

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge School Enrollment Guide 2026 (No Neighborhood Schools)

Controlled choice, the single registration center at 459 Broadway, the documents asked for, language screening and the SSN question.

SHORT ANSWER

Cambridge has **no neighborhood school**. Since 1980 the city has used controlled choice: you are not assigned a school by your address, you rank schools and seats are balanced across the city. Every registration goes through one office: the Student Registration Center, 459 Broadway, 617-349-6551, weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The K-8 registration packet has **no SSN field and no immigration question**, a passport is accepted as parent ID, and meals are free for all students.

Why there are no neighborhood schools

In 1980 the school committee decided to move away from the neighborhood school model in order not to segregate the schools; since 2001 assignments have weighed socioeconomic balance. Families rank their choices, the system aims to meet family preferences first but balances the result against socioeconomic mix, gender, seat counts and the needs of its two-way programs. That has two practical consequences: if you move within Cambridge your child's school does not have to change, and there is no point calculating "which school district" a home sits in. The district describes the assignment as a lottery-like algorithm and promises no placement in one of your top choices.

How to register, step by step

- 1 Start with the Student Registration Center.** It is inside Cambridge Rindge and Latin School: 459 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02138, first floor. Phone 617-349-6551, fax 617-349-6552, src@cpsd.us. Weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., open year round except holidays, and it processes more than 1,200 student applications a year.
- 2 Pick one of the two routes.** You can go in and fill out the paper packet, or complete the forms digitally and email scans or photos of every form and document. **Mailing it in is not accepted.**
- 3 Prepare the documents.** The list below is what is asked for; because water is billed quarterly, keep your electricity bill ready as the proof of occupancy.
- 4 If you are arriving from abroad, write on the day you land.** Email welcome@cpsd.us for an appointment. The Office of Multilingual Learner Education is 617-349-6468.

- 5 Language screening comes before the assignment.** If the home language survey names a language other than English, the child takes the WIDA Screener at the center before a school is assigned. In busy periods that can take a few days.
- 6 Rank your schools.** Once registration is complete the student usually starts within two to five days (September through June).

Document checklist

DOCUMENT	DETAIL
☐ The child's identity	A birth certificate or a passport
☐ Immunization record	Handed in at registration. The physical exam, the tuberculosis risk assessment and the kindergarten lead screening go to the school nurse
☐ Health history form	The district's own Health History Form
☐ Cambridge address proof	A lease, a Section 8 contract, a purchase and sale agreement, a mortgage statement, a deed, a property tax bill, a notarized letter from the landlord (a sample is in the packet), or a letter from a homelessness or transitional service provider
☐ Proof of occupancy (last 30 days)	A gas, fuel, electricity or cable bill, or a letter from the provider. The water bill arrives quarterly, so it usually does not work
☐ Parent ID	A Massachusetts license or ID, a passport , a vehicle registration, a W-2, a pay stub or bank statement from the last 60 days, or an excise or property tax bill
☐ Forms	The application, the home language survey, a records release, the Controlled Choice preference form and, if you are not the parent, a Caregiver Authorization. If you share a home with a relative or friend, a Doubling Up Form and the host's documents are also asked for

SSN and immigration status

WHAT TO KNOW

- The nine-page K-8 registration packet we read has **no Social Security number field and no immigration status question**. The packet does ask for the child's city and country of birth; race and ethnicity reporting is voluntary.
- The district makes no written policy statement about immigration status on the pages we read, so we do not present one as an institutional commitment. What you can rely on is state law and the 1982 decision in **Plyler v. Doe**: a school district cannot require immigration status to enroll a child, and not having a government photo ID cannot block enrollment.
- Guidance from the Massachusetts Attorney General says districts should not collect or keep documents containing passport information, visa information or Social Security numbers for enrollment purposes. If an official asks anyway, cite that guidance and the decision, and note who you spoke to.

English support and languages

- **Programs:** Sheltered English Immersion (levels 1 and 2), ESL support classes (levels 1 through 4) and two-way immersion programs: Spanish at the Amigos School, Mandarin at the King School and Portuguese at King Open.
- **For Turkish:** we found neither a Turkish translation of the registration packet nor a Turkish-speaking family liaison. The district's priority languages are Spanish, Haitian Creole, Amharic, Arabic and Bengali. The ParentSquare messaging system translates automatically into more than 100 languages, and the language survey lets you request a free interpreter. Ask for one when you book.
- **Screening timing:** during the school year it happens within four days of a completed registration.

Calendar, age limits and mid-year moves

- **Calendar:** K-8 registration for 2026-27 opened on January 5, 2026; the kindergarten lottery for the next year opens **January 4, 2027**. Students who move to Cambridge during the year can always register.
- **Age:** five by August 31 for kindergarten, six for first grade.
- **Mid-year:** kindergarten and grades 1 to 8 are handled first come, first served, and the district says seats are spread across the city and limited; siblings may not land at the same school. Late registrations outside the lottery do not get sibling, proximity or language priority.
- **If you have not moved yet:** a signed lease, a purchase and sale agreement or a letter from your university housing office showing your Cambridge address is accepted, so you can start the registration before you have the keys.
- **Meals are free:** the district runs the federal Community Eligibility Provision, so meals are free for all students with no separate application.
- **Preschool and high school:** the Cambridge Preschool Program for ages 3 and 4 runs separately (cpp@cpsd.us). The high school is Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, about 1,800 students; the family liaison line is 617-349-6660.

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Do not calculate school districts when you look for a home in Cambridge, because there are none; make your first call to the registration center at 459 Broadway (617-349-6551) and ask which grades have seats mid-year. Three things make the preparation easier. First, have the birth certificate, immunization card and report cards you bring from Türkiye translated into English up front. Second, because the English screening here comes before the assignment, email welcome@cpsd.us on the day you arrive if you are coming from abroad; that saves two or three days. Third, the proof of occupancy must be dated within the last 30 days, and the water bill arrives quarterly, so get your electricity bill or your lease ready.

Registration dates and the document list can change. Confirm them on the [CPS registration center page](#) before you go. Information as of October 1, 2026.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN CAMBRIDGE

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in Cambridge and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English.

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