

Guidance for own admission authorities (academies and aided schools)

This guidance is based on the admissions code published in December 2014.

- Consultation on admission arrangements (which must include supplementary information forms, SIFs, if used) must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before those arrangements are to apply. For example: for arrangements which are to apply to applications in 2018 (entry in September 2019), consultation must be completed by 31 January 2018.
- Admission arrangements must be determined (published) by 28th February and sent to local authorities before 15th March.
- Objections to any proposed admission arrangement must be referred to the Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year. Further guidance on these timings is on our website.
- A change in the wording regarding Looked after Children - The highest priority must be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children.
Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order).'
- Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children eligible for the early years' pupil premium, the pupil premium and also children eligible for the service premium.
- Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria **to children eligible for the early years pupil premium, the pupil premium or the service premium** who:
 - a) Are in a nursery class which is part of the school; or
 - b) Attend a nursery that is established and run by the school. The nursery must be named in the admission arrangements and its selection must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.
- Admission authorities **must** make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year 1.
- There is a continuing stress on equity and fair access, and on diversity and increased parental preference.
- Looked after children and previously looked after children must be first in oversubscription criteria
- Schools **MUST NOT** give priority to children according to the order of other schools named as preferences by their parents, including 'first preference first' arrangements;
- Children having statements of special educational needs or Education Health and Care plans (EHCP) naming the school must be admitted and counted towards the published admission number (PAN) if the application is received in the normal admissions round.
- In year applications for children who have an EHCP naming the school will be admitted over PAN
- A waiting list must be kept until at least the end of December of the year of admission, the date for which a waiting list is held must be included in the admission arrangements.

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- Admission authorities must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs, and that other policies around school uniform or school trips do not discourage parents from applying for a place for their child.
- Governing Bodies must provide the Local Authority with a list of all children who applied for places, showing each child ranked in order of priority under the admission arrangements, showing which criterion each child met.
- Governing Bodies can only withdraw the offer of a place in exceptional circumstances, normally a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application, often to do with the address used.
- The decision to refuse admission must not be made by one individual in a school; the whole Governing Body or its admissions committee should make such decisions. Head Teachers and other school officials should not give parents an expectation that their application will be successful, or tell them their child has been offered a place before the official date.
- The governing bodies of Aided Schools must consult the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) about their admissions policies before consulting with other admission authorities.

Prohibited criteria

The Code prohibits giving higher priority to children according to:

- Likely parental support for school finances or other practical support given to the school.
- Parental occupational / financial / educational / social / marital status
- Parental interests / hobbies
- A requirement for an expression of practical support for the ethos of the school.

Additionally schools may not discriminate against or disadvantage disabled children or those with special educational needs;

Acceptable criteria

After the admission of all children with statements of special educational needs or Education Health and Care plans and Looked After Children and previously looked after children who must be the first priority, the governing body needs to work out the order of its criteria from:

- Special medical or social circumstances affecting the child
- Where the family lives
- Whether there will be a sibling in the school at the time of the younger child's admission.
- Whether to extend this to include siblings who were previously in attendance at the school (this must be clearly defined).
- Faith criteria
- Whether to give priority to the children of staff members and how they might be defined.
- Distance of home from school measured by an approved system to and from defined places

Consultation

If there are any changes to the admission arrangements (not including a raise in PAN) or there has

been no consultation in the past 7 years, governing bodies must consult on their admission arrangements for a minimum period of 6 weeks between October 1st and January 31st of the school year before those arrangements are to apply. **The DBE must be consulted prior to the general consultation.** They must consult:

- Parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen
- Other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions
- All other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools)
- Whichever of the governing body and the local authority who are not the admission authority
- Any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority

The arrangements should include information about:

- The timetable and how to apply for a place, including the use of supplementary forms
- The admission number for any year group to which it intends to admit pupils.
- The oversubscription criteria
- Where maps of parish boundaries or other defined areas may be viewed, if necessary.
- How late applications can be made and will be handled
- For how long a waiting list will be maintained. (It must be for a minimum of the Autumn Term)
- The definition of home address and evidence
- The in-year admissions process
- How parents can appeal if they are refused a place
- How fraudulent applications are dealt with
- For infant and primary schools, deferred or delayed admission to reception and how parents may apply
- A copy of any supplementary form if one is used

Faith aspects

Voluntary aided schools and some academies (dependent on their funding agreement) may continue to give preference in their admission arrangements to members of their faith or denomination, provided this does not conflict with other legislation, such as equalities legislation or the mandatory provisions of the Code. As with all other maintained schools, church schools must not keep open places if they have insufficient applicants of their own faith and other families have applied for a place at the school.

The Code allows the DBE to provide guidance for aided school governing bodies setting out what processes and criteria should be used to establish membership of the faith. The Code also states that where such guidance is produced, the admissions authorities for schools of the faith **must have regard to the guidance when framing their admission arrangements.**

All aided school governing bodies must consult the DBE about the admission arrangements they are proposing for their schools before they go out to statutory consultation with other admission authorities.

Supplementary form

Church schools should use a supplementary form which asks parents about their membership of, or relationship with, the church or religious denomination. Such forms may only ask for additional factual information which has a direct bearing on decisions about oversubscription criteria, e.g. a tick box to confirm attendance and the signature or name of the member of the clergy or a church officer to confirm attendance. Supplementary Forms are not compulsory but governors may point out that failure to complete the form will mean that the governors would not be able to apply the school's faith criteria.

The following information will be obtained from the local authority:

- Name and address of people with whom child normally lives
- Siblings who will still be on the school roll at the time of the admission of the younger child.
- Social/medical/welfare reasons for choice of school (where social/medical/welfare reasons are included in the over-subscription criteria)
- Looked after children and previously looked after children
- Children having a statement of special educational needs or an Education Health and Care Plan.

The name of the child and the address of the people with whom they normally live will need may need to be requested on the supplementary information form in order to match up the two forms.

The Admissions Committee

Where the governing body or the academy trust decides to delegate responsibility for admissions to an admissions committee to consider applications for school places the committee is to be constituted along with other committees at the first meeting of the academic year.

It may not include any non-governors, except in the case where the headteacher is not a governor.

Decisions as to whether any child should be admitted or not, may not be delegated to the headteacher or any other individual.

Example Terms of Reference

The committee is responsible for all matters to do with admissions, subject to the requirement that the full governing body must approve the policy. Decisions as to whether any child may be admitted may not be delegated to the headteacher or any other individual, unless governors are advised that there is a vacancy in the year group. It is advisable not to appoint any governor to the admissions committee if they are involved in the writing of references for applicants under faith criteria.

Suggested Delegated Powers:

- To draft the admissions arrangements, including criteria, which must be reviewed and approved annually by the full governing body.
- To ensure that consultations with the DBE and then other bodies are carried out when required.
- If the school is over-subscribed, to apply the admissions criteria to all applicants and provide the local authority with a list of pupils ranked in order of the criteria by the due date.
- To prepare the case of the governing body ready to go to the Appeals Panel

To deal with all non-routine admissions