

drb Ignite Multi Academy Trust

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2022-23

Vision

'All pupils achieve the highest standard of educational outcomes regardless of circumstances or background'.

The Trust has been established through a shared belief that lives can be transformed by what goes on in schools. We believe that the process of teaching and learning shapes futures. To this end, our vision is to give every pupil learning experiences that excite and give them the power to begin to shape their own lives.

Admission to a Trust school

This policy outlines the Trust's approach to school admissions. It is in line with the statutory **Schools Admissions Code** (September 2021) and the **Schools Admissions Appeals Code** (2012) and other relevant legislation.

As a family of schools, the Trust welcomes:

- children of all faiths and backgrounds.
- embraces all cultures, races, and families.
- and celebrates diversity.

We are committed to serving our local communities. As part of the educational landscape in Birmingham and Dudley, our aim is for all Trust schools to be excellent schools that serve their communities well. This ambition is reflected in our approach to the admission of children to our schools. The criteria we use to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. We aim to work collaboratively with local authorities and other academy trusts on place planning to ensure that children have access to a good education close to where they live and that this is reviewed annually.

The DfE School Admissions Code 2021

The *School Admissions Code 2021* imposes mandatory requirements on all admission authorities. The Trust is an *Admission Authority*.

Trust schools are required, by their funding agreements, to comply with the Code, although the Secretary of State has the power to vary this requirement where there is demonstrable need (this is very rarely permitted).

As a multi academy trust, the Trust is the overarching *Admissions Authority* for its schools. The Trust's *Scheme of Delegation* assigns responsibility for admissions to the Trust Board.

The Trust Board requires all schools to abide by this Policy, the *School Admissions Code 2021*, the *Admissions Appeals Code 2012* and other relevant legislation e.g. the *Equality Act 2010*. The purpose of the Code is to ensure all school places are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

The Trust follows the *Code* to ensure its admissions reflect statutory processes and timeframes and are fully compliant. The Trust and its schools will:

- act in accordance with equalities law and the law on admissions as they apply to academy trusts.
- participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by either Birmingham or Dudley LA and the relevant local in-year fair access protocols.
- act in accordance with, and ensure that any *Independent Appeal Panel* is trained to act in accordance with, all relevant provisions of the *School Admissions Code 2021* and the *School Admissions Appeals Code 2012 (the Codes)* published by the DfE as they apply at any given time to academy trusts and their schools
- take part in any *Admissions Forum* set up by either Birmingham or Dudley LA and have regard to its advice
- respect that the Secretary of State may:
 - direct the Trust to admit a named pupil to a Trust school on application from a local authority.
 - direct the Trust to admit a named pupil to a Trust school if the Trust has failed to comply with applicable admissions and equalities legislation or the provisions of the *Codes*.
- ensure that parents have the right of appeal to an *Independent Appeal Panel* if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision of the Trust. The *Independent Appeal Panel* will be independent of the Trust. The arrangements for appeals will comply with the *School Admissions Appeals Code 2012*. The determination of the appeal panel will be binding on all parties.
- prepare guidance for parents about how the appeals process works and provide them with a named contact who can answer any enquiries they may have about the process.

For note:

The Trust may enter into an agreement with Birmingham/Dudley LA or any other organisation for it to recruit, train and appoint appeal panel members, and to arrange for the process to be independently administered and clerked.

Admissions principles

The Trust and its schools will ensure the practices and criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. The Trust will make sure that parents are able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for its schools are allocated. Each Trust school will have admissions arrangements which set out clearly how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than places.

To achieve this:

- the Trust has regard for the admissions criteria outlined by Birmingham and Dudley Local Authority School Admissions and Pupil Placement Teams.
- admission arrangements for each school within the Trust are set (“determined”) annually.
- where changes are proposed, consultation on the proposed changes will take place first. If no changes are made to admission arrangements, these will be consulted on at least once every 7 years.
- if a Trust school is undersubscribed, any parent that applies will be offered a place.
- when oversubscribed, admissions will be ranked in order against oversubscription criteria and then the ranked list returned to the local authority who will coordinate all admissions in the area.
- published admissions arrangements will make clear to parents that a separate application must be made for any transfer from nursery to primary school, and from infant to junior school (see page 8 of the Code at paragraph 15.e).
- an admission number (PAN) must be set for each age group. The Code defines this as the age group at which pupils will normally be admitted to the school i.e. reception.
- Trust schools can change their PAN, as set out below:
 - schools do not need to consult on their PAN where they propose to either increase it or maintain it. However, consultation is required if a decrease to the PAN is intended. Despite there being no requirement to formally consult if the PAN is to be increased, schools do need to notify their local authority of their intention, and reference must also be made on the school’s website alongside the published admissions policy.
 - if at any time a school decides it is able to admit above its PAN, it must notify the local authority in good time to allow the authority to deliver its coordination responsibilities effectively.
 - schools may also admit over their PAN in-year. Any admissions above the PAN do not constitute an increase to the PAN.

Section One

Determining Admission Arrangements

Pupil admission numbers (PAN)

The Trust has nine primary schools. The pupil admission numbers (PAN) for each school are detailed below. These numbers reflect the number of places available in each year group from reception onwards.

Audley Primary School	120
Beechwood CE Primary School	30
Bromley Pensnett Primary School	30
Hob Green Primary School	30
Jervoise Primary School	30
Princethorpe Infant and Nursery School	60
Princethorpe Junior School	60
The Oval Primary School	90
Wychall Primary School	60

Annual procedures for determining admission arrangements

The admission procedures for nursery and reception classes in Trust schools operate in line with the admissions arrangements of Birmingham City Council Education Authority and Dudley Council Education Authority.

Determination procedures

- The Trust and its schools formally agree admissions arrangements every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required. This allows any objection to the continuation of arrangements to be made to the *Office of the Schools Adjudicator*.
- Admission arrangements are formally agreed and set by **28 February** in the determination year (the year in advance of the one in which the arrangements are to apply) (paragraph 1.46 of the Code) and cannot be changed thereafter for that year other than under extreme variation circumstances as set out in the Code.
- Once determined, The Trust and its schools notifies Birmingham and Dudley local authorities (no later than **15 March** in the determination year) and publishes them on websites, displaying them for the whole offer year.
- Minutes of the Trust meeting/s at which the arrangements are determined are kept as they can be called as evidence of the determination decision by the *Schools Adjudicator*.

- Following determination of arrangements, any objections to the arrangements must be made to the *Schools Adjudicator* no later than **15 May** in the determination year.
- The Trust and its schools will provide all the information that local authorities need to compile the composite prospectus no later than **8 August**, which they will then publish by **12 September** in the offer year.

Consultation on changes

- For any change in admission arrangements, consultation will be for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between **1 October and 31 January** of the school year before those arrangements are to apply (paragraph 1.43 of the Code). For example: for arrangements which are to apply to entry in September 2023, consultation must be completed by 31 January 2022.
- Arrangements can still be objected to and referred to the *Schools Adjudicator* following consultation. Objections to admission arrangements must be made by **15 May** in the determination year. Any decision of the *Schools Adjudicator* must be acted on by the Trust and the admission arrangements amended accordingly.
- The Code sets out specific requirements (paragraph 1.44 of the Code) as to whom the Trust must consult with. This includes parents, the local authority and other admission authorities in the area. For the duration of the consultation period, the Trust and its schools must publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on their website together with the details of the person to whom comments may be sent and the areas on which comments are sought.
- Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals.

Variation

- Once admission arrangements have been determined, they cannot be revised unless such revision is necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement of the *Schools Admissions Code*, admissions law, a determination of the *Schools Adjudicator* or any misprint in arrangements. However, a variation may be proposed if there is a major change in circumstances.
- Such proposals must be referred to the *Schools Adjudicator* for approval, and the appropriate bodies notified. Any approved variation must be published in line with the requirements to publish admission arrangements for the whole offer year (see paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the Code)

Schools new to the Trust

- When a school joins the Trust, the school's existing admission arrangements will be reviewed to ensure they are fair, clear and objective and are in line with the Code. Otherwise, the arrangements will only be changed if they are deemed to be unfair or too vague to be helpful to parents.

Section Two

Applications and offers

Applications to Trust schools, in the normal admissions round, are managed via the Birmingham or Dudley local authority's **common application form (CAF)** and in line with the national offer day of **16th April** or the next working day for primary school applications.

Trust school arrangements

Each Trust school will annually set out published admission arrangements that include:

- the name and address of the school and contact details.
- a summary of the Trust's Admission Policy including oversubscription criteria.
- a statement of any religious affiliation (Beechwood CE Primary School).
- numbers of places and applications for those places in the previous year.
- arrangements for hearing appeals.

Once the Trust admission arrangements have been determined for a particular year and published, the Trust **will not** make any change to such arrangements unless there is a major change of circumstances and the following procedures have been followed:

- the Trust has consulted those who are required to be consulted on the proposed variation
- following such consultation, the Trust has applied to the Secretary of State to approve the change setting out:
 - the proposed change
 - reasons for wishing to make such a change
 - any comments or objections to the proposal from those consulted
 - following such application, the Secretary of State has provided his consent to the proposed variation.

The Trust will always follow the prior written agreement or direction of the *Secretary of State* to vary the Trust's admission arrangements where such changes are necessary to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes for academy schools. The Trust acknowledge that such changes may be made at any time. Any changes to the Trust's admission arrangements brought about through any variation process will be published on school websites.

The Trust will make arrangements for a parent of a child who has attained the age of two but is not above compulsory school age and who has been, is or will be eligible to apply to be admitted to a Trust school to make representations to the Secretary of State that any aspect of the Trust's admission arrangements do not comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes as they apply to academy trust schools.

Where a parental representation is made, the *Secretary of State* may, after consulting the Trust, direct that the Trust modify its arrangements for the admission of pupils to a Trust school so that they comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law and the Codes as they apply to academy trust schools. The Trust will comply with any such direction.

Records of applications and admissions to Trust schools shall be kept for a minimum period of **10 years** and shall be open for inspection by the Secretary of State.

Application process

The Trust will use the Birmingham and Dudley's annual timetable for applications as exact dates within may vary from year to year. This will ensure alignment with the timetable for the co-ordination of admission arrangements as agreed by the LA's Admissions Forum.

- By September – Trust schools will publish information about the arrangements for admission, including oversubscription criteria, for the following September. This will include details of opportunities for prospective pupils and their parents to visit the school.
- September/October – Trust schools will provide opportunities for parents to visit
- October – Common Application Form to be completed and returned to the pupil's home LA to administer
- LA sends applications to Trust schools
- Trust schools send list of pupils to be offered places to the LA
- February - LA applies agreed scheme for own schools, informing other neighbouring LA's of offers to be made to their residents
- 1st March offers made to parents.

There is a national closing date for applications as follows:

15 January for Primary School applications

The Trust will ensure its application processes enable parents to apply before these deadlines.

Consideration of applications

Trust schools will work with Birmingham and Dudley Admissions Teams to consider all applications for places at Trust schools. Where fewer than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year groups are received, Trust schools will offer places to all those who have applied.

Oversubscription criteria

The Trust and its schools have criteria against which places will be allocated when there are more applications than places and the order in which the criteria will be applied.

These criteria reflect any specific requirements set out in any school's *Funding Agreement*. All children whose statement of special education needs (SEN) or Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) names a Trust school will be admitted by operation of law (i.e. not under the oversubscription criteria).

If a school is not oversubscribed, all applicants will be offered a place.

We aim to ensure that our oversubscription criteria are reasonable, clear, objective, fair and comply with all relevant legislation including equalities legislation, for example, the highest priority will be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children.

For note:

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* (paragraph 1.7 of the Code).

When two applications cannot otherwise be separated the Trust has an effective, clear and fair tie-breaker decision making process which is **distance**.

In administering this *Admissions Policy*, the Trust recognises the specific actions set out in the Code that admission authorities **must not do** (paragraph 1.9 of the Code):

- Take in to account any previous schools attended.
- Give extra priority to children whose parents ranked the school in a particular order (including 'first preference first' arrangements).
- Introduce any new selection by ability.
- Give priority based on financial support from the parents or request financial contributions.
- Take account of reports from previous schools.
- Discriminate against or disadvantage disabled children or those with SEN.
- Interview parents or children.

Where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admission number, applications will be considered against the criteria set out below.

Criterion 1: Looked after children (as defined by Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) - Priority will be given to a child who is in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by that authority.

Criterion 2: Medical/Social - whether there are specific medical or social circumstances that can be met only by the child's attendance at a particular Trust school.

Criterion 3: Siblings - whether siblings attend the school and will still be attending the school at the time of admissions. For admission purposes, a sibling is a child who resides at the same address as the child for whom a place is being requested, and is one of the following:

- brother/sister
- half-brother/sister (i.e. share one common parent)
- stepbrother/sister (i.e. related by a parent's marriage)
- any other child for whom it can be demonstrated that s/he is residing permanently at the same address (e.g. under the terms of a residence order).

The sibling connection only applies where families have a sibling attending the school at the time of the application as well as at the time of admission.

Criterion 4: Distance - How close the child lives to the school requested, with those living closest to the school getting the highest priority. The measurement between home and school will be determined by a straight-line measurement from the designated seed point of the home address to the designated seed point of the school using the authority's computerised system. The home address of a pupil is considered to be the permanent residence of a child in a residential property when the place is offered. The address must be the child's only or main residence and is either:

- owned by the child's parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Leased to or rented by the child's parent(s), carer(s) or guardian(s) under lease or written rental agreement.

Allocating places

Places will be allocated on the basis of the Trust's determined admission arrangements only. A decision to offer or refuse must not be made by an individual and will be made by the Trust Board or an admissions committee established by the Board (paragraph 2.7 of the Code).

In the normal admissions round, places will be sent by the home local authority and schools should not contact parents about the outcome of their applications until after these offers have been received.

Withdrawing an offer or a place

A place cannot be withdrawn 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 deliberately misleading application (paragraph 2.13 of the Code). Where the parent has not responded, they must be given a further opportunity to do so alongside an explanation that the offer may be withdrawn if not. A school must not withdraw a place once a child has started at school except where that place was fraudulently obtained. In such circumstances, the length of time the child has been at the school must be taken in to account.

Shared parental responsibility

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child lives with both parents for part of the week then the main residence will be determined as the address where the child lives for a majority of the school week. If the child equally shares living with both parents, the parents must inform the Trust and local authority which address should be used for admission purposes and which parent will make the application. Parents may be requested to supply documentary evidence to support the address used for the application.

Other important information

The *Schools Admissions Code* also includes details about the following which the Trust and its schools will comply with:

- **Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school** – we will provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday and allow for this to be deferred until later in the school year and allow for children to attend part-time if their parents wish, but not beyond compulsory school age (paragraph 2.17 of the Code).
- **Admission of children outside their normal age group.** Our admission arrangements make clear the process for requesting admission outside of the normal age group. Decisions must be made on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the child's best interests. The *Schools Admissions Code* gives further information (paragraph 2.18 of the Code).
- **Children of UK service personnel and crown servants** .The Trust and its schools must accept a unit postal address or quartering area address, accompanied by an official letter which includes a relocation date, when considering an application for a place against oversubscription criteria. A place cannot be refused because the family does not currently live in the area (paragraph 2.21 of the Code).
- **Children from overseas.** Applications for children coming from overseas must be treated in accordance with European Union law or Home Office rules for non-European Economic Area nationals. Further guidance should always be sought.

Ensuring fairness

The Trust and its schools must not refuse to admit children in the normal admissions round on the basis of poor or challenging behaviour elsewhere. However, where a child has been permanently excluded from two or more schools there is no need to comply with parental preference for a period of two years from the last exclusion.

For note

The twice excluded rule does not apply to:

- children who were below compulsory school age at the time of the exclusion
- children who have been re-instated following a permanent exclusion
- children with special educational needs statements or an EHCP.

Fair Access Protocols

Both Birmingham and Dudley local authorities have a **Fair Access Protocol** to ensure that outside of the normal admission round, unplaced children are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible. Local authorities must ensure that no school is asked to take a disproportionate number of children who have been excluded from other schools or who have challenging behaviour. All Trust schools must comply with local *Fair Access Protocol arrangements*.

Secretary of State's power of direction 8

Where a local authority considers that a Trust school will best meet the needs of a child, it can ask the school to admit that child but has no power to direct it to do so. Whilst an agreement can usually be reached, the local authority can ask the *Secretary of State* to intervene. The *Secretary of State* has the power under an academy school's funding agreement to direct the school to admit a child.

Operation of waiting lists

Trust schools will operate a waiting list for each year group which has regard to any provisions regarding waiting lists in Birmingham and Dudley local authority co-ordinated admission schemes. For example, where a school receives more applications for places than there are places available (in a particular year group), a waiting list will operate until 31 December. This will be maintained by individual Trust schools and will be open to any parent to ask for their child's name to be placed on the waiting list, following an unsuccessful application.

A child's position on the waiting list will be determined in accordance with the Trust and Birmingham and Dudley local authority's oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with this oversubscription criteria.

Managing in year admissions

Trust schools in partnership with Birmingham and Dudley local authority co-ordinate admissions for in-year applications and for applications for year groups other than at the normal point of entry. This does not affect the Trust's autonomy to determine which applicants have priority for admission.

Subject to any provisions in the relevant local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements relating to applications submitted for years other than the normal year of entry, the Trust will consider all such applications and if the year group applied for has a place available, admit the child unless one of the permitted reliefs apply. If more applications are received than there are places available, the Trust's oversubscription criteria will apply. Any parent whose application is turned down is entitled to appeal.

Section Three Appeals and objections procedure

Objections

- Objections to the admission arrangements of Trust schools can be made to the *Schools Adjudicator* whose decisions are binding and enforceable.
- Objections must be referred by **15 May** in the determination year (the year before actual admission).
- The role of the *Schools Adjudicator* is to consider whether admission arrangements comply with the law and the Code relating to admissions.
- The admission authority i.e. the Trust must, where necessary, revise its admission arrangements to give effect to the *Schools Adjudicator's* decision **within two months** of the decision (or by **28 February** following the decision, whichever is sooner), unless an alternative timescale is specified by the Adjudicator.

Right to appeal

- When a school informs a parent of a decision to refuse their child a place, it must also set out the reason why admission was refused, provide information about the right to appeal and the deadlines for this, and the contact details for making an appeal.
- Parents must also be informed that if they wish to appeal they must set out their case in writing.
- The *Schools Admissions Appeals Code 2012* sets out information regarding admission appeal panels and is designed to ensure all admission appeals are conducted in a fair and transparent way.
- Responsibility for making arrangements for an appeal against the refusal of a school place rests with the Trust.
- Parents have the right of appeal to an *Independent Appeal Panel* if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision.

Arranging appeal panels

The Trust will follow the Birmingham/Dudley local authority run arrangements for *Independent Appeal Panels* or commission support from another specialist provider. It is the responsibility of the Trust school in consultation with trustees to ensure whatever route is used complies fully with the *School Admissions Appeals Code 2012*.

Appeal hearings

- Schools will set a timetable for the organising and hearing of appeals panels, which needs to be published on their website by **28 February** each year. The timetable must include a deadline for lodging appeals which must be at least **20 school days** from the date of notification that an application was unsuccessful.
- At least **10 school days'** notice should be given of the date of the hearing, and decision letters should be sent within **5 school days** of the hearing, wherever possible.
- The *Schools Admissions Appeals Code 2012* sets out further specific requirements on when appeals must be heard, which in the main, are either **40 school days** from the deadline for lodging appeals, or within **30 school days** for in-year admission appeals.
- The Code includes considerable detail about how hearings should be run (paragraphs 2.5 to 2.27) and the decision-making process (paragraphs 3.1 to 5.6). Whilst the clerk of the panel should be well versed in this detail, all schools should ensure they are familiar with the requirements when preparing their admission and independent panel arrangements. Appeal panels must either uphold or dismiss an appeal and must not uphold an appeal subject to any specific conditions.
- A panel's decision that a child shall be admitted to a school is binding.
- All notes and records of proceedings must be held by the school for a minimum of **2 years**.
- Complaints about maladministration on the part of an appeal panel can be made to the *Secretary of State*, and appellants must be informed about the arrangements for making a complaint.
- Appeals by the parent or child with a statement of Special Educational Needs or an EHCP are considered by the *First-tier Tribunal*, not a school admission appeal panel.

Parents who wish to appeal against any admissions related Trust's decision e.g. not to offer their child a place at a Trust school should appeal directly to the school concerned. Appeals should be addressed in writing or email to the:

Admissions Officer at the Trust school within 20 school days of receiving the decision letter. The envelope/email should be clearly marked *Admission Appeal*.

Monitoring and review

Links:	SEND Policy Behaviour Policy Medical Needs Policy Equalities Policy
Staff responsible:	CEO Headteachers
Committee responsible:	Achievement, Support and Scrutiny
Date reviewed	February 2022
Sign off – Chair of Board:	 Date: February 2022
Review date:	February 2023

For note

Should there be any changes/further national guidance issued relevant to this Policy, it will be updated accordingly prior to the review date shown above and referred to the next Trust Board meeting.

Change Management

Issue	Change date	Change description
1.0	Dec'16	Initial release
2.0	Nov'18	Rebranded, updated and Signed off for release.
3.0	Nov'19	Checked, no content changes, signed off and published
4.0	Sep'20	Added Princethorpe Junior Admissions numbers Reviewed PAN for Beechwood CE and Bromley Pensnett
5.0	Feb '22	Full review and update