



Exeter Diocesan Board of Education (EDBE)

Admission Guidance for Church of England Schools and Academies

Admissions criteria only comes into play when a school is oversubscribed. The over-subscription criteria must be objective, fair and compatible with admissions and equal opportunities legislation. There needs to be regard to any relevant advice, the School Admission and Appeals Codes, the Local Authority co-ordinated admission scheme and been subject to the consultation procedures as set out in the admissions timeline.

All governing bodies / academy trusts are required by section 324 of the Education Act 1996 to admit to the school children with a statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care plan that names the school. This is not an oversubscription criterion. Schools must admit such children whether they have places or not. Admission authorities must not imply in their published admission arrangements that they have discretion over the admission of children with statements of special educational needs. Paragraph 1.6 – School Admissions Code 2014.

Over-subscription criteria needs to be clearly defined e.g. definition of sibling, tie breaker. Listed are some commonly used and acceptable over-subscription criteria. These are not listed in any particular order.

1. **Looked After Children.** The Code states that looked after children and previously looked after children are the most vulnerable children in society and finding a school place in the best interests of the child is of paramount importance. Admission authorities for faith schools **must** give first priority to children in care of their faith and may give first priority to all children in care. The Exeter Diocesan Board of Education endorses all admission authorities to give all children in care the first and highest priority in their over-subscription criteria. Paragraph 1.7 – Schools Admissions Code 2014. The 2014 code also states that previously looked after children **must** also be included in this priority.
2. **Religious Affiliation.** Church schools can legitimately use religious affiliation and practice as one of their over-subscription criteria – Paragraph 1.36 Schools Admissions Code 2012. Admission authorities must ensure that parents can easily understand how faith based criteria will be reasonably satisfied. Careful consideration should be given to the meanings of ‘the church’, ‘attendance at a church’, ‘and membership of a church’. Consideration should be given to the proximity of other church schools and other churches where there is no church school in the parish. Consideration may also be given to churches with membership of and/or bodies in association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and/or the Evangelical Alliance. Faith schools are required by

section 86 of the SSFA 1998 to offer every child who applies, whether they are of faith, of another faith or no faith, a place at the school if there are places available. Paragraph 1.36 – Schools Admissions Code 2014.

Admission authorities must ensure that parents can easily understand how any faith based criteria will be reasonably satisfied and must have regard for any guidance from the Exeter Diocesan Board of Education.

Funding Agreements for entirely new Academies (i.e. not converters from the maintained sector, or those sponsored Academies with a predecessor school) and Free Schools with a religious character provide that where the school is oversubscribed at least 50% of places are to be allocated without reference to faith. Regulation 9 of the School Admissions Regulations 2012 30 1991 No 2.

- 3. Siblings of children who are at the school at the time of application.** It is good practice for admission authorities to give priority to siblings in their over-subscription criteria. The complexity of family life means it is important to make clear the information provided to parents what is meant by a sibling. Paragraph 1.11 – Schools Admissions Code 2014.
- 4. Designated areas (catchment areas). Priority may be given to local children whose parents have expressed a preference, though there must not be any guarantee of a place.** A designated area does not prevent parents expressing a preference for the school if they do not live in the area. Admission authorities must comply with parental preference in respect of parents living outside the designated area. Where designated areas are used admission authorities must provide a map. Designated areas must not be set after other admission arrangements have been determined. Paragraph 1.14 – Schools Admissions Code 2014.
- 5. Distance from School.** Distance from school or nearness to school, is a very commonly used over-subscription criteria and is frequently used as a ‘tie breaker’. There should be clear information on how distance is measured. This should include provision for cases where parents have shared responsibility for a child following the breakdown of their relationship and the child lives for part of the week with each parent. Paragraph 1.13 – Schools Admissions Code 2014.
- 6. Social and Medical need.** Admission authorities must ensure that in using these oversubscription criteria there is no discrimination against children because of their special educational needs or disabilities. There must be a clear explanation of what supporting evidence will be required from a relevant professional, such as a doctor, social worker or educational psychologist. It is also advisable for the school to have a written and agreed policy for this criterion. Admission authorities must not give higher priority to children under this criterion if the required documents have not been produced. All decisions based on evidence provided must be consistent. Paragraph 1.16 – Schools Admission Code 2014.
- 7. Children of staff at the school**

Admission authorities may give priority in their over subscription criteria to children of staff at the school in either or both of the following circumstances:

- a) where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or
- b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

Paragraph 1.39 – School Admission Code 2014.

8. Feeder Schools

Feeder schools can be named in the oversubscription criteria but this must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds. Paragraph 1.15 – School Admission Code 2014.

9. Pupil Premium

Admission authorities may priority in their oversubscription criteria to children eligible for the early years pupil premium, the pupil premium also children eligible for the service premium. Admission authorities must clearly define in the arrangements the categories of eligible premium recipients to be prioritised. Paragraph 1.39A – School Admission Code 2014.

Admission arrangements must include an effective, clear and fair tie breaker to decide between two applications that cannot otherwise be separated.

Governors / directors must decide which type of policy is most relevant to their local circumstances, may adapt the EDBE model policy, and formulate a policy specifically for their school.

Decisions on admissions can be made by a delegated committee or the whole governing body / board of directors. The whole governing body for a maintained school must decide on terms of reference for an Admission Committee and review annually. The scheme of delegation for academies must clearly define who has responsibility for the admissions process and decisions on admissions. Admission authorities must ensure that any member of staff employed at the school has no individual role in the admission process or admissions decisions. This includes the headteacher.

Headteachers or school staff should not give parents an expectation that their application will be successful or inform them that their child has been given a place, before admissions decisions have been made. Under co-ordinated arrangements the Local Authority will send notification to the parents. This may differ for in year applications.

Governing bodies may need to obtain additional information from parents in order to apply specific admissions criteria. This may be provided via a separate form – a Supplementary Information Form. Governing bodies should agree with EDBE and Local Authority how any additional forms are received or submitted, and is usually written into a Local Authority co-ordinated scheme. Additional information sought

should be objective and factual and may include evidence sought from a priest or minister, or in the case of other world faiths, from a religious leader. Additional information requested must not include any information other than that required to process the application. Supplementary Information **must** be collected before the allocation of places.

The national offer date for primary applications is 16th April or the next working day. The national offer date for secondary applications is 1st March or the next working day.

Each admission authority must maintain a waiting list for at least one term in the academic year of admission, for every oversubscribed school. The waiting list policy should be made clear in the published arrangements. The waiting list must be clear, fair and objective and must not give priority to children based on the date either their application was received or the date their name was added to the list. Children on the waiting list must be ranked in the same order as the oversubscription criteria.

Where admission authorities offer places in reception to children before compulsory school age they must allow parents to request that their child's entry be deferred until later in the school year and that the place is held for that child. The parent would not be allowed to defer entry beyond the beginning of the term after the child's 5th birthday, nor beyond the year for which the original application was accepted. Paragraph 2.16 – Schools Admission Code 2014.

Where parents seek a place for their child outside their normal age group, admissions authorities must make decisions on the basis of circumstances of each case and in the best interest of the child concerned which will include taking account of the parent's views, the child's developments and professional views.

When a school place is refused information on parents/carers right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel needs to be included with contact details of the clerk to the Independent Appeal Panel.

Any changes to admission arrangements must go through a statutory consultation process for 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January each year. If there are no changes governing bodies need to consult at least every 7 years. All admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements by 28 February each year even if they have not changed and a consultation has not been required.