

Admissions Process

Lincolnshire County Council Maintained Schools

This concerns admissions arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled (C/VC) Schools. Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is the admission authority (AA).

Basic Principles

- As the admissions authority, any admissions decision legally has to be made by Lincolnshire County Council. The school advise whether to offer the child a place.
- As the admissions authority for these schools, LCC has the power to insist on the admission of any child who has not previously been permanently excluded from the school.
- LCC, as the admissions authority, is responsible for setting the published admission number (PAN) for these schools and their admissions policy, including the oversubscription (OS) criteria used to rank applications if the school has more applications than places available. Individual maintained schools have no powers to vary the criteria.
- Schools must rank their reserve list and offer places in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria, published policy and relevant legislation. The ranking of this reserve list must be updated if any changes occur (such as new applications or children moving address), as required by the School Admissions Code (2021).

Admissions Arrangements

LCC publishes the admission arrangements for maintained schools at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Schools must ensure that their websites direct parents to LCC's policy on the LCC website or that the relevant policies are displayed. These are:

- The policy for the current school year, relevant for mid-year admissions,
- The policy for the next school year, relevant for admissions in the co-ordinated round and
- The policy for the following year after 28th February, when it has been determined by LCC.

Note:

- Schools must not make a local version of the admissions policy.
- If not directing to the LCC website, schools must also display a copy of the Supplementary Behaviour Form or Church Supplementary Form.
- School staff and governors working on admissions matters should familiarise themselves with the LCC policy to advise parents appropriately.

Admissions Process

All Admissions

The governors are responsible for ensuring that school staff:

- Check sibling claims
- Verify church claims, where relevant
- Check and record qualification for a selective school, where applicable
- Review whether addresses and distance measurements appear plausible, raising any apparent anomalies with the School Admissions Team as soon as possible
- Review the evidence around potentially fraudulent addresses and recommend whether to accept them: The applicable test for the intake year admission round is whether, on balance of probabilities, parent and child are resident at the claimed address at the time of application and admission of the pupil denied a place to a child with a stronger claim.
- Head teachers and school administrators must not make admissions recommendations alone, because the Code specifies that these decisions must not be made by a single person.

Officers in the LCC school admissions team will support the governors' work on admissions to ensure this complies with the Code, that the governors have followed the appropriate procedure and applied LCC's policy correctly.

LCC is the AA for C/VC schools and therefore has the power to insist on the admission of any child; this might be necessary, for example, to address a procedural error that had deprived a child of an offer of a place that would otherwise have been made.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that they comply with Infant Class Size regulations when making offers.

Intake Admissions

Governors will be responsible for ensuring that the list of applicants is ranked according to the LCC oversubscription criteria through the Schools Access Module (SAM) within the timescales stipulated in the LCC co-ordinated scheme. This responsibility may be delegated, providing that governors ratify the final list to be returned to the LA.

In Year

The governors advise on admissions decisions by applying LCC's published admission arrangements and notifying the admissions team whether there is a space, **within 2 school days**.

Where a space is available, but the school already have a disproportionate number of challenging children on roll in that cohort and there is reason to believe that the child displays challenging behaviour, they may ask for information regarding behaviour from the child's current school and then refuse admission on this basis. **See Challenging Behaviour section below.**

As applications are updated daily, it would cause unacceptable delay and be an unreasonable burden to schools to make these recommendations at full Governing Body

meetings. Therefore the governors must consider how best to make timely recommendations within their school. They may achieve this, for example, by setting up an admissions sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers, to avoid a full meeting being held each time. This sub-committee may not formally meet but may make recommendations via email if appropriate. Governors should outline how they intend to deal with admissions in the interests of transparency.

Robust arrangements must be in place for schools to respond promptly to all requests for in year places, irrespective of whether these are:

- Parental preferences,
- 'Next nearest' requests, where the School Admissions Team has determined that all preferred and nearer schools have refused to admit the child, or
- Fair Access Protocol requests, where the School Admissions Team is satisfied that it is impossible to place the child within a 'reasonable' distance (5 miles for primary age children and 10 for secondary, measured by straight line distance to three decimal places).

Any delay dealing with in year admissions requests causes children to miss education and exposes schools and the LA to reputational damage, challenge, criticism and complaint; therefore the governors must make appropriate arrangements to ensure this does not happen. Where an application appears in some way anomalous, it is essential to raise this at once with the School Admissions Team.

Schools can accept direct admissions if they have a space available and no reserve list, or the student would be top of that list. They must notify the LA of the admission by emailing midyearadmissions@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

Where a parent wishes to apply but no space is available, parents should be directed to the LA Common Application Form, so that an alternative school can be offered if necessary.

PAN / Prejudice

- It is a legal requirement to admit up to PAN in the normal year of intake.
- Legally, after the year of intake, schools can refuse where they feel that the admission of a further student would prejudice the efficient education and efficient use of resources at a school. In all other year groups, it is LCC's expectation that schools will admit up to the PAN of that class' intake year, as to do otherwise would be unlikely to be successful at appeal. The exception to this is where a restructure has caused classes to be amalgamated or a mixed age class already has 30 students.
- Schools can suggest offers and over offers (above PAN). This could be because there is no clear case for 'prejudice' to defend at appeal, to support an armed forces family, or to allow all children in the family unit to attend the same school. The School Admissions Team will check that these offers comply with the Code and advise of any possible implications of the decisions for future appeals.
- It is expected that schools will not refuse admission to a Looked After or Previously Looked After Child unless the prejudice in admitting the child would be excessive. When considering this, governors should contact the School Admissions Team for advice.

Challenging Behaviour

Schools can seek further information regarding a child's behaviour and recommend that the LA refuse admission, although spaces are available, and refer for action under the [Fair Access Protocol](#).

It is recommended that schools do not seek additional information for all students, only if they intend to refer to the protocol. Blanket application of this to all applications may be unlawful.

Schools must respond within **2 school days** to notify the LA of whether there is available space and recommend whether to offer a place. Schools must notify the LA within this time if additional information is being sought regarding behaviour. If a school is requesting further information, then the deadline for response is 10 school days.

Schools must not request information regarding behaviour if the class is full. These referrals are only applicable where a school has space available.

Referrals can be made:

- Where a school has a disproportionate number of challenging children on roll in that year group **and**
- The admission of a further child would cause prejudice to the efficient education and efficient use of resources.

Referrals cannot be made for:

- Looked After Children
- Children with an EHCP
- Children in the school's year of intake.

Full details of the definition of 'challenging behaviour' and the supplementary form can be found in the Fair Access Protocol and In Year Process.

LCC schools must not use a different supplementary form to that displayed on the LCC website to gather any additional information.

Schools wishing to make a referral should contact schooladmissions@lincolnsire.gov.uk for advice.

Appeals

LCC is responsible for dealing with any appeals to the independent school admission appeals panel that parents may make. The following points are important to note:

- Schools must provide relevant information promptly so that the School Admissions Team can formulate the appropriate paperwork.
- School governors and school staff must not support individual parental appeals for places at the school where they are governors or are employed, as this would be unlawful.
- Schools must refrain from suggesting to parents that the result of any appeal is predictable.

- Schools are welcome, but not obliged, to send a representative to the appeal.
- If LCC officers do not agree that the school is likely to make a case for prejudice or a refusal is inappropriate (e.g. for a previously LAC/LAC), schools will be contacted to send a representative if they wish to contest the admission.

Reserve Lists

For the normal intake year, the School Admissions Team operates these for all schools until the close of the admissions round in August. The list is then transferred to schools, who must operate it until the end of the year and for all other year groups.

The list should be held in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. It can be cleared at the end of each academic year. It is good practice to write to those on the list at the end of the year to ask if they wish to remain, although this is not a requirement.

Church Criterion

The Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE) prefers that schools do not operate church criterion in the admissions arrangements and the vast majority of schools have removed this. The LDBE position means that LCC would be likely to agree to the removal or narrowing in scope of a church criterion. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss this, as there is an 18 month process to remove this from the school's policy.

It is for schools to ensure that the criteria are applied correctly. Supplementary forms are returned to the respective schools. Any schools operating a church criterion must display any relevant supplementary form on their website.

Out of Cohort Requests

Where a parent makes a request for admission to intake year group (YR, Y7 or Y3 at a junior school) out of cohort, they should be advised to contact the School Admissions Team for the procedure to follow. In-year out of cohort requests are handled by the school directly.

The governors will consult with the LA regarding parental requests for out of cohort places and recommend their acceptance or refusal giving detailed reasons covering the factors listed in the Code. These factors should be addressed in turn, giving a final summary detailing the conclusion including:

- The circumstances of each case
- The best interests of the child
- The parents views
- The child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, the child's medical history and the views of medical professionals
- If the child has ever been educated outside of their normal age group
- If a premature child might have fallen into a lower age group
- The views of the headteacher.
- If the child enters school for the first time at statutory school age, is it in their best interest to join Reception or Year 1, considering the facts of the case and the impact of starting school without first having completed Reception, if refused.

LCC will issue annual guidance for schools on how to deal with these requests and will review the process followed by the governors. A panel of LCC officers will then consider the request, as the formal admission authority, to provide a response to the parent.

In the event that a decision may not have followed the required process, or the result is likely to result in an upheld complaint, officers will request that the governors re-consider it, or provide more detailed reasoning for their decision.

If it is not possible to resolve an application within a reasonable period, a panel of LCC officers may consider all available information and make the decision on the parental request without governor information. The School Admissions Code requires that the opinion of the headteacher is considered in these cases. If schools do not respond to the request, support for the parental request from the headteacher will be implied.

Forces Applicants

As forces applicants and returning Crown servants can use an address in advance of a move, for the purposes of the oversubscription criteria, those dealing with admissions will ensure that these applications are dealt with in accordance with the school's admissions policy and LA guidance, which will be reviewed and distributed annually.

All children of current UK Armed Forces personnel are eligible to be excepted pupils to infant class size restrictions.

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