


# Mercia School

# Admissions

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Author: Dean F. Webster  
*Headteacher*

<i>This policy has been approved by the Local Governing Body and has been signed by the Chair of Governors</i>	
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# **Mercia School admission arrangements for 2021/22**

## **Introductory statement**

This document sets out the proposed admission arrangements for the Mercia Academy Trust, Mercia school, throughout this document referred to as “the Academy”.

The Academy is a 11 -18 secondary and sixth-form Academy which will offer places at Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 from September 2020. The entrants to the school in September 2021 will be the school’s fourth year group.

## **Admission number(s)**

The school has an admission number of 180 for entry in Year 7.

The school will accordingly admit this number of pupils if there are sufficient applications. Where fewer applicants than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year group are received, the Academy Trust will offer places at the school to all those who have applied.

## **Application process<sup>1</sup>**

Applications for places at the Academy will be made in accordance with the statutory Admission Code and will be made on the Common Application Form provided and administered by the Sheffield LA on behalf of Mercia. The Authority has determined co-ordinated admission schemes as required by law for the 2021/22 academic year.

This means that a parent completes the Common application form expressing up to three preferences and the Authority liaises with schools and other local authorities on their behalf.

The Local Authority will inform the parent of the outcome of their application, including the reason for the refusal and information on the appeals process if a place is refused at any of their preferred schools.

The Local Authority will communicate the outcome of individual applications to parents on the Academy’s behalf on the national offer day, 1 March 2021 for Y7 applications.

Nevertheless, Mercia Academy Trust is still responsible for considering the applications and ensuring that Mercia Academy Trust Mercia School admission arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code. The LA applies the oversubscription criteria on behalf of the Academy by agreement.

If you are a parent or carer and wish to apply for a place at Mercia Academy Trust Mercia School you will need to complete the Common Application Form via the Local Authority Website:

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<sup>1</sup> This section will be necessary for free schools which are not in LA co-ordinated admissions for their opening year. It should not be used by any other school as they will be included in LA co-ordinated admissions.

Offers will be made on 01/03/2021. If we have not entered into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State opening the school by that date, they will be conditional offers and will be confirmed once we have a signed funding agreement.

The application form can be obtained from

[\[https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-forparents/carers/pupil-admissions.html\]](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-forparents/carers/pupil-admissions.html)

## **Oversubscription criteria<sup>2</sup>**

The oversubscription criteria for the Academy is in line with the Schools Admission Code. Where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admission number, applications will be considered by the Academy against the criteria set out below. After the admission of students with an Education, Health and Care plan or statement of special educational needs naming the Academy, the criteria will be applied in the order in which they are set out below:

### **Priority One - Children in Care or Previously in Care (Statutory Requirement)**

All Admission Authorities MUST prioritise the admission of Looked After Children and all previously looked after children within their admission criteria. These children are defined as: “a child who is looked after by a local authority in accordance with section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989(b) and who (a) is looked after at the time an application for admission to a school is made and (b) in relation to whom the local authority has confirmed that the child will still be looked after at the time when the child will be admitted to the school.

### **Priority Two - Catchment area & Sibling**

Children who normally reside with a parent or person with parental responsibility in the defined catchment area and who will have a brother or sister at the academy on the day of admission will be considered next.

The catchment area is defined at the end of this document in the form of a map. The definition of a sibling for these purposes is given at (4) below. This means that all catchment/sibling applications are prioritised before catchment applicants irrespective of distance. The normal distance tie-breaker will apply within each category.

### **Priority Three - Catchment Area**

Children who normally reside with a parent or person with parental responsibility in the defined catchment area, but will not have a sibling at the preferred school at the point of

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<sup>2</sup> In this section, for their admission criteria, free schools must use the oversubscription criteria set out in the ‘pick-list’ of admission criteria within this document. Schools are encouraged to consider giving children eligible for the pupil and service premiums, or any element of the premiums, such as pupils registered as eligible for free school meals, a level of priority in oversubscription criteria.

admission will be considered next. A copy of the catchment map is available in appendix 1 of this proposed policy.

#### **Priority Four - Non-Catchment Siblings**

A sibling is a child who permanently or usually lives at the same address as below: - The term “sibling” means a full, half, adopted or fostered brother or sister, or the child of the parent/carer’s partner where the child for whom the place is sought is living in the same family unit at the same address as that sibling living permanently within the same household.

The Academy reserves the right to ask for proof of relationship

#### **Priority Five - Contributory feeder school**

Applicants for a Year 7 place whose children attend a designated feeder primary school but do not fit into any of the above categories will be considered next.

The designated linked feeder Primary Schools for Mercia Academy Trust, Academy School are proposed as:

Abbey Lane Primary

Anns Grove Primary

Bankwood Primary

Bethany School

Birkdale Independent School

Bradway Primary

Carfield Primary

Carterknowle Junior

Dobcroft Junior

Dore Primary

Ecclesall CE Junior

Greenhill Primary

Greystones Primary

Hallam Primary

Hunter's Bar Junior

Lowedges Primary

Lower Meadow Primary

Lowfield Primary

Lydgate Junior

Meersbrook Bank Primary  
Mundella Primary  
Mylnhurst Catholic School  
Nether Green Junior  
Netherthorpe Primary  
Norton Free CE Primary  
Porter Croft CE Primary  
Sharrow Primary  
Sheffield High School  
Springfield Primary  
St. Marie's RC Primary  
St. Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary  
St. Wilfrid's RC Primary  
Nether Edge Primary  
Totley All Saints CE Primary  
Totley Primary  
Valley Park Primary  
Westbourne School  
Westways Primary  
Woodseats Primary

Parents are advised in the Composite Prospectus "A Guide for Parents" that if they choose to send their children to a non-catchment primary school, they have a lower priority for entry to the linked secondary school and that there is no guarantee of a place there.

### **Priority Seven - For families of service personnel**

For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, the Local Authority will;

- Allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria. The Authority will not refuse a service child a place because the family does not currently live in the area

### **Priority Eight - All other applicants**

Any applicant who does not fall into one of the above categories will be considered next.

## **Tie Break**

For any admission category that is oversubscribed there are two stages of further consideration.

Exceptional medical, social or special educational needs.

Where exceptional medical, social or special educational needs are demonstrated and supported by a professional, an application may be prioritised by the Admission Committee (AC) but only within its admission category. It is the parent's/applicant's responsibility to provide supporting evidence.

The parent/applicant must supply sufficient supporting evidence from relevant professionals at the time of the original application, for the Authority to consider whether an individual case constitutes exceptional circumstances to be prioritised. In any event, the evidence must support the view that the child must attend the school applied for and that they could not have their needs met at any other school.

Applications will only be submitted to the Admission Committee for further consideration if they are accompanied by supporting evidence.

## **Distance**

Where exceptional circumstances are not demonstrated, the final tie-breaker will be the distance from the home address to the school building. This is a straight line measurement from the home address to the designated point of the school building.

Where the remaining place could be made for a number of children living equidistant from the school the determination of the single offer will be made by random allocation:

### **The random allocation will:**

Be independently supervised by a representative of the Legal and Governance Service. ii. take place on a date and time notified in advance to the participating parents so that they can attend as witnesses.

## **Equal Preference**

The statutory School Admissions Code 2014 made the practice of offering places on a "First Preference First" basis unlawful. All Admission Authorities in Sheffield must operate an Equal Preference system when determining the final school offer.

This means that each of the three preferences will be considered as equal preferences and oversubscription criteria applied to each preference irrespective of ranking. The ranking of the preferences is relevant only where the applicant is eligible for more than one school. In this case a place will be offered at the highest ranked school for which the child is eligible.

Please insert tie-break from the drop-down options

Children of multiple births – See drop-down. This must be selected for a primary with infant classes and is recommended for all schools

## **Arrangements for admission to the sixth-form**

Subject to meeting the published entry requirements, all students on roll at Mercia Academy School will have the right to progress to Year 12 if they wish to do so.

For external applicants, priority will be afforded to students who are attending another school in the Mercia Trust family. Any remaining places will be offered to other applicants subject to the criteria below. Again, subject to the minimum entry requirements being met.

### Exceptional Circumstances

It is important that appropriate provision is made for students in exceptional circumstances. For some applicants the Admission Authority may wish to exercise reasonable discretion for an individual young person who could benefit from the programme offered their sixth form but because of his/her exceptional circumstances has not met the minimum entry criteria.

These circumstances may include students with English as a Second Language where the current school can demonstrate that the pupil would benefit from attending the sixth form, but may not meet the minimum entry criteria. Any placement in this category would require careful discussion and the views of the school and any potential prejudice to the provision of efficient education and/or the efficient use of resources as a result of the placement would always be considered before a decision is made. The incidence of such cases is expected to be low.

We are aware that exceptional circumstances do sometimes affect students' grades. As such it may be that we make an offer to a student who does not achieve or is not expected to achieve the minimum entry criteria or individual subject criteria.

These exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis and may include long term illness; immediate family bereavement in examination season. This category may also include students who are or who have been "Looked After" and students with special educational needs and/or physical disability with a requirement for adapted buildings and/or facilities which can only be met at this particular school.

Where there are more applications from external candidates than there are places, places (subject to meeting the entry requirements) will be offered in the following order:

1. Looked After Children - this category also includes students who were previously in care but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order. The student should meet the minimum entry criteria described below. Exceptional circumstances may be considered.
2. All other students who are predicted to meet the minimum entry requirement of 5 A\*-C GCSE passes. Some subjects will also require a minimum subject grade at GCSE. Please see details in the school prospectus.
3. If an entire category cannot be admitted without exceeding the number of places available then places will be offered to those students within the category that live

closest to the school. All distances will be measured in a straight line from home to school.

## Late applications<sup>3</sup>

All applications received by the Local Authority after the last date for receiving applications will be considered to be late applications. Late applications will be considered after those received on time. If, following consideration of all applicants the school is oversubscribed, parents may request that their child is placed on the school's waiting list.

## Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may request that their child is admitted outside their normal age group. To do so parents should include a request with their application, specifying why admission out of normal year group is being requested [Click here to enter text](#).

When such a request is made, the academy trust will make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child concerned, taking into account the views of the headteacher and any supporting evidence provided by the parent.<sup>4</sup>

## Waiting Lists

The Local Authority will operate a waiting list on behalf of the Academy for each year group. Where the school receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will operate until the end of [the first term after the beginning of the school year/the end of the academic year<sup>5</sup>]. This will be maintained by the Academy Trust and it will be open to any parent to ask for his or her child's name to be placed on the waiting list, following an unsuccessful application.

Children's position on the waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. The waiting list will be reordered in accordance with the oversubscription criteria whenever anyone is added to or leaves the waiting list.

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<sup>3</sup> This is optional. Whatever is adopted will need to fit with the process for handling late applications within the local co-ordinated scheme. Depending on what the scheme says, various options are open to the school: treating all applications equally which are received up to the offer date, treating applications received after the closing date (31 Oct for Secondary or 16 January for Primary) as late or specifying some date falling between the two dates.

<sup>4</sup> All schools are required to set out, in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group. Advice on out of year admissions and on the admission of summer-born children are in paragraphs 2.16 to 2.17B of the School Admissions Code, paragraphs 68-76 of the [free schools common issues advice](#) and in the DfE [Advice on the Admission of Summer Born Children](#). Your process should make it clear how parents will apply, what factors you will consider and how you will convey your decision to the parents.

<sup>5</sup> Either of these options are acceptable or any sensible date – such as the end of a term - in between.



The school will also keep a list, ranked against the oversubscription criteria, of those applying for entry to year 12 who are not made a conditional offer on [date1]. Any of those students meeting the academic entry criteria on 23<sup>rd</sup> August will be considered for a place if any students who were previously offered places, conditional upon meeting the above academic entry criteria, do not achieve their grades.

## Appeals

Parents/carers will have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if they have been refused a place at the Academy. The Appeal takes place before a panel which is independent of the Academy. The arrangements for Appeals will be in line with the School Admission Appeals Code published by the Department of Education. Appellants will be advised of the appeal process by Sheffield City Council if they are refused admission. Information on the appeals process is available at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-forparentscarers/pupil-admissions/admission-policy.html>

## Notes

Home address<sup>6</sup>:

The home address is where a child normally lives. Where a child lives with parents with shared parental responsibility, each for part of a week, the address where the child lives is determined using a joint declaration from the parents stating the pattern of residence. If a child's residence is split equally between both parents, then parents will be asked to determine which residential address should be used for the purpose of admission to school. If no joint declaration is received where the residence is split equally by the closing date for applications, the home address will be taken as the address where the child is registered with the doctor. If the residence is not split equally between both parents then the address used will be the address where the child spends the majority of the school week.

Sibling<sup>7</sup>:

'Sibling' means a natural brother or sister, a half brother or sister, a legally adopted brother or sister or half-brother or sister, a step brother or sister or other child living in the same household as part of the same family who, in any of these cases, will be living at the same address at the date of their application for a place.

Medical and Social Need<sup>8</sup>:

'Social need' does not include a parent's wish that a child attends the school because of a child's aptitude or ability or because their friends attend the school.<sup>9</sup> 'Medical need' does not include mild medical conditions.

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<sup>6</sup> In this section define anything you need to, such as siblings, for instance or pupil premium. Here we have defined home address as an example.

<sup>7</sup> This is an example only. You may define siblings differently. Only relevant if you have a sibling oversubscription criterion.

<sup>8</sup> This is an example only. You may add to this definition. Only relevant if you have a medical or social need oversubscription criterion.

Please see map (attached appendix 1)

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<sup>9</sup> If your local authority include children who they deem to be 'at risk' (or whose parents have moved because of domestic abuse etc.) as having a social need, include them in this definition.

## Instructions to complete the admissions template.

### Introduction

The following instructions should be read as a guide to help you complete the template.

Before you start, delete the DfE badge at the top of the form, then you can continue to complete the template.

Mainstream free schools must use the criteria/processes in the drop-down boxes in the template in drafting their admission policies. They will help them ensure their arrangements comply with the [School Admissions Code](#) ('the Code'). We recommend you use 3 or 4 criteria in your policy, but you can use more or fewer if you wish.

You must retain the criterion in the template which gives top-priority to looked after and previously looked after children and the final criterion which gives priority to 'other' children.

Anything in square brackets can be removed or amended if not appropriate for your school.

Once you send your policy to your lead contact, DfE will check the policy to ensure:

- It works – DfE will advise whether the criteria you have selected work collectively in the order you have selected them (e.g. it would make little sense to prioritise siblings after the school was filled up by those living closest to the school);
- It complies with the Code; and
- It is fair. For example that, especially, catchment areas, feeder school systems and any banding (if used) are fair and are unlikely to run a high risk of an adverse schools adjudicator determination.

If a school does not use the template populated with the drop-down criteria, your lead contact will send your policy back to you for re-drafting.

Please therefore ensure you:

- a) draft your policy using this admissions policy template;
- b) use only the criteria in this document when drafting the admissions policy;
- c) include an application form when you submit your admission policy to DfE - it must ask only for the information necessary to apply the published admission criteria (faith schools may also need a religious inquiry form which a religious authority/priest/imam/rabbi etc. will need to sign to certify and applicant child is of the faith); and
- d) if you have a catchment area, submit a detailed catchment map as part of the admission policy, showing, street names, the location of the school and the boundary of the catchment.

Additional guidance is on the [free school admissions website](#). Schools are likely to find [the model policies document](#) useful in drafting their admissions policy.

## Section 1 – Introductory statement

This is a free text section. It should be no longer than one or two paragraphs at most and should set out the ethos of the school and any specialism (if relevant).

## Section 2 – Admission numbers

This is your published admission number ('PAN') as required by paragraph 1.2 of the Code. It is the number you must admit if there are sufficient applications.

It must be a definite single number (e.g. '60') for each relevant age group for admission rather something indefinite (e.g. 'we propose admitting up to 60') or a range (e.g. 'we will admit between 30 and 90'). It must also be clear which year group to which it will apply; normally reception in a primary school or year 7 in a secondary.

We strongly recommend that you do not adopt a PAN for every year group. This is because it will take at least 23 months start to finish to remove a PAN<sup>10</sup>. A school could quickly become overcrowded.

## Section 3 – Application process

Before completing this section you will need to talk to your local authority admissions officer and read the 'co-ordinated admissions' sections of the [Free School Pre Opening Guide](#). At the time of publication these were paragraphs 8.38 to 8.44.

Schools can only be within co-ordinated admissions<sup>11</sup> if:

- the local authority is content for your school to be included before the funding agreement is signed;
- the school has an agreed site (permanent or temporary) with all planning consents in place and no outstanding building works likely to delay opening; and
- your DfE lead contact has agreed that the school can be included in co-ordination in the school's first year.

Most schools will not be able to be in co-ordination in their first year and so they should work with their local authority admissions team early on to agree an application process, either with the school receiving applications and making offers, or the local authority doing so, but outside of co-ordinated admissions.

If the school has a sixth-form, also set out in this process how applications and offers are made. There are several options in the drop-down.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, if a school wanted to remove a PAN for September 2019 it would have to begin consulting in accordance with the Code from October 2017.

<sup>11</sup> All free schools must be included in their home local authority's co-ordinated admissions process in their second year and must comply with the local authority's co-ordinated scheme, which will be published on the council's website. For an explanation of co-ordinated admissions see paragraphs 63-65 of [Free School Admissions: Common Issues](#).

Where a school is not in co-ordinated admissions, it will need to produce an application form. This form must be submitted to DfE with the admissions policy and ask only for the information necessary to apply the admissions policy. It will need a separate application form for a sixth-form.

## **Section 4 – Banding**

This section is left blank if the school does not band applicants.

We are not aware of any primary schools using banding. It would appear to be impossible to test infants in the way required to band applicants.

Banding is a lawful method of ability-testing applicants and placing them in bands of different ability children to ensure the school admits a comprehensive intake of applicants overall.

Pupils first sit an ability test and are then placed into their ability bands. Oversubscription criteria are then applied to each band to determine who is admitted from each. Pupils are not admitted in the order of their test results. This would breach the Code.

If the school does band applicants it will need to purchase or develop an ability test and ensure applicants' scores are known before it applies its admission criteria.

It will need to select dates for testing applicants (offer alternative dates) and ensure that all marks are known before it applies its oversubscription criteria. Once a school is within co-ordination in the second year, tests will need to be marked and pupils ranked against the school's oversubscription criteria before the date set out in the local authority co-ordinated scheme for sending ranked lists of applicants back to their local authority.

Schools can band against:

- the ability profile of applicants;
- the ability profile of all children (i.e. of that year group) in its local authority area; or
- the ability profile of all children (i.e. of that year group) in England.

## **Section 5 – Oversubscription criteria**

All children with an education health and care plan naming the school must be admitted.

After these children are admitted, looked after and previously looked after children must always be given top priority within the oversubscription criteria and 'other children' must be given final priority for admission under the school's admission criteria. These fields are locked.

Other than this, the school has discretion over which other criteria to adopt and what order to place them in. Schools must use the wording provided in the drop-down boxes.

## **Aptitude Selection**

This is optional. We are not aware of any schools selecting by aptitude in reception and very few at junior phase.

Schools with a specialism in modern foreign languages, visual arts, performing arts and or sport can select 10% of their cohort by aptitude in those subjects. They are prescribed in regulations as subjects to which aptitude selection can lawfully be applied. No other subject is acceptable.

Aptitude is different to ability. Ability looks at prior attainment while aptitude looks at potential to learn. A school which asked for piano certificates would be selecting by ability in music but a school which tested for pitch, rhythm etc. would be testing for aptitude.

Where aptitude selection is used it is normally the second criterion after looked after and previously looked after children, but you can give such children lower priority if you wish. Note that if you give them too low a priority, parents are unlikely to be motivated to apply for an aptitude place.

If you test by aptitude, you must include a section in your application form so that parents can flag-up that they are applying for an aptitude place. Children who are assessed for aptitude and found not to have it must be considered alongside all other children under the remainder of the school's admission criteria rather than refused a place simply because they have failed to demonstrate their aptitude.

A number of tests exist and are already used by schools. For example a **music aptitude test** might test Pitch, Rhythm, Melody and Texture, a **sports aptitude test** might test agility, co-ordination, leg power; speed, muscular endurance, flexibility and stamina. A **modern foreign language** test will be in a synthetic language and might test a child's aptitude in associating words to their sounds, identifying grammatical structure, finding rhymes and practising writing and speaking words. You will be able to find these tests by searching the web.

Set out details of your test in notes at the end of your admission policy.

Remember to offer alternative dates for tests in case parents cannot make the original date.

## Siblings

This is optional.

The school has a couple of options it can select here:

- to prioritise the siblings of children already attending the school. As this is the school's first year, this will only apply to in year applicants;
- to prioritise the siblings of children already attending the school and of children attending a linked school.

The Code allows schools to give sibling priority to siblings of pupils attending another state funded school with which they have close links (for example, schools on the same site, or where there are close links between two single sex schools).

Schools cannot prioritise the siblings of children attending an independent school which is not an academy, or free school.

Set out your definition of 'sibling' in notes at the end of your admission policy. This is a requirement of the Code. Remember also to include a section to identify any siblings within your application form.

## **Medical or Social Need**

This is optional.

Where you prioritise based on medical or social need this is normally to take account of a child or parent's difficulties or inability to travel to another school or to take account of social needs such as children at risk or, for example, parents who have to move into the area because of abuse. There may be other medical or social needs.

We recommend that priority is given based on a child or parent's medical or social needs especially in a primary school where parents will normally accompany children to school. However, it is not unlawful to prioritise just on the child's needs.

The admissions criterion within the template requires written evidence to be submitted with the application. Schools should assess whether the evidence supports that the child or parent has a medical or social need which means that the child must attend this school.

The school can contract with the LA for it to assess need but will remain responsible for the decision and will have to be able to justify any decision to refuse admission at appeal. .

Set out your definitions in notes at the end of your admission policy. Remember to include a tick box in the application form that enables parents to alert you to the fact that they want their child to be considered under this criterion and a reminder to submit evidence with the application.

## **Pupil Premium and/or Service Premium or Free School Meals**

This is optional but we recommend that free schools prioritise pupils eligible for the pupil premium, free school meals ('FSM') and or the service premium.

If the school adopts this criterion it should be placed fairly high up in the oversubscription criteria, otherwise numbers admitted will be low.

Schools may limit the numbers of pupil premium and service premium children to, for example, the percentage of FSM children in the LA if they wish.

We have included the definitions of eligibility for pupil premium, service premium and FSM in the notes at the end of the template. Please delete whichever of the three definitions are not relevant when adopting such a priority.

Remember to include a tick box in the application form that enables parents to alert you to the fact that they want their child to be considered under this criterion and a reminder to submit evidence with the application.

## Staff priority

This is optional.

As the school will not have been open for two years at the point this admission policy comes into force, it is not possible to prioritise the children of staff who have been employed at the school for two years. The school can therefore only prioritise the children of staff recruited to fill a skill-shortage area.

Remember to include a tick box in the application form that enables parents to alert you to the fact that they want their child to be considered under this criterion.

## Catchment areas/priority areas

It is not compulsory to have a catchment area/priority area<sup>12</sup>

When a school adopts one (or an inner and outer catchment area) remember to include a map at the end of the admission policy which clearly sets out:

- Where the catchment is located within the local area – i.e. street names both inside and outside the area should be identifiable.
- A clear boundary, making it clear whether those who live on the boundary are considered to live inside or outside of the catchment;
- The location of the school.

You have a number of options with a catchment area and these options are set out in the template:

- a simple geographic area, either prioritising groups in order within the area (e.g. criterion a, followed by criterion b, followed by other children) or simply tie-breaking everyone within the catchment by distance from the school or by random allocation;
- inner and outer catchment areas prioritised as set out in the example above<sup>13</sup>;
- a radius (or radii) around the school prioritising pupils within the area prioritised as set out in the example above.

Ensure your catchment area is fair. The Admissions Code states that ‘admission authorities must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group’.

The schools adjudicator has found a number of schools’ admission policies to breach the fairness provisions of the Code where they do not give local children a high priority for admission or exclude a particular social/ethnic group of children.

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<sup>12</sup> The two terms are interchangeable.

<sup>13</sup> Note that the Academies Act requires that pupils are wholly or mainly drawn from the area of the school, so more pupils should normally be drawn from the inner catchment area.



## Feeder schools

It is not compulsory to have feeder schools. Where a school has feeder schools, these must be fair in the local context. The selection of a feeder school or schools must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.

They should be listed by name - i.e. saying 'all schools in X deanery' would not be compliant with the School Admissions Code.

Independent schools which are not academies or free schools cannot be selected as feeders.

The schools adjudicator has found a number of school's admission policies to breach the fairness provisions of the Code where they do not give local children a high priority for admission, so ensure that when you adopt a feeder system, the majority of places are allocated to children who are wholly or mainly from the area of the school.

It might also be hard to justify if primary schools near the school are not feeders but those further away are.

## Religious Admission criteria for faith schools

Free schools with a religious designation (i.e. those who will have one once open) can prioritise a maximum of 50% of children for places on the basis of their religion.

The template therefore includes this provision. You would normally prioritise up to 50% by faith within your policy, then use any permissible oversubscription criteria to prioritise faith applicants within that category. Next, you would allocate remaining places without reference to faith, using any permissible oversubscription criteria to prioritise applicants within that category.

Please note that, with a PAN of, for example 100, a school will be able to admit a maximum of 50 by reference to their faith:

- if the school receives 180 faith applicants and only 20 non faith applicants, 50 of the faith applicants would be admitted on the basis of their faith and the remaining 150 applicants would be considered for the remaining 50 places with no consideration being given to their faith or lack of it;
- If the school receives 49 faith applicants and 151 non-faith applicants, all faith applicants would be admitted. The remaining 51 places would then be allocated to non-faith applicants.

If a school operates faith admission arrangements parents will need to identify that they are 'of the faith' on the application form. You are also likely to need a priest's/imam's/rabbi's etc. reference form that defines what 'of the faith' means and whether children fit the faith criteria.

The school must, insofar as it complies with the School Admissions Code, follow their faith body's definition of 'of the faith'. It would be helpful to include this in the notes section of the admission policy and/or on the application form and priest's etc. reference form.

The Code requires that schools have regard to any faith admissions guidance provided by their faith body and to adopt any measures of faith activity (such as attendance at church etc.) 'as laid out' by their faith body, insofar as this advice complies with the Code.

You should not include such things as service to the church or community work within the religious community or any connected body within your faith criteria as these are ruled out by the School Admissions Code.

You will have seen that [we are consulting](#) on removing the requirement to limit faith admissions to 50%. This is, however, for the future and we cannot remove the requirement in anticipation of the outcome of the consultation.

Any change to the rules will not affect free schools already approved in pre-opening. The department will inform faith schools of any changes in policy.

## **Section 6 – Tie-break**

Your admission policy must include a tie-break. It is absolutely vital that you have one for cases where several applicants meet your oversubscription criteria and you have no other way of determining who is admitted. We have included alternatives within the template.

You have options of:

- tie-breaking by distance, in a straight line from home to school or by safe walking route;
- tie-breaking by distance, in a straight line from home to a nodal point<sup>14</sup> or points for the school or by safe walking route; or
- random allocation.

If you adopt random allocation, we recommend that you do so within a reasonable catchment area. If you do not, applicants living anywhere will have an equal opportunity of admission and may not be able to travel the potentially lengthy distances required to school.

Random allocation should also be used as a final tie-break when using a distance tie-break. This is because children living in a block of flats may live exactly the same distance from the school.

Where you use a distance tie-break and the local authority will measure distance for you, ensure that the way this is written into your admission policy correctly describes the LA methodology.

If children of multiple birth are tied for the final place, we strongly recommend they are both admitted and you exceed your admission number.

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<sup>14</sup> Nodal points will normally be used where the free school is in temporary buildings before moving to its permanent site. The nodal points will be set in the community to be served by the school and, most often, at the temporary site of the school itself. UTCs often use nodal points because they are specialist provision serving a wide geographic area.

## **Section 7 – Arrangements for admission to the sixth-form**

This section is clearly only necessary if you have a sixth-form

It will set out whatever academic criteria the school will apply to sixth-form admissions and state either:

- that the school will apply no academic entry criteria whatsoever;
- that the school will apply academic entry criteria but no specific additional requirements in respect of Maths and English GCSEs; or
- that the school will apply academic entry criteria including specific additional requirements in respect of Maths and English GCSEs.

Please note, that children in your own year 11 cannot be required to apply to re-enter the school in year 12. If they have met the academic entry criteria, they must be permitted to move up to year 12. This means that your PAN will only include those you wish to admit from outside the school.

Most free schools will not have any year 11 pupils in their first year and so can set their year 12 PAN so that the sixth-form is filled by external applicants. However, if the school does have a year 11 cohort, the year 12 PAN should be low to take account of numbers moving up from year 11. A PAN is a minimum number to be admitted. You can always exceed it if numbers moving up from year 11 look like they will be lower than expected.

## **Section 8 – Late applications**

This section is optional. The school should ideally adopt the same process as the LA does for handling late applications in its co-ordinated scheme. This is because, in its second year, the school will in any case be required by the School Admissions Code to comply with the processes in the co-ordinated scheme (including and for handling late applications).

## **Section 9 – Deferred entry for infants**

The inclusion of this section is required, unamended, for any schools with infant classes. Other schools should delete it.

## **Section 10 – Admission of children outside their normal age group**

This section must be included. It is a mandatory requirement of the School Admissions Code to set out, in the school's admission policy, the process for considering admissions out of normal age group. See paragraphs 2.17 to 2.17B of the Code.

Remember to include a tick box in the application form that enables parents to alert you to the fact that they want their child to be considered for admission outside their normal age group and a reminder to submit evidence, if they wish, with the application.

## **Section 11 – Waiting lists**

This section must be included as drafted in the template except in two cases:

- if banding is used - in which case, replace both paragraphs with whichever banding drop-down option you choose, either running banding tests all year round or not banding the waiting list;
- if the school makes offers for its sixth-form, if it has one, based on conditional grades, which it firms up after GCSE grades are known – in which case, select the additional paragraph from the drop-down.

## **Section 12 – Appeals**

This section must be included as drafted in the template. Anyone refuse a place has a right of appeal.

## **Section 13 – Notes**

This section has been ready populated in the template. Delete anything which does not apply and add any further notes that are necessary.

## **Section 14 – Catchment area map.**

Add a map at the end of your policy if the school has a catchment area.

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