

Consultation on 2018 Admissions

Context

We are a primary, secondary and all-through Academy Trust currently responsible for 14 academies in 3 local authority areas (as at December 2016), approved to open a brand new school in 2018 and with growth in other areas in prospect. In developing this Trust-wide admissions policy, we are seeking to: provide a core of consistency across all our academies on aspects that will reflect our vision and values; while aligning with local arrangements so that parents/carers of potential pupils can more easily navigate their options. This consultation applies to our existing open academies – see annex for details.

Key points

The Trust proposes a Trust-wide approach to admissions, for September 2018, based on:

1. simple and fair oversubscription criteria (as below) that ensure our schools serve their local communities
2. participation in the coordinated admissions scheme run by the relevant local authority in which the school is located¹ (other than, exceptionally, where we will manage our own admissions in the first year or two of a brand new school)
3. alignment with the relevant local authority's approach on technical details such as how home-to-school distance is measured or how certain terms are defined, to keep things as simple and consistent as possible for parents/carers of potential pupils.

Over-subscription criteria

The Trust proposes the following oversubscription criteria²:

- a. **Looked after children³ or previously⁴ looked after children** i.e. children in foster care, care homes or who were before being adopted
- b. **Children with siblings in the school⁵**

¹ The Trust may choose to manage the first year or two of admissions to a brand new school in-house – however, this does not apply for any of our existing schools covered by this consultation (see annex), all of which will participate in their local authority coordinated schemes.

² Note that any children with Education, Health & Care Plans that name the school must be allocated a place even before the over-subscription criteria are applied.

³ That is, children who are (a) in the care of a local authority or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

⁴ That is, children who were previously looked after (as per footnote 2) but immediately after being looked after became subject to adoption, a child arrangements order, or special guardianship order.

⁵ As defined by the relevant local authority for community schools – see annex

- c. **Children of school staff⁶ recruited to fill a skill shortage post** – this will be subject to confirmation by a Reach4 non-executive Regional Ambassador that, on the evidence available, the post does indeed relate to a skills shortage in the area
- d. **Home-to-school distance⁷**– so that children living closest are allocated remaining places first.⁸ .

Appeals

Where applications are unsuccessful, there is a right to appeal as set out in the admissions code and this will be explained in the response to the parent/carer. Appeals will be carried out within the timescales set out in the code.

Equality Impact Assessment

There are no identified differential impacts on individuals with protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; or sexual orientation.

Questions and answers

1. *Why not include children eligible for Free School Meals or Pupil Premium in the over-subscription criteria?* We want to keep the criteria as simple as possible. Most of our schools serve local communities with higher than average rates of eligibility for FSM and Pupil Premium so many such children would qualify under the proposed criteria anyway. Also some parents/carers will not be familiar with the relevant eligibility criteria or application processes before their children start school.
2. *Why not include children with exceptional medical or social needs in the over-subscription criteria?* We want to keep the criteria as simple as possible. We would expect most such children to have Education, Health & Care Plans that would be taken into account before any other places are allocated.
3. *Why the criterion on children of school staff filling a skill shortage post?* This should help us recruit the best possible candidates to key roles in schools in areas where recruitment is difficult. The Admissions Code would allow us also to prioritise children of any staff who had been at the school for 2+ years but we are not proposing to take up that wider option: by focusing on skills shortage posts, there is a benefit to the whole school which other potential parents/carers will be able to understand. We propose an independent non-executive 'check' on whether a

⁶ i.e. Trust employees based in the school – this does not apply to wider Trust employees who are part of our regional/central teams

⁷ As defined by the relevant local authority for community schools – see annex

⁸ Where in future the Trust considers it beneficial for clarity of communications with parents/carers of potential pupils in the local area (for example for brand new schools or schools close to a local authority boundary), this criterion could be replaced by (d) a defined geographical catchment area then (e) home-to-school distance for children outside that area. This is not currently proposed for any of our existing schools covered by Annex A.

particular role constitutes a skill shortage post to ensure we are using this criterion fairly and proportionately.

4. *Why not include a catchment area reference in the over-subscription criteria?* We want to keep the criteria as simple as possible. Demand for school places changes year-on-year. It may not be possible to meet demand from within a set catchment area over several years; and publishing a catchment area map for one year may be misleading - parents/carers tend to perceive it as a longer-term arrangement. We propose only to set catchment areas in circumstances where it would help parents/carers understand their position more clearly – e.g. a school close to a local authority border where it would help parents/carers living in the immediate local area (even if the other side of the border) to understand that an application for the school would be likely to be successful. We do not think this applies to any of our existing schools in the annex.
5. *Where a Reach4 primary school has a nursery:*
 - i. *What approach will be taken to admissions to the nursery?* The school will manage admissions to the nursery based on the same criteria set out in a) to d) above.
 - ii. *Why not prioritise children already in the nursery in the over-subscription criteria for Reception places?* Legally there could be grounds for parents whose children aren't in the nursery to contest such a criterion as an unfair pre-condition. We do not think that exposure to legal challenges – even if unsuccessful – would be in anyone's interest. There would be less risk of legal challenge if only nursery children from disadvantaged backgrounds were prioritised but this would create other risks, around the clarity/complexity of the criteria and appearing divisive.
6. *What approach will be taken for children whose parents/carers would like them to be admitted earlier or later than usual, such as those born in the summer term?* The Principal will decide how to respond to such requests, on a case-by-case basis and based on what they believe is in the best interests of the child after liaising with the parents/carers and, where appropriate, the local authority.

How to respond to the consultation

The consultation runs until 31 January 2017. It would really help us in collating and considering responses if you could respond via our online survey:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SFPDRBG

Alternatively, you can respond by writing to:

Reach4 admissions consultation – FAO Anna Thompson

[state name of academy/ies your response relates to, if relevant]

C/o Scientia Academy, Mona Road, Burton Upon Trent, DE13 0UF

or by emailing: info@Reach4.org.uk



Reach4 open academies (as at December 2016): key information for 2018/19 admissions consultation

Academy name	Admission number for 2018/9	Link to relevant local authority info – we will align with their approach for community schools on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • definitions of ‘sibling’ and ‘home-to-school distance’ in our over-subscription criteria • definitions of related terms such as ‘parent’, ‘residence’ etc • details of related processes such as tie-breaks and waiting lists
Carrfield Primary Academy	45	
Gooseacre Primary Academy	60	https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/4027/admission-arrangements-com-vol-controlled-schools-2018-2019.pdf
Highgate Primary Academy	45	
The Hill Primary Academy	60	
Castle Academy	30	
Denaby Main Primary Academy	40	
Edenthorpe Hall Primary Academy	40	http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/schools/admission-arrangements
Hexthorpe Primary School	90	
Hillside Academy	20	
Byron Wood Primary Academy	60	
Greengate Lane Academy	30	
Hatfield Academy	56	https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/pupil-admissions/primary-school/guide-for-parents-primary.html
Hartley Brook Academy	90	
Lower Meadow Primary Academy	45	