



Admissions Advice

The following guidance has been prepared to help governors review their policies prior to consulting on them or determining them for 2026-2027.

The Admission Arrangements

All schools must have Admission Arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places at the school. Admission arrangements are determined by Admissions Authorities. The Board of Education produces guidance to support Admissions Authorities to determine their policies.

Admission Authorities must set ('determine') Admission Arrangements annually, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required. Where any material changes are proposed to Admission Arrangements, the Admissions Authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements for a minimum of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31st January. If no changes are made to Admission Arrangements, they must be consulted on at least once every 7 years. This consultation period allows parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about proposed Admission Arrangements. We suggest that all consultations should try to be completed by the time schools break-up for Christmas. For information about who to consult, please see the Admissions Code.

If the changes proposed are to adhere to a determination of the Schools Adjudicator, to ensure compliance with the Admissions Code, to correct an error or for clarification then no consultation is required.

The Applications

Parents must complete the Local Authority (LA) Common Application Form, and may also need to complete a Supplementary Information Form if this is required from individual schools such as 'faith' schools. These forms are in an agreed format to comply with legislation. In the normal admissions round parents apply to the LA in which they live for places at their preferred schools. Parents are able to express a preference for at least three schools. The application can include schools outside the LA where the child lives: a parent can apply for a place for their child at any state-funded school in any area.

The Offer of Places

If a school is undersubscribed, any parent that applies must be offered a place for their child or children. When oversubscribed, Admissions Authorities must rank applications in order against its published oversubscription criteria and send that list back to the LA. Published Admissions Arrangements must make clear to parents that a separate application must be made for any transfer from nursery to primary school, and from infant to junior school. All preferences are collated and parents then receive an offer from the LA. For primary schools, the offer is made on or about 16 April, in the year in which the child will be admitted. For secondary schools, the offer is made on or about 1 March, in the year in which the child will be admitted.

The Appeals

Parents, and in some circumstances children, have the right to appeal against an Admissions Authority's decision to refuse admission. The Admissions Authority must set out the reasons for the decision, that there is a right of appeal, the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. The Admissions Authority must establish an independent appeal panel to hear the appeal. The panel will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the appeal. Where a panel upholds the appeal the school is required to admit the child.

Admissions: The Process to Approve your Admission Arrangements

The Admissions Process is over a two-year cycle. This begins in September when the Governing Board has to consider a number of questions.

a. Setting the Published Admission Number (PAN)

1. As part of determining their Admission Arrangements, all Admissions Authorities must set an admission number for each 'relevant age group'.
2. Admissions Authorities are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. However, we would expect an Admissions Authority of a VA school to consult with the Board of Education if there is a proposal to increase the PAN as this could have significant implications for the building. Admissions Authorities must notify their LA of their intention to increase their PAN and we would also encourage a conversation with other local schools. Reference to an increase in PAN must be made on the school's website.
3. For a community or voluntary controlled school, the LA (as Admissions Authority) must consult at least the Governing Board of the school where it proposes either to increase or keep the same PAN.
4. All Admissions Authorities must consult where they propose a decrease to the PAN. The level of consultation expected is set out in the Admissions Code.

5. If, at any time following determination of the PAN, an Admissions Authority decides that it is able to admit above its PAN, it must notify the LA in good time to allow the LA to deliver its co-ordination responsibilities effectively. Admissions Authorities may also admit above their PAN in-year.

b. Agreeing the Admissions Criteria

Schools should determine priority criteria to determine the criteria against which pupil places will be allocated if the school is over subscribed. This should be done with reference to the Admissions Code and the DBE's Guidance (available on our website). Admissions Authorities must allocate places on the basis of their determined Admission Arrangements only, and a decision to offer or refuse admission must not be made by one individual in an Admissions Authority. The Governing Body of an Admissions Authority, or an Admissions Committee to which that function has been properly delegated, must make such decisions.

All schools, including schools designated with a religious character, that have enough places available in the normal admissions round must offer a place to every child who has applied for one, without condition or the use of any oversubscription criteria.

Admissions Authorities must not refuse to admit a child solely because: a) they have applied later than other applicants; b) they are not of the faith of the school in the case of a school designated with a religious character.

Requirements of the 2021 School Admissions Code

The revised code came into force on 1 September 2021 and all maintained schools and academies must comply with it. There are two main areas that all admission arrangements must include.

1. All schools must include IAPLAC children in their first oversubscription category.
2. All policies must be amended to comply with the 2021 code; admission authorities need to ensure that their policy has this as the first oversubscription criteria. Please note that this first criterion cannot include any other category of children.

A suggested form of wording would be:

Children who are in public care (looked after children LAC) or those who were previously looked after (PLAC), including those who appear (to the admissions authority) to have been in state care outside of England, but have ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order.

It would be helpful to add to your note on LAC the following:

By children previously in state care outside of England, we mean children who have been looked after outside of England by a public authority, a religious organisation, or another provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. The care may have been provided in orphanages or other settings. Where Governors are unsure about the validity of the application, advice will be sought from the Local Authority's "Virtual School Head"

In-Year admissions arrangements

The code requires own admissions authorities to determine whether they will manage their own in-year admissions arrangements, or if this will be coordinated by the LA. Schools are now required to inform the LA of their decision by 1 August. Whilst schools can ask their LA to manage in-year admissions, there is no requirement in the code for LAs to offer this, please check with your LA if they do offer to manage in-year admissions.

If governors decide to manage their own arrangements, their policy must set out clearly how an application is to be made and how the governors will process it. They will also have to make available an application form for this purpose (where appropriate this could be modelled on the LA form).

If schools do manage their own in-year admissions, they must let the LA know of any application received and of the outcome of the application.

General issues

Please use the attached checklist to help you ensure that your policy is fully compliant with the code and that it contains all the key elements.

The policy should be clear and easy to understand. It should all be contained in one document rather than requiring parents to access other documents.

It must be published on the school website by 15 March of the year in which it was determined. At this point the policies for 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 must be available on the website. Earlier policies should be removed as they are no longer applicable.

Check that the policy is easily accessible on the website. It can be difficult if parents have to hunt for the policy. Ideally a tab on the home page with the heading of admissions is really the most helpful solution.

Schools must have regard to Leicester DBE's guidance

The code requires that schools must have regard to any guidance set by the diocese. For the sake of clarity Leicester diocese states that:

Church of England schools in the diocese should not set faith-based or church attendance as a criterion. Admitting authorities should have regard to this advice when setting their policies.

In **exceptional** circumstances and only with the prior consent of the DBE, a governing body may use faith-based criteria. In which case the DBE makes the following recommendations:

1. Faith-based criteria must be easy to understand
2. The only definition used should be attendance at church
3. Governing bodies may define churches and ecclesial communities as those that are in membership of any local Churches Together Group. However, there are many new worshipping communities that each church school may know and have a relationship within its area and so Governing Boards may wish to broaden this definition or name specific local Christian communities

4. Admission authorities should define “regular attendance” in consultation with the local churches. In most cases, regular attendance can be defined as attending on a fortnightly basis over two years prior to the closing date for applications.
5. Schools may wish to provide a simple form for the church leader to sign (Supplementary Information Form). Using letters from clergy to verify attendance is not recommended as they may not be precise enough in addressing the criteria and could be challenged at appeal.

c. Ensuring your Admissions Criteria are Approved

For Admissions Authorities NOT Consulting:

If you do not wish to make changes to your Admissions Criteria, and do not need to consult due to the 7 year rule, then we ask that your Admission Arrangements are sent to the Board of Education for checking by **30th November** at the latest. Please email them to:

OfficeDBE@leicesterdbbe.org Your proposals will be responded to promptly.

For Admissions Authorities that ARE Consulting:

Church of England schools must consult with the DBE prior to public consultation. Please email your proposals to the OfficeDBE@leicesterdbbe.org by **30th September** at the latest. Your proposals will be responded to by **15th October** so that public consultation can proceed.

Public consultation must then take place for a six-week period concluding by the **31st January**. The DBE must be included as a consultee. Please email your draft policy to the OfficeDBE@leicesterdbbe.org

It is important that the Governing Board approve your Admission Arrangements once they have been to consultation. Final Approval and determination of the Arrangements must then take place by the Governing Body by **28th February** at the latest. A minute of this formal determination should be taken in the relevant Governing Body meeting.

Useful Documents

The Admissions Code: [School admissions code 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/school-admissions-code-2021.pdf)

Useful Contacts

Any queries or assistance with regards the process please contact Nina Hern or Carolyn Lewis in the first instance.