

GUIDANCE FOR OWN ADMISSION AUTHORITY SCHOOLS ON THE CONSULTATION & DETERMINATION OF ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2024 ENTRY

Summary

1. Admission authorities¹ must set (“determine”) admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first publicly consult on those arrangements. If no changes are made to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least every 7 years.
2. In drawing up their admission arrangements, Admission Authorities **must** ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated. Admission Authorities must also ensure that the arrangements comply with the mandatory requirements of the Admissions Code, associated regulations and any other relevant legislation.
3. The national Admissions Code (September 2021) stipulates that consultation must now be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January of the year before those arrangements are to apply. For example: for arrangements which are to apply to applications made in 2023-24 (for entry in September 2024), consultation must be completed by 31 January 2023. This consultation period allows parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about proposed admission arrangements.
4. It is no longer a requirement to consult where the change is an increase to a school’s published admission number.

Consultation

5. When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities must consult by 31 January on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) will apply for admission applications the following academic year. Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.
6. Admission authorities for schools designated as having a religious character must have regard to any guidance from the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination when constructing faith-based oversubscription criteria, to the extent that the guidance complies with the mandatory provisions and guidelines of this Code. Please note the Office of the Schools Adjudicator has recently advised that it has been clarified in the High Court that this means that admission authorities must have a “*clear reason*” with a “*proper evidential basis*” for a decision to depart from diocesan guidance.
7. Schools with a religious character must also consult with the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination when deciding how membership or practice of the faith is to be demonstrated. Church of England schools must, as required by the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991, consult with their diocese about proposed admission arrangements before any public consultation. The Education Commission of the Catholic Diocese also requires Catholic schools to consult with them about changes prior to public consultation.

¹ The admission authority is the school governing body for foundation schools and voluntary aided schools, and the academy trust /governing body for free schools and academies. The Local Authority is the admission authority for community schools.

8. Consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.
9. Admission authorities must consult with:
 - a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
 - b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
 - c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
 - d) whichever of the governing body and the local authority who are not the admission authority;
 - e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and
 - f) in the case of faith schools, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.
10. For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority must publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on their website together with details of the person within the admission authority to whom comments may be sent and highlighting the proposed changes and the areas on which comments are sought. Admission authorities must also send upon request a copy of the proposed admission arrangements to any of the persons or bodies listed above inviting comment. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals. An example notice is attached which schools may find helpful.
11. To meet the requirement to consult with parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen and other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions, it is also recommended that, as a minimum, admission authorities highlight the consultation on the proposed arrangements to parents of existing pupils and any other persons or local groups that may have an interest, eg local nurseries, community groups and for church schools, places of worship. In recent determinations, the Office of the Schools Adjudicator has been critical of some admission authorities' efforts to consult with parents and other interested groups and has indicated that merely publishing the proposed arrangements on the school's website is insufficient.
12. In addition, Wandsworth Pupil Services Team is happy to facilitate the part of consultation process on behalf of admission authority schools and academies by circulating by email copies of the proposed arrangements to all maintained schools and academies in the borough and neighbouring local authorities. The team will also publish a copy of the proposed admission arrangements on the borough council website. Schools wishing to take up this offer must email a copy of their arrangements to Adam Wells (adam.wells@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk) by **Friday 9 December 2022** at the latest.
13. Where comments are made on the changes for consultation, admission authorities must have regard to these comments. For own admissions authority schools, the school's governing body or Academy Trust, as appropriate, must meet to consider all comments made before determining their arrangements. Where there are a high number of comments that are objecting to the same aspect of the admissions arrangement, admission authorities may wish to seek advice from the Local Authority or the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination (for faith schools).
14. **No changes can be made in your determined admission arrangements if you have not consulted.**

Determination and Publication

15. All admission authorities must determine admission arrangements by 28 February every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required.

16. Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they must notify the appropriate bodies and must publish a copy of the determined arrangements on their website displaying them for the whole offer year (the academic year in which offers for places are made). Admission authorities must send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the Local Authority as soon as possible before 15 March. Admission authorities for faith schools must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination.
17. Where an admission authority has determined a PAN that is higher than in previous years, they must notify the Local Authority that they have done so, and make specific reference to the change on their website.
18. The Local Authority must, by 15 March, publish on its website the proposed admission arrangements for any new school or Academy which is intended 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.
19. Following the determination of arrangements, any interested party can object to those arrangements to the Schools Adjudicator but must do so by 15 May.
20. Composite prospectuses – the LA must publish online - with hard copies available for those who do not have access to the internet - a composite prospectus for parents by 12 September in the offer year, which contains the admissions arrangements and any supplementary information forms for each of the state-funded schools in the local authority area to which parents can apply (i.e. all schools including Academies). Admission authorities that are not the local authority must provide all the information that the local authority needs to compile the composite prospectus no later than 8 August, unless agreed otherwise. They must ensure that this information is kept up to date throughout the period in which it is possible for parents to apply for a place for their child, and that it is written in a way that makes it clear and accessible to all parents.

Variations to Determined Arrangements

21. Once admission arrangements have been determined for a particular academic year, they cannot be revised by the admission authority unless such revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of the Code, admissions law, a determination of the Adjudicator or any misprint in the admission arrangements. Admission authorities may propose other variations where they consider such changes to be necessary in view of a major change in circumstances. Such proposals must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for approval, and the appropriate bodies notified. Where the local authority is the admission authority for a community or voluntary controlled school, it must consult the governing body of the school before making any referral. A variation to increase a school's PAN is not required to be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
22. Admission authorities must notify the appropriate bodies of all variations and must display a copy of the full varied admission arrangements on their website until they are replaced by different admission arrangements. The Local Authority must display the varied admission arrangements on their website where an admission authority has raised its PAN.

For further information, please contact
Adam Wells, Head of Pupil Services
Email: adam.wells@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk
Tel: 020 8871 8028

KEY DATES

Dates that apply	Action
1 October 2022 – 31 January 2023	Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and take place between these dates.
28 February 2023	The date by which admission arrangements must be determined.
15 March 2023	Admissions authorities must publish their determined admission arrangements.
15 May 2023	Deadline for objections to be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator on any admission arrangements.

SAMPLE CONSULTATION NOTICE

Consultation Notice on the proposed Admission Arrangements for 2024/25 XXX Catholic Primary School, XXX Street, London XXX

Over a number of years the Governing Body have been considering how we could make our Admissions criteria fairer, and particularly the fairest way to allocate places when we are oversubscribed, as we continue to be.

The aim of the Governing Body must be to try and make sure that places at our school are able to be offered to children in practising Catholic families, wherever they live within the parishes we serve.

In recent years it has proved to be increasingly difficult to offer places to families the length and breadth of our parishes. This is because, as we are constantly oversubscribed, we use calculation of distance between the school and the child's home to determine who we offer places to.

As a result it is usually only families who live near the school who are offered places. This means that there are many families who do not have the chance of getting a place because they do not live near the school.

After much research and discussion, including taking advice from the Diocese, our Local Education Authority and other similar, oversubscribed Catholic primary schools, we have decided to adopt a different method of determining how places should be offered, if we are oversubscribed.

Attached to this notice is a copy of our Arrangements for Admissions for 2024/25 with supporting documentation. There have been some amendments to the layout and wording of the document which we hope are clearer than before. The significant change is that oversubscription will now be dealt with by a **Random Allocation** method.

The system will be operated within very strict conditions of total independence from the school or anyone connected with it. The Governing Body feel that this is the only way to give every family of the parishes we serve an equal chance when applying for a place at our school. Our Admissions criteria is still one of Catholicity – it is only how we determine oversubscription that has changed.

Nursery Parents joining in September 2023 should note that if they wish to apply for Reception in 2024, they will do so under the new admission arrangements and where they live will no longer be a factor in determining the allocation of a place – in the event of oversubscription – as it has been in the past.

This consultation is for the attention of:

- a) parents of children between the ages of two and eleven years old
- b) other persons in the area who have an interest in the proposed arrangements
- c) all other admission authorities within the local area
- d) the local authority (XXX)
- e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities
- f) any relevant faith bodies (e.g. the local diocese)

The consultation period is open for 6 weeks from **1 November to 15 December 2022** and comments should be submitted in writing to:

XXX (Name)
Chair of Admissions
XXX Catholic Primary School
XXX Street
London XXX

Alternatively you can email your comments to the school's email address: info@ABC

Following the consultation period all submitted comments will be considered at a governors' meeting and the final arrangements will be published on the school website after 28 February 2023.