

## **The Diocesan Board of Education Agreed Guidance for Schools/Governors in setting Admissions Policies**

- As the representative religious authority for our Church of England Schools, the Church of England Birmingham specifies that **attendance at public worship** must be used as the **ONLY** activity to satisfy any faith oversubscription criteria for admissions purposes.
- It is the responsibility of each Governing Board to set its own Admissions Policy (compliant with the School Admissions Code 2021) and, when doing so, the Governing Board is required to take note of the following advice given by the Diocese.

The DBE would encourage all Governing Boards to have in mind the following when setting their Admissions Policy:

1. That the original purpose of many church schools was to serve the children in their Parish. This is often outlined in the school's original Trust Deed. Although times have changed, we would ask Governors to bear this in mind.
2. An awareness of local family and community situations in which the policy may have an impact, particularly in areas where schools are heavily oversubscribed.
3. That it is a **legal requirement** that 'looked after' (LA) and 'previously looked after' (PLA) children must be included as the first oversubscription Criterion in every Policy (the definitions are found at 1.7 of the School Admissions Code 2021).

There is an exception, in that Faith schools *may* give priority to all LA/PLA children whether or not of the faith but they must give priority to LA/PLA children of the faith before other children of the faith. Where any element of priority is given to children not of the faith, they must give priority to LA/PLA children not of the faith above other children not of the faith.

**The DBE strongly encourages all schools to have all 'looked after' and 'previously looked after' children as the first oversubscription Criterion in their Admissions Policy. From September 2021, this will also include Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children.**

We would ask governors also to think generally about how their Policy helps to serve children from more vulnerable backgrounds, and whether it excludes children who live in the Parish who may wish to attend.

4. That the local Church and clergy should be consulted to ensure as far as possible that, as important stakeholders, they understand and support the proposed policy.

An example Admissions Policy is attached, together with suggested definitions and 'notes' to include with the Policy. It is important to include these *or* to define your terms and include all the required statutory information by other means.

In particular, be aware that any faith criteria requirements must be **measurable and defined** (eg Church attendance is once a month for a 12-month period prior to application) and **verifiable** – usually by signed form from the Church Minister. In your Supplementary Information Form (SIF), you must only ask questions that are relevant to your over-subscription criteria.

### Procedure for Setting an Admissions Policy

1. The Admissions Policy for admissions in 18 month's time must be considered each Autumn Term (*ie the Admissions Policy for September 2023 admissions should be considered in Autumn 2021*). If no changes are proposed, please send a copy of your Policy to the Diocese by **31 October**, together with your School Information Form (SIF) if you have one.
2. Legal provisions apply in respect of *changes* to the Policy or to policies which have not been consulted on for 7 years – please speak to Sarah Smith, Diocesan Director of Education (DDE), as early as possible in the Autumn term with respect to any proposed changes or if there has been no consultation process in the last 7 years. Such proposed changes or 7 year-old arrangements must be consulted on for a six-week period, with the latest end date being 31 January. Any responses to the consultation must be considered prior to determination.
3. Whether or not the Policy has changed, it must be determined by **28 February** each year and published on your school website by 15 March.
4. Once determined, the Policy must be forwarded to the LA as soon as possible and by 15 March at the latest.
5. If you need to change your Policy after it has been determined and published as above, please seek advice from Sarah Smith, DDE.