

Guidance for own admission authority schools on the consultation and determination of admission arrangements for the 2028/29 academic year

Introduction

Admission authorities must set ('determine') admission arrangements annually. Where changes are proposed to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least every 7 years. Consultation must 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 from September 2027 (for entry in September 2028), consultation must be completed by 31 January 2027. This consultation period allows parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about proposed admission arrangements.

Whilst consultation is not required for an increase to PAN, admission authorities should consider the impact on accommodation, staffing, organisation, neighbouring schools and local place planning, and discuss proposals with the local authority before determination.

Proposing changes to admission arrangements

All admission authorities must take into account guidance issued by the School Placement and Admissions team that relate to statutory changes that apply to all maintained schools. The team have also listed information specifically reported on by the Office of the School Adjudicator, these points are included in appendix 1. We would recommend all admission authorities review their arrangements and take into consideration the points raised.

Faith schools must also have regard to guidance issued by their faith leaders.

The below is a timeline and guidance of the dates and requirements from consultation to determination of arrangements:

Dates that apply	Action
1 October 2026 – 31 January 2027	Consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks and take place between these dates.
28 February 2027	The date by which admission arrangements must be determined.
15 March 2027	Deadline for admission authorities to send a copy of their full determined admission arrangements to their local authority and publish those arrangements on the school's website or on their website (in the case of a local authority).

15 May 2027	The deadline for objections to be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator on any admission arrangements.
8 August 2027	Deadline for governing bodies to provide admission arrangements information to the local authority to allow them to compile composite prospectus.

1 October to 31 January – A consultation period must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year (i.e., the year before the admission arrangements are due to come into place). Admission authorities **MUST** consult with:

For a school where the governing body is the admission authority, the governing body will consult on admission arrangements for the school with:

- A. Hillingdon Council
- B. the admission authorities for all other schools within the borough of Hillingdon (except that in the case of a primary school, the governing body need only consult with the admission authorities for other primary schools; there is no need to consult with the admission authorities for secondary schools)
- C. parents of children aged between the ages of 2 and 18 in the borough of Hillingdon
- D. such other persons in the borough of Hillingdon who in the opinion of the governing body have an interest in the proposed admission arrangements
- E. in the case of a school which is designated as having a religious character, the relevant faith representative

For an Academy school, the proprietor / Academy trust, as admission authority for the school, will consult on admission arrangements for the school with:

- A. Hillingdon Council
- B. the admission authorities for all other schools within the borough of Hillingdon (except that in the case of a primary school, the proprietor / Academy trust need only consult with the admission authorities for other primary schools; there is no need to consult with the admission authorities for secondary schools)
- C. parents of children aged between the ages of 2 and 18 in the borough of Hillingdon
- D. such other persons in the borough of Hillingdon who in the opinion of the proprietor / Academy trust have an interest in the proposed admission arrangements
- E. in the case of a school which is designated as having a religious character, the relevant faith representative

How to publish consultation

Admission authorities should take reasonable steps to bring the consultation to the attention of interested parties. This may include:

- publication on the school's website;
- communications to parents and carers;
- notification to neighbouring schools and admission authorities;
- use of newsletters, social media and community networks;
- engagement with faith groups, parish councils or local community organisations where appropriate.

Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals.

During consultation

For the duration of the six-week consultation period, the admission authority must publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements on their own website and on the maintaining LA's website with details of the person within the admission authority to whom comments may be sent and **highlight the changes that are proposed in the admission arrangements**. In most cases, by publishing proposed arrangements on the school and LA website, providing the link to the relevant page in your school newsletter or a notice within your school (poster or leaflet), you will meet the minimum statutory requirements of a public consultation. It is important that you include in your consultation notice the intended audience as set out above in (a) to (e).

Where comments are made on the changes for consultation, admission authorities must have regard to these comments. For own admissions authority schools, the governing body or its admissions committee, must meet and consider all comments made before determining their arrangements. The governing body or admissions committee must consider all consultation responses before determining admission arrangements. Faith schools should also have regard to guidance provided by the relevant diocesan or religious authority where applicable

Where changes are proposed that require consultation under the School Admissions Code, those changes cannot be implemented unless the required consultation has been undertaken.

Determination of Admission Arrangements

28 February - All admission arrangements must be determined by the 28 February in each year. This also applies if there have been no changes to the arrangements and a consultation has not been required. Own admission authority schools must

provide their determined arrangements, including any supplementary forms that apply (schools with religious affiliation) to Hillingdon School Placement and Admissions team.

Please ensure that you have recorded the minutes from the meeting where the admission arrangements have been determined by your admissions committee. This may be requested by the Office of the School Adjudicator at a later stage.

By the 15 March - Once determined, admission authorities must send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the School Placement and Admissions team before 15 March 2027, including all additional forms that apply. They can be sent to the generic email (admissions@hillingdon.gov.uk). Admission Authorities for faith schools must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination (i.e., Diocesan board)

Local Authorities must, by the 15 March 2027, publish on their website where the determined admission arrangements for all schools located within their authority can be viewed. This is a statutory requirement and if there were an objection submitted to the Schools Adjudicator on your determined admission arrangements, evidence will be requested that you provided this to the Home LA prior to this date.

15 May - Any objections to the determined arrangements must be made to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May.

Determined admissions arrangements must be published and accessible to the public for the whole of year that the arrangements apply.

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 such as open evenings and contact details.

Variation to determined arrangements

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 reference. **A variation to increase a school's PAN is not required to be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.**

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. Local authorities **must** display the

varied admission arrangements on their website where an admission authority has raised its PAN.

What must be included in the schools' admissions arrangements:

EHCP: (Education Health and Care Plan)

All schools must make reference to the requirement to admit children with an Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school.

Example: When the school is oversubscribed, *after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan where the school is named in the Plan, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below:*

Looked After Children:

A looked after child (as defined in the Children Act 1989) or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

Banding (if applicable) & Looked After Children:

Where the school is oversubscribed: looked after children and previously looked after children must be given top priority in each band, and then any oversubscription criteria applied within each band, and priority must not be given within bands according to the applicant's performance in the test.

Children with Education, Health and Care Plans may be included in banding tests and allocated places in the appropriate bands but, regardless of any banding arrangements, they must be allocated a place if their Education, Health, and Care Plan names the school.

Faith (if applicable) & Looked After Children:

Admission authorities for schools designated with a religious character may give priority to all looked after children and previously looked after children whether or not of the faith, but they must give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children of the faith before other children of the faith. Where any element of priority is given in relation to children not of the faith, they must give priority to looked after children and previously looked after children not of the faith above other children not of the faith.

Previously Looked After Children:

All schools must give the highest priority in their oversubscription criteria to looked after children and previously looked after children. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order) immediately following being looked after including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

Distance:

Admission authorities must clearly set out how distance from home to the school will be measured, making clear how the 'home' address will be determined and the point in the school from which all distances are measured. This should include provision for cases where parents have shared responsibility for a child following the breakdown of their relationship and the child lives for part of the week with each parent.

Admission authorities should ensure that distance measurements are objective, clear, consistently applied and capable of independent verification.

Temporary addresses:

Admissions Authorities may want to consider whether a temporary address may be accepted. If the applicant still owns a property that was previously used as a home address, or a temporary address which the admissions authority considers to be solely or mainly used to obtain a school place. For example, if the applicant resides at more than one property the admissions authority may decide to only consider the given address if applicant has lived there for a year prior to the closing date of application (including rented, bought or living with a family member or friend). It must be clear what additional information, or documents can be used to explain why an applicant is not using their permanent address, or another address identified as a result of screening, or as a result of information obtained from the public. This may include utility bills, benefit claims and copies of mortgage or rent agreements.

Siblings:

Admission authorities must state clearly in their arrangements what they mean by 'sibling' (e.g., whether this includes step siblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children living permanently at the same address or siblings who are former pupils of the school).

The sibling definition must be clear. The admissions authority should consider if half brothers and sisters are included and should full brothers and sisters who live in different households be included?

Some schools (outside of Hillingdon) give priority to siblings of pupils attending another state funded school with which they have close links (for example, schools on the same site). Where this is the case, this priority must be set out clearly in the arrangements.

Multiple births:

Twins and children from multiple births; when one of the siblings is the last child to be admitted they can be offered over the published admission number unless to do so would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources. Where one child of a multiple birth is offered the final available place, admission authorities should clearly state whether siblings will also be admitted and in what circumstances this may result in admission above PAN.

For Key Stage 1 the child/children can be considered as an exception to the class size rule.

Junior schools:

Children attending year 2 at the linked infant school should be given priority for admission to the junior school. This needs to be referenced in your admission criteria with reference that it applies to junior school applications only.

In Year Admissions:

The following applications will be treated as in-year admissions during 2028/29:

- applications for admission to Reception which are received after 1 September 2028;
- for any school which has a published admission number (PAN) for Year 3, applications for admission to Year 3 which are received after 1 September 2028;
- applications for admission to Year 7 which are received after 1 September 2028;
- all other applications for admission to Years 1 to 6 and 8 to 11

Parents must apply directly to the admission authority for a community school or schools of their preference. The local authority is the admission authority for Community Schools. Academies, Voluntary Aided Schools, Foundation Schools, Free Schools are their own admission authorities. Parents can either apply directly to the non-community schools or through the local authority.

The relevant admission authority will make available a suitable form on which an application may be made. The local authority will make available a suitable form for parents to complete when applying for a place at any school for which they are not the admission authority as required.

Every admission authority is required to notify the local authority of both the application and the outcome of the application so that the local authority can meet its statutory duty to keep up to date figures on the availability of school places in the area.

Admission authorities must inform parents of their right of appeal against refusal of a place.

Waiting lists:

Each admission authority must maintain a clear, fair, and objective waiting list until at least 31 December of each school year of admission, stating in their arrangements that each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. Waiting lists must be ranked strictly in accordance with the published oversubscription criteria.

A child's position on a waiting list may change as other children join or leave the list and should not be determined by the date the application was received.

Withdrawal of places:

If a place was offered at an oversubscribed school the admissions authority should advise under which circumstances the offer will be withdrawn.

A place will not be withdrawn once a child has started at the school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained but the length of time the child has been at the school will be taken into account. For example, it might be considered appropriate to withdraw the place if the child has been at the school for less than one term.

Places may be withdrawn where they have been offered on the basis of fraudulent, intentionally misleading or materially incorrect information.

Reception Admissions, Deferred Entry and Part-Time Attendance:

Children are entitled to a full-time Reception place from the September following their fourth birthday. Parents may:

- accept the place and take it up full-time;
- request part-time attendance until compulsory school age;
- defer admission until later in the academic year, provided the place is taken up before the start of the term following the child's fifth birthday.

Schools should discuss arrangements with parents and ensure decisions are made in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Admission of children outside their normal age group:

Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year 1.

Admission authorities must make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. They must also take into account the views of the head teacher at the school concerned.

When informing a parent of their decision on the year group the child should be admitted to, the admission authority must set out clearly the reasons for their decision.

Where an admission authority agrees to a parent's request for their child to be admitted out of their normal age group;

- parents/carers will need to withdraw the admissions application for their child's chronological year group and will need to apply for a place in the following admissions round
- this does not guarantee a place in a particular school in the next school year
- this decision does not bind any other admission authorities and so the parents/carers will need to apply separately for education out of year group to any other schools
- the parents/carers will need to re-apply for education out of year group ahead of moving to a new school, for example transition to separate junior/secondary schools or changing schools due to moving address

They must not give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group.

Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied. This right does not apply if they are offered a place at the school, but it is not in their preferred age group.

Children of UK service personnel (UK Armed Forces):

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.

Children from overseas:

Admission authorities should comply with current Home Office and Department for Education guidance relating to the admission of children arriving from overseas and should satisfy themselves that a child has the right to access a state-funded school where relevant.

Right to appeal:

When an admission authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse their child a place at a school for which they have applied, it must include the reason why admission was refused; information about the right to appeal; the deadline for lodging an appeal and the contact details for making an appeal. Parents must be informed that, if they wish to appeal, they must set out their grounds for appeal in writing. Admission authorities must not limit the grounds on which appeals can be made.

Admission Number (or Published Admission Number – (PAN)):

The number of school places that the admission authority must offer in each relevant age group of a school for which it is the admission authority (i.e., the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school). Admission numbers are part of a school's admission arrangements.

Tiebreaker:

Admission arrangements must include an effective, clear, and fair tiebreaker to decide between two applications that cannot otherwise be separated.

Additional criterion that can be included in the school's admission arrangements

Medical/Social:

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.

Only exceptional social or medical needs that can be demonstrated and evidenced should qualify under this criterion.

Children of staff:

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.

Children eligible for pupil premium or service premium:

Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children eligible for the early year's pupil premium, the pupil premium and children eligible for the service premium. Admission authorities should clearly define in the arrangements the categories of eligible premium recipients to be prioritised.

Admission authorities may give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children eligible for the early year's pupil premium, the pupil premium or the service premium who:

- a) are in a nursery class which is part of the school;

or b) attend a nursery that is established and run by the school. The nursery must be named in the admission arrangements, and its selection must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds.

Ensure arrangements are not unnecessarily complex which may make them unclear.

Additional Information

Where you are including web links, telephone numbers and email addresses within your admissions arrangements, please ensure they are current and operational.

When revising your admission arrangements, it's recommended to clearly state the version number both within the document itself and in the document's name.

Additionally, please ensure that all relevant school staff members are aware of the location where the most recent version is stored.

If you refer to Hillingdon's admissions team in your arrangements, kindly use the term 'School Placement and Admissions team' to refer to our team and where you are referring to our website, please ensure that you are sharing the accurate link to our website: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/schooladmissions.

Common Issues Identified by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator

- Oversubscription criteria must be clear, objective and procedurally fair.
- Definitions of sibling, home address and distance must be precise.
- Supplementary Information Forms must only collect information necessary for applying oversubscription criteria.
- Admission authorities should ensure that any Supplementary Information Form does not become an additional application form and only requests information needed to apply the oversubscription criteria.
- Admission authorities should avoid unnecessary complexity.
- Faith-based criteria must be capable of objective assessment.
- Waiting list arrangements must reflect published oversubscription criteria.
- Admission arrangements should be reviewed annually for clarity and legal compliance.

Further Support

If you are considering making substantial changes to your admissions arrangements that may have an adverse effect on surrounding schools or pupil groups, the School Placement and Admissions team would like to offer a meeting with the Headteacher and Governors to discuss the changes in advance of determination.

If you need any further guidance on the consultation process or you would like to arrange a meeting, please email:

The School Placement and Admissions team - admissions@hillingdon.gov.uk