Inspires MAT

WITHAM OAKS ACADEMY

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2028/2029

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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at the school
- Set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply
- Explain how to appeal against a decision not to offer your child a place

2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):

- School Admissions Code 2021
- School Admission Appeals Code

As an academy, the school is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

3. Definitions

The normal admissions round is the period during which parents can apply for state-funded school places at the school's normal point of entry, using the common application form provided by their home local authority.

Looked-after children, as defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989, are children who, at the time of making an application to a school, are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Being provided with accommodation by a local authority in exercise of its social services functions

Previously looked-after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they:

- Were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or
- Became subject to a child arrangements order (defined in section 8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014), or
- Became subject to a special guardianship order (defined in section 14A of the Children Act 1989)

This includes children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in state care due to being adopted.

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

A parent is any individual who holds parental responsibility, as defined under the Children Act 1989, or any person who has care of a child, where the child lives with them either full or part time and they look after that child.

Children with statements of special educational needs or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) that name the school on the statement, are required to be admitted to a school regardless of their place in the priority order.

4. How to apply

For applications in the normal admissions round you should use the application form provided by your home local authority (regardless of which local authority the schools are in).

You will receive an offer for a school place directly from your local authority.

Please note, pupils attending Acorn Academy will not transfer automatically into Witham Oaks Academy. A separate application must be made for a place.

As required by law, Witham Oaks Academy provides for the full-time admission of all children offered a place in the Reception year group from the September following their fourth birthday. Therefore, if a parent wants a full-time place for their child from September (at the school of which a place has been offered) then they are entitled to that full-time place. Parents can request that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age in the school year. The law does not require a child to start school until the term following their fifth birthday. Compulsory school age is reached at that point. Where entry is deferred, the school will hold the place for that child and not offer it to another child. The parent would not however be able to defer entry beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday, nor beyond the academic year for which the original application was accepted.

5. Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group.

Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and the best interests of the child concerned. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, this will include taking account of:

- Parents' 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
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The headteacher's views

Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria listed in section 6. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group.

Parents will always be informed of the reasons for any decision on the year group a child should be admitted to. Parents do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school, but it is not in their preferred age group.

6. Allocation of places

There is no guarantee of a place for children living in the priority admission area. In the event of oversubscription, places will be allocated using the following criteria in the order given:

1. Looked After Children and previously looked after children (as defined in the Primary Education in Essex)
2. Children with a sibling attending the school other than Year 6
3. Children living in the priority admission area
4. Remaining applications

Should a child hold an EHCP or currently be seeking an EHCP and intend to name the school as first choice please inform the school so they can be included in admission numbers.

6.1 Published admission number (PAN)

The school has a published admission number of 90 pupils for entry in year 3.

6.2 Oversubscription criteria

If the school receives more applications than places available, the following criteria will apply in order:

6.2.1 Looked-after and Previously Looked-after Children
Highest priority will be given to looked-after children and all previously looked-after children who apply for a place at the school. *(Exceptions apply only to grammar schools, partially selective schools, and faith schools as per the School Admissions Code.)*

6.2.2 Children Attending Named Feeder Schools
Priority will next be given to children who attend named feeder schools. *(The selection of feeder schools must be transparent and based on reasonable grounds. Fee-paying independent schools must not be named.)*

6.2.3 Children with Siblings on Roll
Priority will next be given to children with siblings on the roll of the school at the point of application for the new pupil. Siblings include step siblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children living permanently at the same address. *(Priority will not be given to children with siblings who are former pupils of the school.)*

6.2.4 Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a Disability / Social or Medical Need
Parents of children with identified SEND should contact the school before applying to ascertain the support that would be needed.

- The school defines social and medical need as being under social care or in receipt of a medical care plan.
- Supporting evidence is required if applying on the basis of social or medical need.

6.3 Tie break

In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the school will use the distance between the school and a child's home as a tie breaker to decide between applicants. Priority will be given to children who live closest to the school.

Distance will be measured in a straight line from the child's home address to the school's front gates. For the purposes of this policy, a child's home address is defined as the place where they live and sleep for the majority of nights in a normal school week, with their parent(s).

If a child lives in different properties (shared care), parents must provide the address where the child lives for the majority of the week. In cases of equal shared care, both parents must agree which address should be used on the application. For applications made in the normal round, if there is no agreement, the local authority will decide which address will be used.

Where the distance between 2 children's homes and the school is the same, random allocation will be used to decide between them. This process will be independently verified and defined at that time with equity and fairness applied.

6.4 Waiting list

We will maintain a clear, fair and objective waiting list for children entering a year group until 31 December of each school year of admission. If your application is unsuccessful, your child's name will be added to the waiting list. Where places become available, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria outlined in section 6.2. Priority will not be given to children based on the date their application was received, or when their name was added to the list.

Under the School Admissions Code, looked-after children, previously-looked after children, and those allocated a place at the school in accordance with a Fair Access Protocol (see section 6.6 below) must take precedence over those on the waiting list. There is an additional consideration for faith schools here – see paragraph 1.37 of the school admissions code.

6.5 Children below compulsory school age (optional)

Where children below compulsory school age is offered a place at the school, they will be entitled to attend the school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday.

Parents may defer their child's entry to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age, and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year the offer was made for.

Where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

6.6 Fair Access Protocol

We participate in Essex County Council's Fair Access Protocol. This helps ensure that all children, including those who are unplaced and vulnerable, or having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, get access to a school place as quickly as possible and before anyone is considered from the waiting list. Eligibility for the Fair Access Protocol does not limit a parent's right to make an in-year application to the school for their child. Any application will be processed in accordance with the usual in-year admission procedures (see section 7).

6.7 Challenging behaviour

We will not refuse to admit a child on behavioural grounds in the normal admissions round or at any point in the normal year of entry. The exception to this is where we may refuse admission in certain cases where the specific criteria listed in the School Admissions Code (paragraph 3.8) apply, i.e. where section 87 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is engaged.

We may refuse admission for an in-year applicant for a year group that isn't the normal point of entry, in certain cases where the specific criteria listed in the School Admissions Code (paragraphs 3.10 to 3.13) apply.

6.8 Children of UK service personnel and crown servants

Families of UK service personnel with a confirmed posting, or crown servants returning from overseas, will be allocated a place in advance of the family arriving in the area, provided a place is available and the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date.

We will use the address at which the child will live when applying our oversubscription criteria, provided the parents provide some evidence of their intended address. Alternatively, the unit or quartering address will be used as the child's home address when considering the application against the oversubscription criteria, where this is requested by a parent.

Address Checking

The school will ask applicants to provide proof of their home address. This will include a copy of the following:

- Council tax notification
- UK driving licence
- Two utility bills dated within the last 6 months (gas, electricity, water or landline phone).

The school reserves the right to take additional checking measures including further documentation and, in some cases, unannounced home visits. If a school place is secured through false information regarding a home address, the school may withdraw the place offered.

6.9 Withdrawing an offer of a place

We will not withdraw an offer unless it has been offered in error, a parent has not responded within a reasonable period of time, or it is established that the offer was obtained through a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application.

Where a parent has not responded to the offer, we will give them a further opportunity to respond and explain that the offer may be withdrawn if they do not respond.

If an offer is withdrawn on the basis of misleading information, we will consider the application afresh and a right of appeal will be offered if an offer is refused.

We will not withdraw an offer of a place once a child has started at our school except where that place was fraudulently obtained. In these circumstances, we will consider the length of time that the child has been at the school before deciding whether to withdraw the place.

7. In-year admissions

Parents can apply for a place for their child at any time outside the normal admissions round. As is the case in the normal admissions round, all children whose EHC plans name the school will be admitted.

Likewise, if there are spaces available in the year group you are applying for, your child will be offered a place. This rule does not apply to designated grammar schools, which are free to remove this provision.

If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to the waiting list for the relevant year group. When a space becomes available, it will be filled by 1 of the pupils on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in section 6.2 of this policy. Priority will not be given to children on the basis that they have been on the waiting list the longest.

Applications for in-year admissions should be sent to the following address:

admissionsWOA@inspiresmat.co.uk

You can find details on our in-year admissions and an application form on the following webpage:

Witham Oaks Academy - Admissions

Parents will be notified of the outcome of their in-year application in writing within 15 school days.

8. Appeals

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you will be informed why admission was refused and given information about the process for hearing appeals. Parents have the right of appeal against admission decisions. Information on Admissions Appeals for 2028-2029 can be found at www. https://www.essex.gov.uk/after-your-school-offer/appeals

Appeals will be heard by an independent appeal panel.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees every year.

Whenever changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the published admission number), the Board of Trustees will publicly consult on these changes. If nothing changes, it will publicly consult on the school's admission arrangements at least once every 7 years. Consultation will be for a minimum of 6 weeks and will take place between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before the arrangement are to apply.