If the school decides that portal access should be suspended indefinitely, then Parent B should be permanently disabled instead.

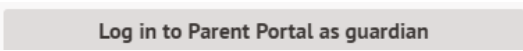

Parent-portal access is a privilege, not a right. A legal guardian can request information about their child, but they cannot dictate how that information is provided. If a parent becomes confrontational or coercive, their portal access can be removed. The portal also allows direct contact with the school, so if a parent is behaving inappropriately, access should be withdrawn.

To unlink a child from a parental figure, go to the child's profile and delete the address. This removes the address link for both parents.

### Deleting an address

- Click the address you want  to remove.
- Select the  button, then choose Delete.
- A slide-over will appear click again to confirm.
- Add the child's new address and link only Parent A. This ensures the child is connected to Parent A's new location.

### Checking what a parent can see

- Open the parent's profile and click the .
- Staff must have the '**Guardians: Log in as guardian**' permission, this can be granted by the school administration (headteachers have this automatically).
- This will log your account out of the Arbor Portal and log you into the portal as that parent.
- Select  to view what they can see.

If the steps above were followed correctly, Parent B will not see the new address for Parent A or the child.

### About parent-portal access

Again parent-portal access is a privilege, not a right and should be treated as such. Schools are not required to use the portal, and access can be removed if a parent becomes abusive, confrontational, and/or coercive. Removing portal access does not deny their right to information, they can still request it through a Subject Access Request (SAR).

If Parent A and Parent B live separately, and the child lives with Parent A and their new partner, the school should confirm whether the new partner should have parent-portal access. This should not be automatic.

**Options**

- Legal guardian
- Primary guardian
- Authorised to collect

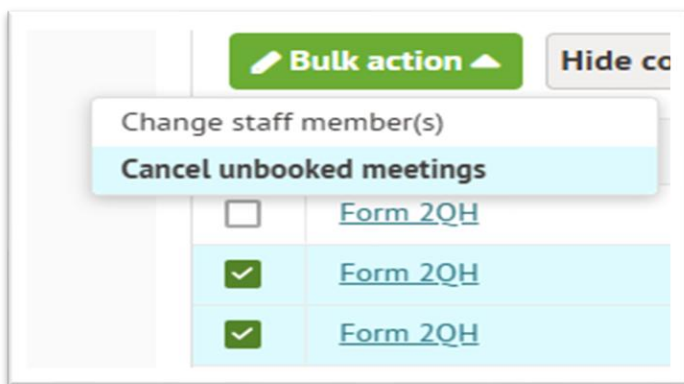
When adding a new contact in Arbor, the system automatically ticks Legal Guardian, Primary Guardian, and Authorised to Collect because it treats all new contacts as parental figures. Since this isn't always correct, staff must check and untick any options that do not apply.

## SEPARATED PARENTS & GUARDIAN CONSULTATIONS

Arbor MIS allows parents to book appointments for guardian consultation events. However, when parents are separated and prefer not to meet each other on school premises, you may need to offer separate appointment slots. Because Arbor uses an all-or-nothing configuration for consultation booking, this creates a challenge when you don't want the entire registration group to have access to separate sessions.

To manage this:

- Set up the consultation sessions as normal for all registration groups.



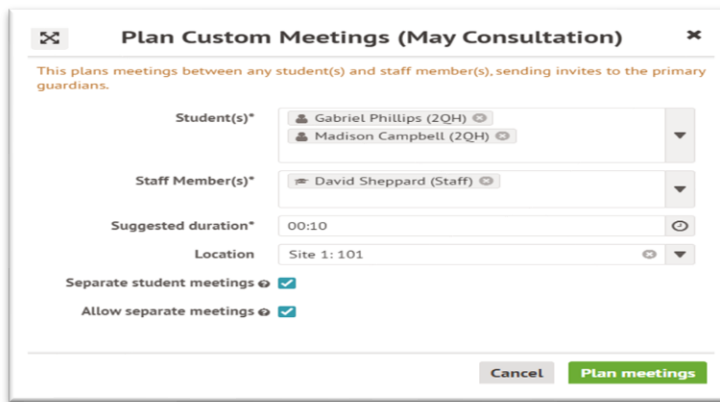
(Refer to: [Guidance on setting up guardian consultation sessions](#))

- Then, open the consultation session for the specific registration group that includes the children whose parents require separate appointments.
- Select the relevant children and use the bulk action menu to remove the unbooked meetings. This ensures only the necessary families can book separate sessions, without affecting the rest of the group.

Return to the overview and add a new meeting by selecting the Add button again—this time choosing the Custom Meeting option. If you assign the same tutor to this custom meeting, Arbor will place the new meeting type alongside the original group but with a different structure. This allows the tutor to enter their availability only once while still supporting separate booking options.

Select “Separate student meetings” and “Allow separate student meetings” If “Separate student meetings” is not enabled, Arbor will combine both children into a single meeting, allowing all parents/guardians linked to those children to book the same appointment. Enabling the option ensures each child has their own individual meeting slot.

Below is a demonstration on the options selected.



The screenshot shows a form titled "Plan Custom Meetings (May Consultation)". Below the title is a subtitle: "This plans meetings between any student(s) and staff member(s), sending invites to the primary guardians." The form contains the following fields and options:

- Student(s)\***: A dropdown menu with two selected items: "Gabriel Phillips (2QH)" and "Madison Campbell (2QH)".
- Staff Member(s)\***: A dropdown menu with one selected item: "David Sheppard (Staff)".
- Suggested duration\***: A text input field containing "00:10".
- Location**: A dropdown menu with one selected item: "Site 1: 101".
- Separate student meetings**: A checkbox that is checked.
- Allow separate meetings**: A checkbox that is checked.

At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Plan meetings".

Type A:



The screenshot shows a form titled "Plan Custom Meetings (May Consultation)". Below the title is a subtitle: "This plans meetings between any student(s) and staff member(s), sending invites to the primary guardians." The form contains the following fields and options:

- Student(s)\***: A dropdown menu with two selected items: "Paula Martin (13 HD)" and "Alexa Scott (13IP)".
- Staff Member(s)\***: A dropdown menu with one selected item: "David Sheppard (Staff)".
- Suggested duration\***: A text input field containing "00:10".
- Location**: A dropdown menu with one selected item: "Site 1: 101".
- Separate student meetings**: A checkbox that is checked.
- Allow separate meetings**: A checkbox that is checked.

At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Plan meetings".

Create separate booking availability for parents to discuss their child’s progress. This is helpful when parents cannot attend at the same time, and it also supports situations where separated parents prefer not to meet together. In the latter case, staff oversight is needed to ensure bookings are managed appropriately.

Type B:

**Plan Custom Meetings (May Consultation)**

This plans meetings between any student(s) and staff member(s), sending invites to the primary guardians.

Student(s)\*: Damien Smith (12XT), Carrie Smith (110X)

Staff Member(s)\*: David Sheppard (Staff)

Suggested duration\*: 00:30

Location: Site 1: 101

Separate student meetings:

Allow separate meetings:

Cancel Plan meetings

Used when there are siblings and parents want to make separate bookings to discuss the progress of their children.

**Result:**

The results of both custom booking types –

**David Sheppard Meetings**

Bulk action Hide columns


<input type="checkbox"/>	Class/Form	Student	Staff
<input type="checkbox"/>		Alexa Scott	David Sheppard
<input type="checkbox"/>		Damien Smith and Carrie Smith	David Sheppard
<input type="checkbox"/>		Paula Martin	David Sheppard

***(Disclaimer: The names used are fictitious taken from the training site and any resemblance to real individuals is coincidental.)***

When parents/guardians who are separated and login to the Parent Portal, only the parent with the same address as the child will see the child’s address.

When the first parent logs in to book a session, they need to ensure they uncheck the other parent.

When the second parent logs in to book their own session, they will see a message saying they are not included in a meeting. This simply means a session has already been booked by the other parent. The booked time will appear as unavailable, but no details are shown. If the second parent has other appointments in their schedule, the blocked-out time blends in, so they cannot identify which slot the other parent has booked.



You're currently not a participant of this meeting .A separate meeting with the staff member can be viewed by clicking the "View meeting" button below.

[View meeting](#)

The system does allow parents to book sessions that sit directly next to each other, which is why staff need to monitor these bookings. If two separated parents book back-to-back sessions, one of them will need to be moved to a different time or day.

Another option is to set up a separate consultation specifically for guardians who require privacy. This consultation would not allow self-scheduling. Instead, only the children needing private appointments would be added, and the school would book the sessions on behalf of the parent who requests confidentiality. Once that booking is made, the corresponding times can be blocked out on the other visible consultations, unless they take place on different days.

If you need more information or support, please log a call (details at the end of this newsletter and we can talk through the available options with the school.

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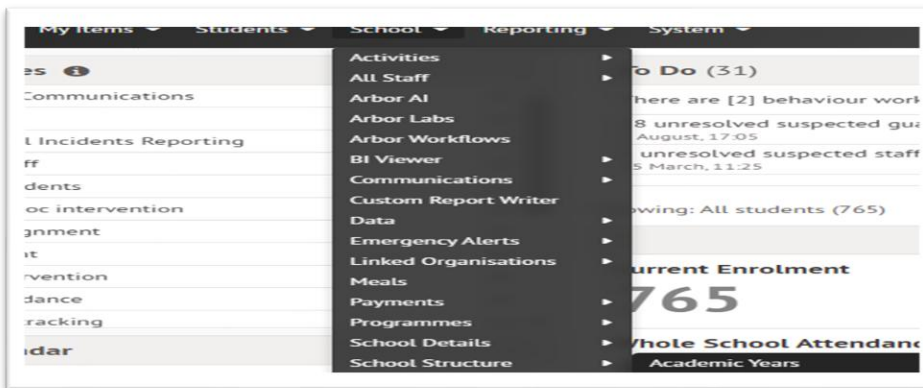
# Applicants for 2026–2027

We are in the final term of the academic year, signalling the start of the onboarding period for the upcoming intake. This serves as a reminder to review and process your applicants if you have not already done so.

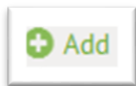
## ● SCC SECTION: Step 1 — Academic Year

**School > School Structure > Academic Years**

Create the next academic year if you have not already done so.



If the year exists, then move on to the next step. If not:



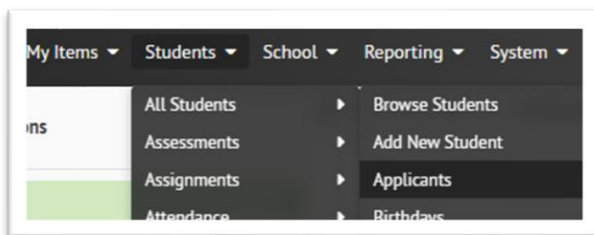
Fill in the relevant data, the end of the academic year is always the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, then select “create Academic Year”.

You cannot setup any more of the academic year until it becomes available in May.

## ● Step 2 — Intake Season

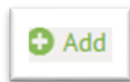
Create somewhere to place all your applicants. This is done in the Current and Future Intake Season area.

**Students > All Students > Applicants**





If the intake season has already been created, then proceed to the next step. Otherwise select



The intake name can be whatever you want so long as other people can understand what it is. You do not want other people creating unnecessary intakes seasons because your title was confusing.

You can have multiple intake seasons, for instance, an autumn intake and a spring intake for September and January respectively.

Published admissions number, (PAN), is the hard limit to the amount the school can take on. The target application number is sometimes larger depending on the wants of the school. This is to cover the expected dropouts of the school.

When ready, create the intake season.

### ● Step 3 — Buckets and Groups

Groups are generally expected to be used if there is an aptitude test for intake. Not normally used.

Buckets are containers to separate applicants into identify groups outside of an aptitude test. For instance: siblings, twins, SEN, etc. This is used to aide admin with the new intake, if they are in an actionable group, ie SEN, then the applicant is easier to find. Another group that could be considered is “Separated”, for parents that have separated, just in case a more cautious approach needs to be taken with the child’s data.

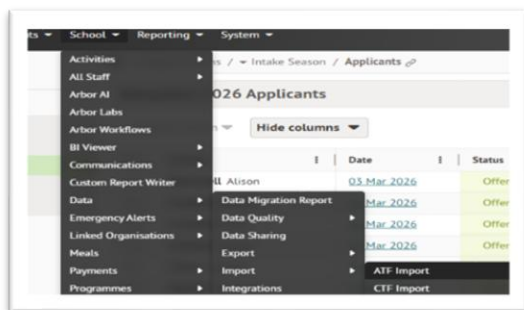
### ● Step 4 — Onboarding Applicant Data

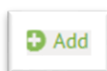
There are several methods to onboarding data in Arbor MIS.

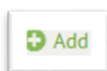
#### Method A:

The easiest way is to import the ATF file downloaded from the LA.

**School > Data > Import > ATF Import**





Select  , select you file and then select “Upload ATF”. The imported applicants should have a red x indicating that they have not been fully imported. You can complete the process individually or collectively and assign them to an applicant season.

[Guidance for importing an ATF into Arbor](#)

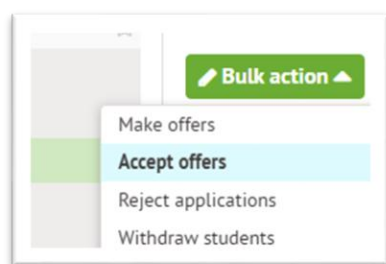
### **Method B: Manual Entry**

Navigate to:

**Students > All Students > Applicants**

Select and open the appropriate applicant season, then select applicants on the left-hand side. You can manually add applications, one at a time, in this location. This is done via the add button, a slide over will appear, then select “create applicate for new student”. Enter the student details then click save, then enter the guardian details.

From this area, you can also assign a year group, registration form, house and/or an application bucket, if used. You can do this as an individual or as a group selection, you can also “make offer”, “accept”, “reject” and “withdraw” the child. In this window, you can also enrol, but once enrolled, you cannot assign the child in this area any further for any purpose.



[Guidance for adding applicants manually in Arbor](#)

### **Method C: Spreadsheet Upload**

Navigate to:

**Students > All Students > Applicants**

From this area, select “Application Uploads” on the left-hand side.

Now, from this location, you can download a spreadsheet template that you will later use to upload.





Open the template has downloaded, open and add in the student data as required. Once complete, you can then upload the file in this location by selecting the add button then locating the now saved and closed template. When uploading the file, you can assign the applicants to an intake season so you can edit them later.

[Guidance for uploading the import spreadsheet for applicants in Arbor](#)

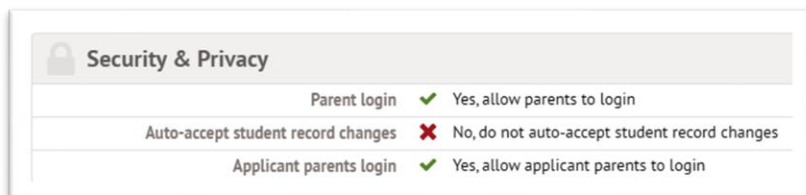
**● Step 5 — Data Collection / Correction**

This step is normally undertaken at a future point, but you could allow parents/guardians to access the applicants via the parent portal provided you have enabled this setting.

**Students > Parents & Guardians > Parent Portal Settings**

Enabling this allows a parent/guardian to edit the data which admin can verify/validate later in Arbor providing the “Auto-accept student record changes” has not been enabled.

Do remember, that once the portal is enabled, if a parent has multiple children at different schools. The parent must select the right school to login to edit the data for their child which is an applicant at your school. There is guidance below for the parent portal that can be sent to the parents for guidance. A good idea would be to send the links to the parents when inviting them to check the data on the portal.



[Guidance for parents logging into Arbor Parent Portal](#)

[Guidance for parents for the parent portal dashboard](#)

If a child has left another school that uses Arbor MIS and arrives at your school, then they will still have access to the former school Parent Portal. Same as above, they would need to ensure they have opened the correct school.

[Guidance for schools on how to use the settings for Parent Portal](#)





# ArborFest Liverpool – A National Event for School Innovation

Suffolk County Council is pleased to highlight ArborFest Liverpool, a national event bringing together school and trust leaders to explore the future of digital systems in education.

ArborFest offers a mix of keynotes, practical workshops, and hands-on sessions focused on smarter workflows, attendance improvement, data-driven decision-making, and new developments in Arbor MIS. It's a valuable opportunity for schools to streamline processes and strengthen their digital strategy.

The event is ideal for headteachers, senior leaders, data managers, and administrative teams, whether already using Arbor or exploring future MIS options.

👉 Find out more and book your place: [Join us at ArborFest 2026 in Liverpool! | Arbor HQ](#)

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## Arbor Webinars – April 2026

Arbor is running several free online sessions this April to help schools prepare for the summer term and make the most of Arbor MIS. Upcoming events include:

- **Office Hours: Arbor Workflows**  
*16 April, 11:00–12:00*
- **Success in the Summer Term – Primaries**  
*28 April, 11:00–12:00*
- **Success in the Summer Term – Secondaries**  
*28 April, 14:00–15:00*
- **Building a Tech-Enabled People Strategy**  
*29 April, 10:00–11:00*
- **Office Hours: Arbor Workflows**  
*30 April, 11:00–12:00*
- **Building a System-Led People Strategy with SAMpeople**  
*30 April, 14:00–15:00*

Schools can find full details and register here: <https://arbor-hq.circle.so/c/webinars/>



## THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING SCHOOL CONTACTS UP TO DATE

Each year, we send out IT Service Statements to all LA schools, so you have a clear record of the services you receive and the support available to you. These statements are important for planning, budgeting, and ensuring your school continues to receive the right level of technical provision.

Recently, however, several schools have told us they did not receive their IT Service Statement, even though the statements were sent out on time. In some cases, the issue has been traced back to outdated or incorrect contact details.

### **Why this matters:**

When contact information is not current, important documents like IT Service Statements may:

- Go to staff who have left the school
- Be sent to inboxes that are no longer monitored
- Bounce back without the school realising
- Miss the key person responsible for reviewing or approving services

This can lead to delays, misunderstandings, and unnecessary follow-up work for both schools and the IT service team.

### **How you can help:**

To make sure your school receives all essential communications, including next year's IT Service Statements, we kindly ask that you:

- Review your school's contact details regularly, especially for roles linked to IT, finance, and administration.
- Notify us promptly of any staffing changes, including temporary cover arrangements.
- Provide a generic school email address (e.g., office@..., admin@...) alongside named contacts to ensure continuity.
- Check that key roles are correctly assigned, such as the business manager, headteacher, and IT lead.

### **A small update that prevents big problems:**

Keeping your contact details up to date takes only a moment, but it ensures your school receives every important document, update, and reminder without interruption. It also helps us support you more effectively and reduces the need for repeated follow-ups. You can notify us by sending an email with the up-to-date details to [schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk)



## CONTACTING THE IT SERVICE DESK

To help us support you quickly and efficiently, please use the correct contact routes for different types of enquiries.

### Sales & New Service Enquiries

The Schools IT Services mailbox is intended only for sales enquiries and is monitored periodically.

For questions about new services, please email:

[schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsitservices@suffolk.gov.uk)

### Incidents & Service Requests

All standard issues, faults, and service requests must be logged via the IT Service Desk.

Using the correct route ensures your request is tracked and resolved without delay.

### IT Service Desk Contact Options:

- Phone: 01473 265555
- Email: [itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:itservicedesk@suffolk.gov.uk)

Requests sent to the wrong mailbox may result in delayed responses, so please ensure you use the correct contact method.

### Office Hours

Our team is available:

Monday to Friday — 8:30am to 5:00pm

