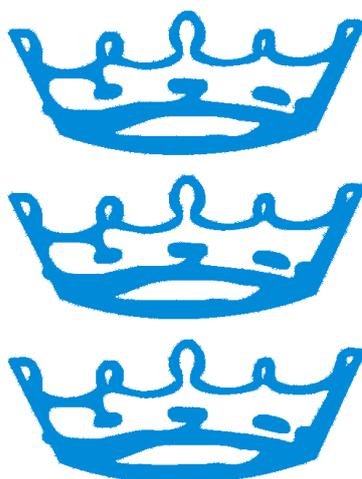


Diocese of Bristol



Guidance on Admissions for Church of England schools and academies

August 2016

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Introduction

Church of England schools and academies should be able to show how their Admissions Policy and practice demonstrates the school's commitment to both distinctiveness and inclusivity, and to both church families and the wider community.

One of the most sensitive issues for Church school admissions is the balance of places offered to Anglican families and to the local community. For the vast majority of primary schools this is not an issue since, while admissions policies almost always include the provision for applications from Anglican families, there is rarely any tension between achieving this and meeting the needs of the community more generally. Church of England schools exist in local communities both as an expression of service and also to provide - for the Church family - an education within an explicitly Anglican Christian ethos and framework.

"The Dearing Report popularised the use of 'foundation' and 'open' places as an expression of this dual purpose. Foundation places are those offered to children whose parent(s) or carers are faithful and regular worshippers in an Anglican or other Christian church. Open places are those available for children from the local neighbourhood or community surrounding the school, irrespective of religious affiliation."¹

For some secondary schools on the other hand the situation may be very different. A secondary school may be the only Church school serving a large area so maintaining a balance between the admission of local pupils and children of Anglican families might be much more difficult. It is, therefore, very important for secondary schools to make clear how the balance is arrived at and what oversubscription criteria are applied, ensuring always that they conform with the most recent School Admissions Code. Because of their often unique situations it would be advisable to ask the Diocese for specific advice and support in achieving this. Other secondary schools may be Voluntary Controlled, serving the local community with a Christian ethos. New Free Schools can only have a maximum of 50% of faith places. Any secondary school needs to develop its Admissions Policy in the light of its specific circumstances.

The Diocese of Bristol seeks to uphold the mission articulated in the *Going for Growth* report:

"The starting point is the Christian belief that all human beings are made in the image of God. That means each child is a unique human being, made by God and loved by Him, and worth the highest possible standards of education and care and the closest attention to what will enable them to flourish."²

This report spells out an obligation to recognise and make visible those who often remain invisible through ethnic or cultural disadvantage, or through disability or poverty.³ This should underpin everything that happens in Church schools and should underpin every Admissions Policy.

¹ National Society Advice to DBEs about Admissions to Church of England Schools June 2011 p4

² *Going for Growth* 3.6

³ Archbishops' Council Education Division 2010

However, the Dearing report spoke of the value of having a core of children who came from families already committed to the Christian faith in order to strengthen the culture of a school and to ensure that all children in the school have opportunities to engage at a profound level with faith in general, and the Christian experience and way of life in particular.⁴

The Diocese of Bristol's Board of Education is committed to providing a mixed economy across its schools to maintain the dual purpose of Church of England education. All schools in the Diocese will seek to maintain a strong commitment to providing a distinctively Christian ethos where all pupils can flourish. All schools within the Diocese will also have strong and distinctive Collective Worship at the heart of their shared life and Religious Education will be regarded as a key subject. Some schools in contexts of oversubscription may offer foundation places for Anglicans and other Christians to make an unequivocally clear expression of Christian life and worship. The criteria recommended by the National Society as a basis for determining who can qualify for a foundation place is found at Appendix 1. If they have not done so and they believe that it would be fair to do so, Choir schools may wish to return to their funding agreement to ensure that the core purpose of their school as a Choir school is maintained by securing an agreed oversubscription criteria for a set number of choristers per year (e.g. 8-10). However schools wishing to set specific criteria that may appear to conflict with the School Admissions Code can only do so if agreement has been gained from the Secretary of State and the Diocese and the criterion is written into the Funding Agreement. Schools should be aware that the Secretary of State will only agree such departures from Code compliance when it supports fairness. Prioritising choristers over local children may not, in every case, always be fair and so may be approved or may be refused.

Advice and FAQs

The advice and information offered below is intended for schools where the governing body is the admissions authority, is for guidance purposes, and is not exhaustive. Whilst every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of information, admissions is a complex and rapidly changing aspect of education and therefore all information contained below should be checked against the admissions codes and appeals processes offered by the Department for Education and the National Society (see Useful Resources at the end of this document).

In drafting their admission arrangements the governing body and the school should consider carefully a major focus of the School Admissions Code that documents should be clear and easy for parents to understand. If necessary it may be sensible to produce a short guide for parents to sit alongside the policy itself.

The use of the terms '*must*' and '*must not*' in this document denotes a mandatory requirement in the School Admissions Code (December 2014). Use of '*should*', '*should not*', '*may*' and '*may not*' denotes guidance.

Who is responsible for admissions?

In voluntary controlled (VC), community and foundation schools without a religious trust the admissions authority is the Local Authority (LA), unless the function has been delegated to the governing body.

In voluntary aided (VA) schools and foundation schools with a religious trust the governing body is the admissions authority.

⁴ Para 4.47 of the Dearing Report in relation to new schools

Type of school	Who is the admissions authority?	Who deals with complaints about arrangements?	Who is responsible for arranging/providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at a school?
Academies	Academy Trust	Schools Adjudicator	Academy Trust
Community	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority
Foundation	Governing body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing body
Voluntary aided	Governing body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing body
Voluntary controlled	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority

The admission authority for an academy is the Academy Trust. Admissions arrangements for academies *must* be approved by the Secretary of State as part of the academy's Funding Agreement. Academies are subject to the School Admissions Code.

Do we have to put the policy on the website?

Governors *must* determine their admissions arrangements each year by 28 February, even if there are no changes to the policy (School Admissions Code 2014 para: 1.46). A copy of the determined arrangements *must* be placed on the school website (where there is one) which *must* be displayed for the whole offer year, unless amended.

In addition the timetable for appeals *must* also be displayed on the school website from 28 February each year. The timetable can be obtained from the relevant LA.

In addition, governors *must* notify the Diocese's Education Department and the LA of their determined admission policy (which will apply to the following calendar year). From 2016 this should be no later than 15th March each year.

Schools with Sixth Forms must also determine and publish their Sixth Form admissions arrangements.

Can governors delegate this responsibility to the headteacher?

The governing body may establish an admissions sub-committee which *must* consist of a minimum of three governors. It is recommended that the headteacher is a member of this committee. No one person may determine admissions (regulation 17(3) and 20(2) of the School Governance (Procedures) Regulations 2003).

Can governors decide who to admit?

Where there are fewer applications than places available all applicants *must* be offered a place. Governing bodies which are the admissions authority for the school *must* set criteria

which will be applied in the event that there are more applications than there are places available for any given year group.

Who offers a place?

In VA schools, in foundation schools with a religious trust and in academies it is the governing body which offers places. However the process *must* be administered by the LA as part of the coordinated admissions schemes for all applications to join the school at the normal point of entry. Therefore the governors rank all applications according to the oversubscription criteria and send the ranked list to the LA:

Bristol schools or academies:	school.admissions@bristol.gov.uk
S. Gloucestershire schools or academies:	admissionsandtransport@southglos.gov.uk
Swindon schools or academies:	school.admissions@swindon.gov.uk
Wiltshire schools or academies:	admissions@wiltshire.gov.uk

The LA will send out the letter offering or refusing a place at the school on behalf of the governing body. Offers of places to secondary schools are made nationally on 1 March (or the next working day if 1 March is not a working day). The national date for offers of places to primary schools is 16 April (or the next working day if 16 April is not a working day).

What is coordinated admissions?

LAs are required to operate a coordinated admissions scheme. Coordinated admissions is where the LAs coordinate the admissions process through a common application form (sometimes called a common preference form) and set dates for admission forms to be returned and when places will be offered on behalf all schools and academies within that LA. This ensures a simpler standardised system for parents and that no child would receive more than one offer of a place on the same date. LAs also have a duty to coordinate with other neighbouring LAs.

The national closing date for 'normal round' applications to secondary schools is 31 October and for primary schools is 15 January. As above, offers must be made on the national offer days for primary and secondary schools.

What is in-year coordinated admissions?

Since December 2013 LAs are not required to coordinate in-year applications but they must provide guidance in the composite prospectus on how in-year applications can be made and will be dealt with, and must produce a common in-year application form. This is a document that explains the admission policies for all the schools within their area of responsibility and is available on the admissions page of their websites. Where an LA is offering to coordinate in-year admissions, governors have to decide whether to continue to allow the LA to coordinate their in-year applications or to do this themselves. This information *must* be included in the school's admissions policy.

Where governors administrate in-year applications they *must* inform parents whether or not the application was successful and of parents' right of appeal where a place is refused. They *must* also inform the LA of both the application and its outcome.

How do governors establish their Admissions Policy? Is there a one-size-fits-all Admissions Policy?

Where governors are the admissions authority, it is their responsibility to determine the oversubscription criteria for their particular communities within the boundaries of the School Admissions Code. It is recommended that governors consider carefully the following points:

- the extent to which the school wishes to give priority to children from Church-attending families, children from different Christian denominations, children from different faith traditions (see Appendix 1);
- that for entirely new academies (i.e. not convertors from the maintained or independent sectors, or those sponsored academies with a predecessor school) and Free Schools which have a religious character: where the school is oversubscribed, at least 50% of places *must* be allocated without reference to faith;
- the extent to which the school aims to serve its immediate and wider communities;
- the priority the school wishes to give to siblings of children who will still be attending the school at the expected time of admission of the younger child;
- how easy it is or is not for parents to understand the policy and therefore the likelihood of their child successfully gaining a place in the school.

(See Appendix 2 for a sample policy.)

It is the governors' responsibility to ensure that the school's policy complies with the relevant School Admissions Code. (Please see Useful Resources at the end of this document)

What should the policy include?

Admission authorities *must* consult on the full details of the admissions arrangements they propose to determine and *must* include:

- Planned Admissions Number (PAN) for any year it is intended to admit pupils, including Year 12 (the PAN for any infant class *must* not exceed 30 pupils);
- application procedures, including in-year admissions;
- oversubscription criteria for each relevant age group;
- that Church schools *must* admit all children in public care (Looked After Children) as their first priority.
- the tie-breaker that will be used in the event that oversubscription occurs within any given criterion;
- a Supplementary Information Form (where a school uses one to apply its oversubscription criteria) – see *What is a SIF?* below;
- information about any tests for aptitude or ability, if allowed;
- any separate requirements and oversubscription criteria for Year 12 or nursery applications, where applicable;
- a waiting list - how long after the end of the autumn term in the admission year the waiting list will be maintained (the waiting list must be maintained until 31 December of each school year of admission, to facilitate in-year coordination of admissions);
- information about how late applications can be made and how they will be handled;
- details of any catchment areas to be used;
- information about a parent's right to appeal, how the appeal should be made and how it will be heard.

All admissions arrangements *must* be consistent with the coordination scheme operating in the year in question (check with your LA).

The following should also be included:

- that children who have a statement of special educational need which names the school will have a statutory entitlement to a place (Education Act 1996, Section 324) and will be admitted regardless of the number of places available. This is not part of the oversubscription criteria.

- “looked after children, and previously looked after children who have been adopted or become subject to a residence order or special guardianship order” *must* have an automatic right to a place before any oversubscription criteria come into play. These pupils are the first priority.
- that there is the parental right to appeal if the application is unsuccessful.

What about additional requirements for primary or infant schools?

When determining the arrangements for primary and infant schools, the admissions authority *must* make it clear that:

- a) the arrangements do not apply to those being admitted for nursery provision, including nursery provision delivered in a co-located children’s centre;
- b) parents of children who are admitted for nursery provision *must* apply for a place at the school if they want their child to transfer to the Reception class;
- c) attendance at the nursery or co-located children’s centre does not guarantee admission to the school;
- d) parents can request that the date their child is admitted to the school is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age;
- e) parents can request that their child attends part-time until the child reaches compulsory school age.

How does deferred entry to primary schools work?

Admission authorities *must* allow parents of children who are offered a place at the school before they are of compulsory school age to defer their child’s entry until later in the school year. Where entry is deferred, Admission authorities *must* hold the place for that child and not offer it to another child. The parent would not, however, be able to defer entry beyond the beginning of the term after the child’s fifth birthday, nor beyond the academic year for which the original application was accepted. This *must* be made clear in the admission arrangements for the school.

Under exceptional circumstances the governors may agree to admit a child out of chronological year group. Where such a request is made a decision should be made on what will be in the child’s best interest on the basis of the individual circumstances, taking into account both the views of the parent and of the headteacher.

How many pupils can we admit?

All schools *must* have a planned admissions number (known as PAN) for each relevant age group. It may be necessary for some schools to have more than one admissions number. The admission number is set by the admissions authority after consultation with the LA and other relevant Admission authorities and *must* have regard for the capacity assessment for the school. The admission number applies only to the normal year of admission.

A school may exceed its admissions number if it would not adversely affect the school in the longer term. A school can also admit over the planned number as part of the Fair Access Protocol.

Own admission authorities (e.g. multi-academy trusts, schools in single academy trusts) are not required to consult on their PAN where they propose either to increase or to keep the same PAN but they *must* inform the LA of the school’s intention to admit above the PAN in good time and make specific reference to the change on their website. (School Admissions Code 2014, paras 1.3-1.5, 1.48 and 3.6)

All admission authorities must consult in accordance with School Admissions Code 2014 para 1.42 where they propose to decrease the PAN.

What is a SIF?

A Supplementary Information Form (SIF) may be used by governors in VA and foundation schools and academies, in addition to the common application form / in-year common application form, in order to collect additional information that is not provided on the LA common application form but which is needed to apply their oversubscription criteria.

It is against the School Admissions Code to request any personal details about a parent's educational background, qualifications, income or first language as part of the admission process. Schools *must not* ask parents to agree to support the ethos of the school in a practical way (School Admissions Code 2014, para 1.9e), nor should the SIF by implication suggest covert requirements or discrimination (e.g. request for both mother's name and father's name could be taken to disadvantage single parent families).

Where a school decides to use a SIF it must make clear in its admission arrangements that the SIF need only be completed by parents applying for a priority faith place within the oversubscription criteria, where a certain number of places are prioritised for faith pupils.

Schools *must not* prioritise children on the basis of their own or their parents' past or current hobbies or activities. Schools which have been designated as having a religious character may take account of religious activities, as laid out by the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination (School Admissions Code 2014 p10 1.9).

Where a school uses a SIF, a copy of this should be appended to the Admissions Policy. An application which is made on the relevant LA's Common Application Form is a valid application even if it is not accompanied by a SIF. However, if a SIF is not completed, governors will only be able to use the information provided on the common application form. Governors may consider contacting parents where a SIF has not been received. The SIF is not a valid application on its own so they should also contact parents if the school has received a SIF but there is no record of a common application form.

Parents should be notified of the relevant information, including the reasonable expectation that it is the parent's responsibility to provide all information that they would wish governors to consider in support of their application and the timescale in which this information should be received by the school.

The fine definitions that can be used to identify different degrees of commitment are set out in Appendix 1. Appendix 3 provides an example of a SIF.

If a school or academy chooses to set aside places for children of the Christian faith does it also have to make provision for those of other world religions?

No, it is the school or academy's decision if it wishes to do this. Appendix 1 provides guidance about how this might be done which is also incorporated in the SIF in Appendix 3.

Is there an example of fair oversubscription criteria?

A fair admissions system is one that provides parents with clear information about admissions and supports those parents who find it hardest to understand the system. (School Admissions Code 2014, paras 1.7 - 1.8 and 1.10-1.17).

'Fair' oversubscription criteria are those which are:

- clear, in the sense of being free from doubt and easily understood;
- objective and based on known facts (governing bodies must not make subjective decisions or use subjective criteria);
- procedurally fair for all groups of children;
- comply with relevant legislation, including the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code 2014;

and which do not unfairly disadvantage a child from a particular social or racial group or a child with a disability or special educational needs.

The following are the most common oversubscription criteria but this is not exhaustive:

- siblings of children who are still at the school;
- social and medical need;
- membership or attendance at worship of the faith/denomination of the school;
- distance between home and school;
- random allocation;
- catchment areas.

The School Admissions Code (2014) sets out examples of *unfair* criteria in para 1.9.

Schools must not ask parents to sign, or express a willingness to sign agreements before they have been offered a place at the school. Documentation to validate proof of address is acceptable where it is unclear whether a child meets the published oversubscription criteria. Proof of date of birth (short birth certificate) may only be requested after a place has been offered (School Admissions Code, 2014, para 2.5).

Can receipt of the pupil premium be used as one of the oversubscription criteria?

Schools 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. Schools should clearly define in the arrangements the categories of eligible premium recipients to be prioritised. This can also apply to children attending a nursery class that is part of the school or a nursery that is established and run by the school, provided it is named in the admission arrangements and its selection is transparent and made on reasonable grounds (School Admissions Code 2014 para 1.39a and 1.39B).

The arrangements must make clear that if applications for a priority group are undersubscribed when the school as a whole is oversubscribed then the balance will be transferred to the next priority group.

Do children with parents in the armed services get any special treatment?

For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities **must**:

- a) 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. This **must** include accepting a Unit postal address or quartering area address for a service child. Admission authorities **must not** refuse a service child a

- place because the family does not currently live in the area, or reserve blocks of places for these children;
- b) ensure that arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children. Arrangements **must** be appropriate for the area and be described in the LA's composite prospectus.

Can children of members of staff at the school be given priority?

Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff 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 (School Admissions Code 2014, para 1.39).

However, in Church of England schools and academies in this diocese, it is strongly recommended that children of staff are not given a higher priority than children of local worshipping families, local children (e.g. those living within the parish) or younger siblings of pupils in school (for primary schools).

Can attendance in the nursery be taken into account?

Documentation should make it clear to parents that a child's attendance at the nursery does not guarantee a place in the main school and parents must apply for a place in the same way as all other applicants.

Is there anything special about Sixth Form admissions arrangements?

Admissions arrangements for external entry to Sixth Forms are similar to those for the main school and must be consulted upon and determined in the same way. Academic entry requirements must be the same for external candidates as internal candidates. Application forms must conform to the requirements of the School Admissions Code and must not request any information that the Code would deem as irrelevant. No additional conditions can be applied to external candidates and meetings or interviews must not form part of the decision making process. As for the main school, there must be oversubscription criteria with the highest priority given to looked after children and previously looked after children. There also should be provision for a tie-breaker.

What if there are more applications than places?

In the event that there are more applications received than places available in the year group then the governors must rank all applications in the order determined by the school's oversubscription criteria. Places will be offered until all places are filled or there are no further applicants. If an applicant refuses the offer of a place (or is offered another place due to a higher preference within an equal preferences scheme) then the child highest on the waiting list must be offered the vacant place.

Do we need a tie-breaker?

A school must have a tie-breaker which should be clear and fair and which can be used effectively to decide between applications that otherwise cannot be separated. If a school has set aside a specific number of places for a certain group then it will need a tie-breaker

for each such group in case the group is oversubscribed. For example, if there are more faith applicants than allocated places it may need to use distance from school as the tie-breaker.

Can we legally accept a bribe?

Clearly, no! Equally schools must not ask parents to agree to make a financial contribution to the school or payment in kind (e.g. services) when applying for a place. Places are allocated according to the oversubscription criteria set out in the school's published admissions policy. It is against the School Admissions Code to request any personal details about the parent's educational background, qualifications, income or first language as part of the admission process.

What if someone wants to appeal against the decision?

Parents have the right to appeal against a refusal of an offer and should do so in writing within the timescale set out in the Admissions Policy and on the letter informing them that a place has not been offered at the school. The letter refusing a place *must* also set out the reason for refusing admission, the deadline for lodging an appeal and to whom the appeal should be sent. The timescale for appeals *must* also be published on the school website (where there is one).

Do we have to run an appeal ourselves?

Bristol Diocesan Board of Education recommends that schools use the independent appeals panels convened by the LA. Where appeals against Church schools are to be heard, the school may request that a suitably trained and experienced panel member (i.e. with understanding of Church school distinctiveness) be included on the panel. LAs may make a charge for this service but if they do so there should have been an appropriate sum allocated to the school budget for managing admissions.

What happens if a vacancy arises whilst appeals are waiting to be heard?

Where a vacancy arises, at any time and regardless of any appeals, the place should be offered to the child whose name is at the top of the relevant waiting list. As waiting lists must be maintained in order of the oversubscription criteria this ensures that the place is offered to the next highest ranked applicant.

What is the timescale for completion of admissions policies?

Governors *must* consult annually on any changes to the admissions arrangements. Where there have not been any changes they *must* consult at least every seven years. For September 2017 consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October 2015 and 31 January 2016. Church schools *must* send their draft policies to the Diocesan Board of Education prior to going out to wider consultation.

Following the close of the consultation period, governors should consider any responses received and should determine the final policy for entry in September 2017 by 28 February 2016. The final policy should then be sent to the Diocese and to the appropriate LA for publication in the LA's admissions booklet for entry in September 2017 as soon as possible before 15 March 2016.

The pattern for consultation and determination will be the same in subsequent years as for admissions for September 2017.

Schools *must* also publish their policy in the general information supplied to parents. (Schools will need to ensure they have the facility to publish the specified content online each year and the staff resource to create and maintain the content.)

Consultation and determination of admissions arrangements are carried out more than a year in advance of the year for which the admissions arrangements will apply, i.e. consultation on admissions arrangements for entry to a school in September 2016 will be completed by 1 March 2015 and the policy will be determined by 15 April 2015 in readiness for publication for applications to be made in Autumn 2015. **In subsequent years the policy will need to be consulted on for 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January, determined by 28 February and published by 15 March.** So for admission in September 2017 consultation would need to take place between 1 October 2015 and 31 January 2016 determination by 28 February 2016 and publication by 15 March 2016.

Senior leaders and governors will need to:

- meet to discuss the potential changes - ideally in the summer term;
- send the draft policy to the Diocese for checking no later than the beginning of October;
- send the draft policy out to public consultation for six consecutive weeks between 1 October and 31 January;
- determine their policy by 28 February and notify the Diocese and the LA prior to publication on 15 March.

This process will need to take place 18 months before the changes are due to come into effect e.g. changes for 2016-17 admissions will need to be completed by 15 April 2015. Any school which has not consulted since 2010 will need to go to public consultation between 1 October 2015 and 31 January 2016 for admissions 2017-18.

Example timetable:

Determination Year 2015/16 (The academic year in which admission authorities determine their admission arrangements for entry to school in September 2017)	
1 May 2015	Admissions proposals to be submitted to the Diocesan Board of Education
1 October 2015	Earliest date to start consultation on proposed arrangements. Consultation <i>must</i> last a minimum of 6 weeks.
1 January 2016	Deadline for the LA to formulate a coordinated scheme for state funded schools in their area, including any new school or academy which is expected to open.
31 January 2016	Deadline for the completion of the consultation on proposed admission arrangements.
28 February 2016	Deadline for admissions arrangements to be determined even if they have not changed from the previous year and a consultation has not been required (after which the Secretary of State may impose a coordinated scheme if local agreement has not been secured).
15 March 2016	Deadline for admission authorities to send a copy of their full determined admission arrangements to their LA. Deadline for LAs to publish on their website the proposed admission arrangements for any new school or academy which is intending to open within the determination year, details of where the determined arrangements for all schools, including Academies, can be viewed, and information on how to refer objections to the Schools Adjudicator.
15 May 2016	Deadline for objections to the Schools Adjudicator.
30 June 2016	Deadline for LAs to report to the Schools Adjudicator on admission arrangements in their area.
8 August 2016	Deadline for governing bodies to provide admission arrangements information to the local authority to allow them to compile composite prospectus for pupil entry in 2016.

There is no requirement for public consultation for an increase in the PAN or to make changes in order to comply with mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code or School Admissions Regulations 2014.

Who must governors consult?

Church schools *must* send their draft policies to the Diocese addressed to Clare Stansfield clare.stansfield@bristoldiocese.org prior to going out to wider consultation. Also:

- parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen in the relevant area;
- other persons in the relevant area who, in the opinion of the admissions authority, have an interest in the proposed admissions;
- all other admission authorities within the relevant area (primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
- the LA;
- other admission authorities across LA borders.

Most LAs offer a service of publishing policies for VA, academies and foundation schools on their website and/or advertising the consultation period on governors' behalf.

Can we keep a waiting list and, if so, for how long?

Paragraph 2.14 of the School Admissions Code 2014, requires each admission authority to maintain a waiting list for every oversubscribed school until at least 31 December of each school year of admission. The Diocese's Board of Education recommends that waiting lists are maintained for each oversubscribed year group and that lists are kept open until the end of the school year for which an application was made, in order to facilitate in-year coordination of admissions. Looked After Children, previously Looked After Children and those allocated a place in accordance with a Fair Access Protocol *must* take precedence over those on a waiting list.

In 2007, the Church of England's National Society published the following advice:

"It is important that all Church of England schools should play their full part in enabling hard to place children to receive an education. A faith school may have an especially positive role in respect of such young people and their families."⁵

What is a fair access protocol?

Fair access protocols exist to ensure that access to education is secured quickly for children who have no school place but for whom a place at a mainstream school or alternative provision is appropriate, and to ensure that all schools in an area admit their fair share of children with challenging behaviour, including children excluded from other schools. Fair access protocols are aimed at supporting children deemed to be vulnerable as well as those with challenging behaviour. (For further information please refer to School Admissions Code 2014 paragraph 3.9 – 3.15.)

Can we delegate the local authority to administer our admissions?

Within coordinated admissions and in-year coordinated admissions schemes the LA has a duty to provide common application forms (one for primary schools and one for secondary schools), to exchange information with other LAs and admission authorities, and to send out the offer of places on the dates specified by the scheme. Offers of places to secondary

⁵ Church of England National Advice to Diocesan Boards of Education Relating to the DfES School Admissions Code 2007

schools are made nationally on 1 March (or the next working day, if 1 March is not a working day). The national date for offers of places to primary schools is 16 April (or the next working day if 16 April is not a working day).

Even if the governing body were to delegate the responsibility for maintaining the waiting list to the LA, legal responsibility for it would remain with the governing body.

If your question has not been answered, please contact:

Clare Stansfield, Schools Officer (Governor Development and Admissions)
Education Department
Diocese of Bristol
Hillside House
1500 Parkway North
Stoke Gifford
Bristol
BS34 8YU

clare.stansfield@bristoldiocese.org

0117 906 0100

Useful resources:

School Admissions Code 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014_-_19_Dec.pdf

Academy admissions

<https://www.gov.uk/academy-admissions>

Academy Admissions Appeals Review 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406977/Academies_admissions_appeals_review_2014.pdf

School Admissions Appeals Code 2012

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00014-2012>

Admissions to Church of England Schools (The National Society: 2011)

[http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1513919/nsadmissionsguidancejune2011final%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1513919/nsadmissionsguidancejune2011final%20(3).pdf)

APPENDIX I: Fine definitions

The following guidance can be used as a basis for developing oversubscription criteria linked to Anglican or Christian affiliation at another church where fine definitions are required:

“at the heart of the church”

“attached to the church”

“known to the church”

- i. An applicant “**at the heart of the church**” would be a regular worshipper. We suggest that this might normally mean one who worships usually twice a month. To accommodate difficult patterns of work and family relationships account should be taken of week-day worship. The worshipper could be the child for whom application is made or one or both parents.
- ii. An applicant “**attached to the church**” would be a regular but not frequent worshipper, by which is meant (for example) one who usually attends a monthly family or church parade service or is regularly involved in a weekday church activity which always includes an element of worship.
- iii. An applicant “**known to the church**” would not be a frequent but probably an occasional worshipper, someone who is perhaps known through a family connection, or one or more of whose family attends worship occasionally (possibly as part of a uniformed or other church organisation).

The usual period of time over which church attendance is considered is a minimum of two years. Where a family has recently moved into the area, worship at their previous church should be considered.

If schools wish to make provision for members of the five main world religions recognised by NASACRE as having significant representation in the UK, attendance at a religious service cannot necessarily be used in the same way as a demonstration of faith. Instead it is suggested that religious leaders confirm that they have evidence that the child and/or parent are committed members of a religious community.

APPENDIX 2: Sample admissions policy

Example Church of England Primary School

Admissions Policy 2017-2018

Mission Statement

Example Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, is one of the family of Church Schools.

We are a caring, Christian school that aims to provide a high quality of education to all our pupils within a secure and loving Christian environment. We hope they will leave us with confidence, positive memories and a love of learning.

We ask all parents applying for a place here to respect this ethos and its importance to the school community. This does not affect the right of parents who are not of the faith of this school to apply for and be considered for a place here.'

Admissions

Example is a 2 form entry Church voluntary aided primary school with a nursery. As a voluntary aided school, the Governing Body are the admissions authority. The nursery admits 30 pupils per session and the main school has a planned admission number of 60 places per year group.

The arrangements in this policy are for admission to the main school and do not apply to those being admitted for nursery provision. For nursery admissions please see the Nursery Admissions document.

Children with a statement of Special Educational Need where this school is named on the statement will be admitted to the school without reference to the oversubscription criteria below.

In the event of there being more applicants than there are places, the Governors' Admission Policy will be applied as follows:

1. 'Looked after' children or a child who was previously 'looked after' but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence or special guardianship order.
2. Children whose parent/guardian is connected to a Christian Church in the following order:
 - (a) At the heart of the church – someone whose family worships twice a month or more.
 - (b) Attached to the church – is a regular but not frequent worshipper or is regularly involved in a weekday church activity which always includes an element of worship.
 - (c) Known to the church – an occasional but not frequent worshipper or someone who attends worship occasionally (possibly as part of a uniformed or other church organisation).

3. Children who have siblings who will still be attending school at the normal time of admission.
4. Children whose parent / guardian is a worshipping member of a place of worship of one of the major world faiths represented in Britain, other than Christianity.
5. Children who live closest to school as measured by the straight line distance from home to the centre of the school building.

Notes

- Attendance at nursery does not guarantee a place in main school. Parents must complete *the common* preference form for a place in Reception and apply within the normal admissions procedures.
- Christian Church means a church that is affiliated to the Council of Churches of Great Britain and Ireland, or a church which is in full sympathy with its Trinitarian stance. **The School's Supplementary Information Form in support of the child's application is required from the Minister of the church.**
- Siblings are brothers or sisters of statutory school age at the time of admission, who live at the same address or children living in the same family home.
- The major world faiths represented in Britain, other than Christianity comprise: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism.
- The family home is defined as being the home where the child resides regularly on weekdays.
- Children will be admitted in to Reception at Example in September after their 4th birthday.
- Parents may request that the date their child is admitted to the school is deferred until later in the same school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age.
- Parents may request that their child attends part-time until the child reaches compulsory school age.
- Requests for a child to start their schooling on a part-time basis or to defer the start until they reach compulsory school-age should be addressed to the Headteacher.
- Compulsory school age is the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday.

Where entry is deferred, the school will hold the place for that child and not offer it to another child during the remainder of the school year for which application was made.

It should be noted, however, that such children will only be allowed to start at the beginning of a term.

Parents may not defer entry beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday, nor beyond the beginning of the summer term of the school year for which the original application was accepted.

Appeals

Parents/guardians of children who are not offered a place have the right to appeal. If a parent/guardian wishes to appeal they must do so in writing to the Chair of Governors at the school, within 14 days of receiving the refusal letter.

In addition to the right of appeal, unsuccessful applicants will be offered the opportunity to be placed on a waiting list. This waiting list will be maintained in order of the over subscription criteria set out above until 31st December of the academic year for which the application was made.

In-year Co-ordinated Admissions

An in-year common preference form, available from school or the local authority must be completed and returned to the school or to the Local Authority Admissions Team for admission to the school outside the normal admission round. All requests will be considered by the Governors who will inform the local authority whether or not a place can be offered. The local authority will then send an offer letter to parents.

Waiting lists

Schools must keep waiting lists. Where a child is refused an offer of a place in the school, the parents may request that the child's name be placed on the school's waiting list. The waiting list will be maintained until 31st December of the academic year for which the application was made. Waiting lists will be maintained in order of the oversubscription priorities.

Nursery Admissions

In accordance with The Education Act 2002, paragraph 7.17, The Governing Body of a Voluntary Aided school is responsible for taking decisions about admissions to nursery classes.

The Governors will apply the admission criteria in this policy.

1. A child in the care of a local authority or a child who was previously 'looked after' but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence or special guardianship order.
2. A child known by the local authority to have additional educational needs and whose needs can be best met at the preferred nursery – applications made under this criterion would need to be supported by written evidence from an appropriate professional.
3. A vulnerable child with a Common Assessment Framework – applications made under this criterion would need to be supported by evidence from the child's social worker and/or health visitor explaining the advantage of the child attending the preferred nursery as opposed to any other.
4. A child with a serious ongoing medical condition, where Services for Children and Young People (Early Years Forum) is satisfied that attendance at the preferred nursery will meet the needs of the child's medical condition rather than any other nursery. Parents/carers or their representatives will have to demonstrate that only the preferred nursery can meet the exceptional medical needs of the child. This can be in the form of a written testimony from a medical practitioner, social worker or other appropriate professional who can support the application on an 'exceptional' basis.
5. Children who will have an elder sibling attending the nursery school or class at the time of entry. Children must reside at the same home address.
6. Any remaining places will be allocated to those children who live closest to the preferred nursery. Measurements are taken by a straight line on a map using our electronic mapping system – the nearer to the school the child lives the higher the priority. Measurement points will be from an internal point of the building concerned (usually the visual centre of the building). Flats are therefore taken to be the same measurement point regardless of floor of location.

Tie Breaker: if there are insufficient places available within any one criterion the following tie breaker will apply: places will be allocated to those children who live closest to the preferred nursery. Measurements are taken by a straight line on a map using our electronic mapping system – the nearer to the school the child lives the higher the priority.

In the event that two or more pupils tie on distance, places will be allocated by random allocation.

- Attendance at nursery does not guarantee a place in main school. Parents must complete the common preference form for a place in Reception.
- Unless an agreement has been reached with the Headteacher, failure to take up an offered place at nursery within 2 weeks of the allocated date, the placement will be withdrawn.

Example Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

[school address]

Supplementary Information Form

You only need to complete this form if you are applying for a faith related place.

The Local Authority Common Admission Form must also be completed and if possible, a copy sent to the school.

Child's Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Tel. No.: _____

If you or your child regularly worship at a Christian Church please fill in Section A below. If you or your child are a committed member of a religious community of one of the other world faiths represented in Britain please fill in section B.

Section A For Christians

Do you or your child regularly worship in an Anglican Church or any other Christian Church? **Yes / No**

If yes, please enter the name and address of the Church:

Please ask the Religious leader of your place of worship to complete the section below:

Religious leader's recommendation

To the best of my knowledge the above parent and or child attends religious services at the Church named above:

Most weeks Once a month Occasionally Never

Regular services

Name (printed) _____

Position _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Section B For members of other world religions

Are you or your child committed members of a religious community of one of the major world faiths represented in Britain, other than Christianity? **Yes / No**

If so which religion? _____

Name and address of religious community

Please ask the Religious leader of your place of worship to complete the section below:

Religious leader's recommendation

To the best of my knowledge the above parent and or child are committed members of the religious community mentioned above

Name (printed) _____

Position _____

Signed _____ Date _____

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that this supplementary information form is completed and returned to Example C of E Primary School at the above address, if we are listed as one of your school choices on the LA Common Preference Form or In-year Common Admissions Form. The SIF should be returned to the school at the same date as the common preference form.