



Diocesan Board of Education: Admissions Guidance for Schools and Academies

The DBE Measure 2021

Church of England Schools must, as required by s.7(2)(d) of the Measure, consult with their diocese about proposed admission arrangements before any public consultation.

Consultation with the DBE should discuss the extent that admission arrangements comply with the mandatory provisions and guidelines of [The Schools Admissions Code 2021](#), when constructing faith-based admissions arrangements. Admissions Authorities must also consult with the DBE when deciding how membership or practice of faith is to be demonstrated.

The School Admissions Code 2021

The Code states that:

I.37 Admission authorities must ensure that parents can easily understand how any faith-based criteria will be reasonably satisfied

I.38 Admission authorities for Church of England schools must, as required by the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021, consult with their diocese about proposed admission arrangements before any public consultation.

Determining Admission Policies and Setting Over-subscription Criteria:

The DBE encourages admissions authorities to reflect on the principles upon which Church schools were established, i.e. for the community in which they are placed, having due regard to the trust deed and foundation.

We encourage Governing Boards and Academy Boards to engage in a thorough discussion about how the school's admissions policy aligns with both its own vision and the Church's vision for education. This conversation should go beyond the administration of places and focus on how best to serve the local community.

We look forward to receiving your draft policies for consultation.

Determining the policy:

The DBE encourages Admissions Authorities to reflect on the principles upon which Church schools were established, i.e. for the community in which they are placed.

The Vision of Worcester DBE states:

*Through **unconditional love and reflection**, we strive to serve and support all of our schools and their communities using the unique gifts that God has given us.*

Loving together, Learning together, Serving together

Children and families from all faiths and none are welcomed, respected and cherished. Our schools should be places of refuge and inclusivity just as, in Deuteronomy 33:27:

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.



It is therefore the DBE's advice that Church of England Schools in the Diocese **should not** set faith-based or Church attendance as a Criteria.

Admitting authorities should have regard to this advice when setting their policies.

In *context-specific circumstances* and **only with the prior consultation with 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. Faith-based criteria should be given a lower priority than siblings and local children.
3. The Parish church clergy should be consulted, as important stakeholders, about any faith-based provisions. If in vacancy, the Church Wardens and the relevant Area Dean should be consulted.
4. The only definition used should be attendance at church.
5. Admission Authorities should define 'regular attendance' in consultation with the local Church/es. In most cases, regular attendance can be defined as attending on a fortnightly basis.
6. Governing Bodies may define churches and ecclesial communities as those that are in membership of any local Churches. However, there are many new Christian worshipping communities that each Church school may know and have a relationship with its Governing Boards may wish to broaden this definition or name specific local Christian communities.
7. Schools may wish to provide a simple form for Church Leader to sign (a supplementary information form).

Oversubscription Criteria:

There are exceptions to whom oversubscription criteria do not apply. Children with identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have an education health and care plan (EHCP) which specifically names a school, must be offered a place.

Once they have been offered a place, by law, the highest priority must then be given to looked after children and previously looked after children.

1. Children in public care and previously looked after children

DBE expects schools to admit all looked after children and previously looked after children without regard to their faith.

The Code also requires that children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a residence order/child arrangement order or special guardianship order) should also be treated as top priority.

In addition, the Schools Admissions Code 2021 points to the specific need for the looked after category/ies to include those "internationally adopted previously looked after children" – "IAPLAC".

This **must** be the first criterion for all schools.

Following the criterion above, the Admissions Authority can then add in further oversubscription criteria, provided that it is in line with the Schools Admission Code.

Following recent national guidance and some difficult local examples, the DBE **strongly encourages** Admission Authorities to put siblings as the next criterion.

2. Siblings



For primary schools, it is usual to endeavour to admit all siblings, when the older child remains in the school. Parents, reasonably, find it very difficult to get primary aged children to two different schools for the same time in the morning and to meet their children after school. The Code places great emphasis on keeping siblings in the same school.

Following the criterion above, the Admissions Authority is able to decide how it may best service the needs of all in the local community and the church community, and decide on the ordering of any further criteria. All, some or none of the criteria below may then be added, in an order that best serves the local community.

3. Social and medical need

If admission authorities decide to use social and medical need as an oversubscription criterion, they must set out in their arrangements how they will define this need and give clear details about what supporting evidence will be required (e.g. a letter from a doctor or social worker) and then make consistent decisions based on the evidence provided.

4. Serving all in the local community

The original purpose of almost all Anglican and Methodist schools was to serve all in their area. For Church of England schools, the presumption is that the specified area will be the ecclesiastical parish; other areas may be used as long as there is a clear rationale for them. If Admission Authorities chose to include a criterion based on living within the ecclesiastical parish (or any other specified area), then a **map** showing the boundaries **MUST** be provided. It is best if it can be in the school brochure and on the school's website and at the very least it must be available in school. Parish maps can be found on www.achurchnearyou.com or contact the diocesan offices.

5. Children of staff

The 2021 Code 1.39 states that governing bodies 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.

Obviously, if such a criterion is included, then it must refer to **ALL** staff who have served the school for the period of two years. If schools have good reason for wanting to include it amongst their criteria, then the member of staff should have been employed for the whole of the two academic years leading up to the closing date for applications. Given the difficulty of defining "demonstrable skill shortage", it is recommended that this part of the criterion is not used.

6. Children of UK service personnel

The 2021 Code 2.21 explains that 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 local authority's composite prospectus.

7. Children from overseas

Refer to non-statutory guidance on the website of the Department for Education.

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-admissions-applications-from-overseas-children>)

Always, the last criterion must be:

Other children.

Tie-Break

Within the Admission Arrangements it must be made explicit how decisions are taken if there are more eligible children within each category than there are places available.

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 appoint 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. Please refer to [The School Admissions Appeals Code 2022](#). The Diocesan Education Team can direct you appeals panel support services.

The DBE does not provide a model policy but advises each Admissions Authority to formulate its own policy having regard to this advice and adhering to the Admissions Code. You may wish to use the Church of England's admission builder for guidance, on the link below:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/form/school-admissions>

Recent adjudications by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) indicate that great weight is placed by the Adjudicator on the guidance that church schools receive from their Board of Education. Governing bodies – acting in their capacity as the Admissions Authority - must have "compelling reasons" for not following it. The DBE reserves its right to refer schools to the OSA which do not follow this guidance.