

# Admissions

## Whitchurch Primary School Admission Policy

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### Responsibility for admissions to school

This rests with the 'admission authority' for each school. The admission authority will determine the school's admissions policy and decide on any applications for places.

#### Key points:

Head teachers have no individual role in deciding school admissions.

Foundation and voluntary aided schools — the governing body is the admission authority, although it may delegate the function of determining applications to a committee. This committee will administer the admission process, as determined by the governing body. A head teacher should be a member of the committee, but cannot act for the governing body in determining the school's admissions policy, or in deciding on the admission of any individual child.

Community and voluntary controlled schools — the local education authority (LEA) is normally the admission authority. In this case, the school's governing body must, by law, implement the LEA's decisions on individual applications, and act in accordance with the admission arrangements determined and published by the LEA.

If the LEA is the admission authority, and the school's governing body refuse to admit the child, the LEA can refer the matter to the Secretary of State. He may then direct the governing body to comply with the LEA's decision under section 496 or section 497 of **the Education Act 1996**. The governing body can, however, appeal to an independent appeal panel where the LEA has decided to admit a pupil who has been permanently excluded from two or more schools.

The LEA may delegate responsibility for admissions to the governing body of a community or voluntary controlled school with their agreement. **The School Admissions Code of Practice** gives statutory guidance to all admission authorities on the law and on guiding principles for school admissions. All those involved with operating admission arrangements must have regard to the Code. A separate, statutory **School Admission Appeals Code of Practice** also applies.

#### Consultation

Admission authorities in an area must consult each other on all aspects of their proposed admission arrangements, before determining them. The School Admissions Code of Practice describes what should be done, including an encouragement to consult Academies.

#### Key points:

The governing body of a foundation and voluntary aided school must consult the governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools, if the LEA is the admission authority.

The governing body of Church of England schools must consult their Diocesan Board of Education before consulting others.

All maintained school admission authorities are encouraged to establish the views of parents before determining their admission arrangements. Academies must consult locally as required by their funding agreements.

Admission authorities must complete their consultation by 1 March and determine their admission arrangements by 15 April, notifying all those that they consulted. This may be done by electronic mail, but it is not sufficient for admission authorities to put their proposed or determined arrangements on their website.

Consultation on proposed admission arrangements should take place within 'the relevant area'; the LEA determines this, after appropriate consultation with the other local admission authorities, and any neighbouring LEAs.

There may be more than one relevant area in the LEA's area. LEAs should consult on and review their relevant areas every two years. Relevant areas should reflect parents' diverse preferences and children's travel-to-school patterns.

If the LEA has notified the Secretary of State that all admission authorities in the relevant area have consulted each other in the 'qualifying year' (i.e. in 2004/05 or any subsequent year), a foundation or voluntary aided school has to consult every other year, not every year, if the following conditions are met:

the governing body is proposing the same admission arrangements as it had determined in the preceding year;

no objection has been made to the Schools Adjudicator about the admission arrangements proposed by the governing body in any of the preceding five years.

LEAs must establish local Admission Forums to enable all local admission authorities to discuss existing and proposed admission arrangements, and to promote agreement on difficult admission issues in the area.

#### **Annual consultation timetable**

<b>By</b>	<b>Action</b>
1 March each year.	All admission authorities complete consultation on proposed admission arrangements for individual schools (should allow at least one month)
15 April each year	Admission authorities determine admission arrangements
Within 14 days of determination date	Admission authorities notify details of determined admission arrangements to LEAs and admission authorities who were consulted
Date specified by LEA	Each governing body provides information to LEA for composite prospectus entry
No later than six weeks before date by when parents may express a preference	LEA publishes composite prospectus
Date decided locally (the admission authority will publish a deadline, which should not be less than 10 working days from the date parents were notified their application was unsuccessful).	Parents make their appeals (where relevant)

#### **Publication of information for consultation**

##### **Key points:**

Admission authorities who determine a school's admission number lower than that indicated by the new net capacity formula (set out in DfES document, *Assessing the Net Capacity of Schools*) must publish a notice explaining this in a local newspaper. The notice must tell parents they have the right to object about this to the Adjudicator.

Admission authorities of schools who determine to continue with partially selective admission arrangements which have been in force since the 1997/98

school year — and which could not now lawfully be introduced — must publish a notice explaining this each year. The notice must tell parents they have the right to object about this to the Adjudicator.

### **Objections to the adjudicator**

School Adjudicators are appointed by the Secretary of State under section 25 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to consider school organisation and admissions issues where local agreement has not been possible; they are independent of the Secretary of State.

### **Key points:**

Any objections should be made to the Adjudicator within six weeks of notification of the determined admission arrangements.

Any admission authority may refer to the Adjudicator an objection about admission arrangements set by another admission authority in the relevant area;

The governing bodies of community and voluntary controlled schools (that are not their own admission authority) can refer an objection to the Adjudicator about:

the admission arrangements of foundation and VA schools; and  
the admission number set for their own school by the LEA.

They cannot object about any other aspect of the admission arrangements the LEA sets for their school, or about any aspect of the admission arrangements the LEA sets for other community and controlled schools.

Eligible parents can object to the Adjudicator about an admission authority setting an admission number for a school that is lower than that indicated by the new net capacity assessment, or against pre-existing partially selective admission arrangements. For the Adjudicator to consider this objection, at least 10 parents who live in the relevant area must object.

See **School Adjudicators** for a fuller description of the Adjudicator's role.

### **Publishing admission arrangements for parents**

All admission authorities have a duty to publish details of the admission arrangements they have determined. Published admission arrangements must include the over-subscription criteria that will be used to allocate places if there are more applicants than places at a particular school.

### **LEAs must publish:**

A composite prospectus containing the admission arrangements for all the maintained mainstream schools and Academies in their area, before 1 October each year;

arrangements for enabling parents to express a preference for a particular school or schools (with an explanation of what they and LEAs/schools should be doing at each stage of the admissions process, including all relevant timescales and deadlines);

information on how to take up their statutory right of appeal (see **Admission Appeals** for more information on appeals);

details of the LEA's co-ordinated admissions scheme, and;

any other information which they consider will be of interest to parents, for example, on application numbers and patterns of successful applicants (i.e. the criteria under which they were accepted) in recent years, to help parents assess realistically their likelihood of getting a place at any preferred school.

Composite prospectuses should also tell parents where and how to access other sources of information, such as the annual school performance tables, and published reports of recent school inspections.

Governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools must:

provide the LEA with the information required for the composite prospectus  
publish information about their school's admission and appeal arrangements;  
they should also consider publishing other information of interest to parents.  
Information for parents should be clear, easy to understand and in an accessible  
format, including on the school's website.

### **Variation to determined admission arrangements**

#### **Key points:**

Once admission arrangements have been determined admission authorities can ask to vary them — if there has been a significant change of circumstances. (Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). The School Admissions Code of Practice defines these circumstances and what admission authorities should do.

Admission authorities should refer their proposed variations to the Adjudicator, and notify all the bodies which were or should have been consulted before the arrangements were determined. A simple misprint in the published admission arrangements may not require a request to the Adjudicator for a variation.

Admission authorities should consider very carefully before referring a variation to the Adjudicator and should not do so once parents have been asked to make their application decisions, unless a major change in circumstances makes this unavoidable.

An admission authority may vary its admission number, irrespective of whether such a variation constitutes a major change, if the variation is necessary to implement published statutory proposals (section 28 of the 1998 Act). However, if the School Organisation Committee proposes to modify the admission number stated in the proposal, the variation must be referred to the Adjudicator.

#### **Revision of determined admission arrangements**

An admission authority may revise its admission arrangements if it believes it needs to do so because of a decision by the Adjudicator or the Secretary of State to uphold an objection to another admission authority's admission arrangements. This would be necessary if the admission authority's arrangements are the same or sufficiently similar for the Adjudicator to make the same decision against them if an objection had been made. In this case the admission authority must revise its admission arrangements within two months and must notify each of the admission authorities which it was required to consult about the revised arrangements it has determined.

### **Parental preference**

#### **Key points:**

LEAs must allow parents to express a preference or preferences for the school they would like their child to attend, and to give reasons for that preference. LEAs and governing bodies must comply with an expressed preference unless certain specified circumstances apply.

In most cases, preferences are refused because the school is full, but admission authorities of wholly selective schools can refuse to comply if their specific selective criteria are not met.

Other specified circumstances are:

where another place has been offered under co-ordinated admission arrangements;

where to admit would be incompatible with the duty to meet infant class size limits, or;

where the child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools and at least one of the exclusions took place after 1 September 1997.

Note: from the 2004-5 school year onwards, if the expressed preference is for a voluntary aided or foundation school having a religious character, the admission authority may no longer refuse to comply if there are places available, when applications for denominational places have been met.

### **Co-ordinated admission arrangements**

#### **Key points:**

See the **clarification note** issued by the DfES School Admissions policy team in March 2005 regarding some of the issues relating to the ranking system and regard to first preference

The 2002 Act introduced a statutory requirement for every LEA to draw up a scheme to co-ordinate admissions to every mainstream maintained school within their area. The School Admissions Code of Practice provides detail on these schemes.

Under co-ordination, parents living in a LEA send in one application form naming all their preferred schools, and all receive place offers on a single day. Co-ordination is required from September 2005 intakes, but LEAs may decide to introduce it for secondary intakes from September 2004.

LEAs draw up schemes in consultation, first with the Admission Forum, and then with all other local admission authorities in their area. The scheme must be agreed by all admission authorities in the LEA's area. If they cannot agree, the Secretary of State may impose a scheme.

Foundation and voluntary aided schools will still be able to determine and apply their own admission arrangements, including oversubscription criteria. They must give their LEA lists of which children they can accept in which order, so that the LEA can eliminate multiple offers in accordance with the agreed scheme.