



Learn-AT
Learning ~ Fellowship

Admissions Policy

For first-time school entry from August 2021 and for in-year applications 2021-22 and beyond

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Part One – The Trust

1.1 Learn AT Admissions Policy Overview

The Learn Academies Trust (Learn-AT) is the Admission Authority for the schools within our Trust. As the Admission Authority, the Trust is responsible for setting the criteria for admissions, interpretation and management of the admissions process within the schools. Leicestershire County Council is the Co-ordinating Authority for admissions in Leicestershire. It provides support to the Trust and the process for offering of school places and, through a service level agreement, for managing oversubscription where more applications are received than there are school places available.

As the Admission Authority for all schools in the Trust, we need to ensure that the Trust's overriding ethos and values are at the heart of Admission Policies for the schools. Learn-AT is committed to the service of pupils and families in each of its schools and their communities. In all the work we do to secure the highest quality of learning for all pupils, we are guided by our core purpose – *learning* – and our core value – *fellowship*. Learning is the 'main thing' and we work in fellowship, together, to promote each of our schools as distinctive and individual learning communities.

Learn-AT is a mixed, Church of England and Community Multi-Academy Trust. The Trust is proud to be part of the Church of England Diocese of Leicester's family of school trusts and includes majority Diocesan representation on the Members' Board. The five Members approve the appointment of Trustees (or Trust Directors), who are accountable for the effective leadership and management of the Trust. A Christian ethos is fundamental to the Learn-AT schools which were formerly 'Voluntary Aided' or 'Voluntary Controlled' Church of England maintained schools. Learn-AT's community schools are an equal part of the Learn-AT family. Commitment to Church of England education principles is **not** enshrined in the local governance arrangements of community schools. However, all Learn-AT schools share the same determination to create hospitable, inclusive, nurturing environments in which all children flourish.

The admission arrangements for our schools reflect their own local communities and their own distinctive and individual school ethos. Admission arrangements are governed by the School Admissions Code, which is published by the Department for Education.

The School Admissions Code recognises that schools within an Admission Authority's care may each require amended and different individual policies.

The requirements of the Code to ensure that admission policies are fair, easily understood and objectively followed also underpin our approach to admissions. Parents should be able to look at a set of admission arrangements and understand easily how places for that individual school are allocated.

The admission policies for each school must be subject to public consultation at least once every seven years. When planning significant changes, such as altering catchment areas, introducing new criteria or anything that would affect admissions of children into our schools, we are obliged, and would wish, to consult.

As an academy trust with Church of England schools, we are obliged by the School Admissions Code to have regard to advice from the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE). We are also obliged to consult with the Diocese before public consultation. The DBE's advice is that Church Schools do not make provision for faith-based criteria to be considered when more applications are received than there are places available.

This policy reflects that advice.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

When considering admission of pupils into any of our schools, the following principles apply:

1. all applications are treated equally;
2. no Learn-AT school selects by ability;
3. admissions will be dealt with as the individual school's admission policy states;
4. subject to infant class size regulations, and planned admission numbers within schools, our schools will prioritise parental preference wherever possible;
5. appeals against refusals to admit a pupil will be dealt with by an independent appeal panel, duly constituted as required by the School Admissions Code;
6. Learn-AT schools are inclusive and are committed to ensuring that the needs of every child on roll are met.

1.3 The Application Process

Parents apply for a place at our schools using the Leicestershire Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme *if they are resident in Leicestershire*. Any parent living outside of Leicestershire needs to apply to their own Local Authority; that Local Authority will then ensure that forms are sent to Leicestershire for the

co-ordinated response. Information about the admissions process and links to Leicestershire County Council are found on the admissions page of each school and by this link.

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions>

1.4 Decisions

The Local Authority is responsible for making decisions about first-time admissions (school places for children starting school for the first time in the year in which they will have their fifth birthday). Parents and carers are informed about school place decisions on the 'national offer date' – 16th April (or the next working day). In LearnAT, the Local Authority is also responsible for decisions about in year applications for school place. For in-year admissions, the Local Authority will confirm whether a place can be offered, within ten school days of receiving the application.

1.5 Local Authority Obligations

Leicestershire, along with all other Local Authorities, must follow a specified timetable. Children entering the Foundation Year Group, i.e. entering primary school for the first time, in Reception, are dealt with on a common and universal basis.

Every Local Authority must publish a composite booklet that explains the process for starting primary school each year. This is found on the Local Authority website and explains information about the admission process, timetable, appeals process and other useful information.

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Your-Guide-Primary20192020.pdf>

1.6 School Transport

Learn AT is not responsible for any decisions that relate to school transport, this is a matter for the Local Authority.

1.7 Starting School

In Leicestershire, children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday. For school admissions, the academic year is defined 1st September to August 31st, regardless of variations in term start dates. There is one admission at the beginning of the Autumn term, 1st September. However,

there may be individual children who begin later in the academic year, see section 1.18 in this policy. Admission of summerborn children is addressed later in the policy in section 1.19.

1.8 Changing School

When a child is applying for a place at any other time, because of a desire to change schools, house move or for some other reason, the Local Authority co-ordinates this process on behalf of Learn-AT. These types of admissions are known as “in-year admissions”.

For any in-year admission, an application must be made to the Local Authority, indicating the parent’s choice of school. The school will be able to advise if places are available, whether the school is able to offer a school place and if not, what parents can do to appeal that decision.

1.9 How does the process work?

By law, every school must have a mechanism to deal with a situation when there are more applications than places. This involves setting priority criteria.

Children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan that names the school as part of that plan are automatically admitted. These children are not included in the priority criteria, the school offers them a place as this is required by law.

The number of places available in a school is indicated by its Planned Admission Number (PAN). When there are more applications than places, the priority criteria are applied in an objective and fair way. Initially a list is provided by Leicestershire County Council. This is then confirmed by the Local Governing Body (LGB) at each school, where authority is delegated to the LGB by the Trust.

1.10 What is the Planned Admission Number?

The PAN is the number of children the school can accommodate on admission to Reception. This is set by law and is the number that the school considers it can teach, in Reception, in an effective manner. Additionally, the Infant Class Size Regulations require that in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 no class shall have more than 30 pupils to each teacher. This may mean that in smaller schools, combinations of year groups are also affected by Infant Class Size Regulations; Where there are mixed year groups the combined size of the class must not exceed 30 pupils.

1.11 Fair Access Protocols

Every school is obliged to take part in local fair access protocols. Fair access protocols exist for children who have no school place and who are at risk from missing education due to several factors. Fair access protocols work by a group of schools discussing who can best meet needs of pupils who fall into this category. The fair access protocol procedure takes precedence over the waiting list.

Hard to Place children who fall under the Leicestershire County Council Fair Access Protocol are:

- Children from the criminal justice system or Pupil Referral Units who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education
- Children who have been out of education for two months or more;
- Children of Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Children who are homeless;
- Children with unsupportive family backgrounds for whom a place has not been sought;
- Children who are carers;
- Children with special educational needs, disabilities or medical conditions (but without an Education, Health and Care Plan)

1.12 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

- Learn-AT does not allow the refusal of an application for admission to a LearnAT school because it is believed that the school cannot cater for the child's special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but no Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are dealt with through the normal admissions policy. Schools cannot refuse to admit a pupil because he/she does not have an EHCP or is being assessed for one.
- The Trust Board is required by section 324 of the Education Act 1996 and Children and Families Act 2014 s. 33 to admit to a school a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school. This is not an oversubscription criterion. Schools must admit children with EHCPs which name the school whether there are places available in the school or not, unless it would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources. Efficient education means providing for each child or young person a suitable, appropriate education in terms of their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. (SEN Code of Practice 2015, para 9.79).

1.13 Withdrawing Offers

The Learn AT Multi-Academy Trust can withdraw offers of places in certain circumstances. An offer of a place will be withdrawn when a parent has not responded to an offer within a reasonable period of time, usually 21 days from the date of that offer. The offer can also be withdrawn if the basis of the offer was either a fraudulent or misleading application.

1.14 Late Applications

Learn-AT, working with Leicestershire County Council, may accept late applications for first-time admission, so long as they are received by the date set by the Local Authority, currently midnight on 15th January 2019. The LA will consider late applications where the applicant can provide evidence that the reason for lateness was beyond the applicant's control. An Independent Appeal Panel may take a different view at a later stage in the process. Examples of reasons for a late application are:

- family returning from abroad;
- lone parent has been ill for some time;
- family moving into Leicestershire from another area;
- other exceptional circumstances.

Whilst every case is treated on its own merits, evidence to explain why the application is late will be required in every instance. An application that is accepted as being late, but with justifiable reason, will be included in the first cycle of allocations and the parents will be notified on the national offer day.

Other late applications for a named Academy after the specified date will be dealt with after the offer day and will be considered against the oversubscription criteria.

1.15 Waiting Lists

The Local Authority maintains a waiting list for each school until the end of the Autumn term. The waiting list is ranked in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria. The list is made up of children whose parent/carers have applied for a place at the school and been unsuccessful. When a place becomes available the next child on the list will be offered the space. If that family does not require the space, it will pass to the next child and so on. The waiting list is 'dynamic' however; this means that late applications are treated equally according to the over-subscription criteria and can affect the ranking of an earlier application.

After the waiting list has been disbanded, places will be allocated on application and if a space is available, following the standard in-year admission procedures.

1.16 Multiple Births

In the unusual event of there being one space available within the infant class size limit, children of multiple births are permitted exceptions to the class size limit in these circumstances.

1.17 Infant Class Size Limits, Multiple Birth Children and Permitted Exceptions (Primary and Secondary)

In compliance with the relevant regulations, an infant child (i.e. up to and including Year 2) who moves into a school's area once initial allocation decisions have been made, will not necessarily be offered a place in the school if the relevant class will already contain 30 children *or* if an alternative school with space available in the relevant year group within 2 miles of the home address is identified. If there are no places available in nearby schools, the child will be an excepted pupil in the catchment school, allowing the class to exceed 30 pupils.

1.18 Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry

Upon notification of a school place being offered, a child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday.

Parents can request that the date the child is admitted to the school is deferred until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the original application was made.

To defer a place at first time admission, parents are asked to inform the school where the child has been allocated school place.

If a child does not attend school by the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the original application was made, parents are required to make a new application.

1.19 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.

Parents of a summer-born child, that is, those children born from 1st April to 31st August, may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group, for example, to Reception rather than Year 1.

To request a delayed entry parents are required to make an application for their child's admission to their normal age group at the usual time in accordance with this policy and at the same time to submit a request for admission out of the normal age group. Further information about the process will be provided to parents upon their request for admission outside of normal age group or by contacting the school.

Decisions will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will take into account parents' views, information about the child's academic, social and emotional development, where relevant their medical history and any views of a medical professional, whether they have previously been educated outside of their normal age group and whether they may have fallen in to a lower age group if the child was not born prematurely. The views of the Headteacher of the school concerned must be taken in to account. Decisions made by the Admissions Authority will be clearly set out.

When informing a parent of the decision on which year group the child should be admitted to, the reason(s) will be given.

Where the Admissions Authority agrees to the parent's request for their child to be admitted to a year out of their normal age group, it will be necessary for the parent(s) to apply again for a place at the appropriate time, and as a consequence the child will be admitted to a relevant age group (the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school). The Local Authority (on behalf of Learn Academies Trust, as the Admissions Authority) will process the application as part of the main admissions round unless the parental request is made too late for this to be possible and on the basis of determined admission arrangements only including the priority criteria when this applies.

One Admissions Authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another. Upon transfer, it will be a matter for that Admissions Authority. Decisions will be made by the Admissions Authority regarding the parental request for admission out of normal age group in time for parents to make an informed decision about whether their child will start school before compulsory school age. An application will not be given a lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group.

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

1.20 Children of UK Services Personnel and other Crown Servants

Such children must be allocated a place in advance, dependent on an official government letter declaring a relocation date and intended address, if the applicant would meet the criteria on relocation.

A unit postal address must be accepted, or if appropriate a "quartering area" address in the absence of a new home postal address.

1.21 Appeals

If an application for a school place is unsuccessful, then parents have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. Part Two of this policy contains more information for parents about how to appeal for a place at that school.