Admissions Policy

2028-2029

Wirral Schools

CONCORDIA MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

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1. Document Control

Amendment History

Version No.	Date	Comments
1.0	May 2022	Initial Trust Wide Draft
2.0	Jan 2024	Amalgamating requirements for different Local Authorities
2.1	Nov 2024	Timetable updated
2.2	Feb 2024	Updated guidance references & dates
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2. Introduction

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at a school within Concordia Multi Academy Trust
- 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

Legislation and statutory requirements

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

- School Admissions Code
- School Admission Appeals Code

Schools within Concordia Multi Academy Trust are required to comply with these codes and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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.

Quick guide to admissions at Concordia schools

- Apply through your home local authority (Cheshire East or Cheshire West & Chester).
- List at least three preferences.
- Places are allocated using the school's oversubscription criteria, not on a first come, first served basis.
- Attendance at a nursery does not form part of the oversubscription criteria. Parents must make a separate application for a reception place, and all applications are considered equally.
- If a place is refused, you have the right of appeal.

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.

Children in Care 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, became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order. This includes children who appear to the admission authority to have been in state care outside England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
- Were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or
- Became subject to a child arrangements order, or
- Became subject to a special guardianship order.

Children reach compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. Children may start school in the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Applications for admission are normally considered in relation to the availability of places in the child's chronological age group, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Parents can request that the date their child starts school in the reception class is deferred until later in the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age in that school year. Applications for deferred admissions must be made by the published closing date. For parents and carers with children born between 1 April and 31 August, they should contact the authority to obtain information on the 'Summer Born Policy' and for advice if they wish to consider delaying their child's entry for a full year.

Parents and carers considering this option must apply in the child's chronological year group to ensure that they are part of the process should they decide not to delay their child's entry. The vast majority of children are taught in their chronological year group.

For the purposes of this admissions policy, the term *parent* includes all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and any person who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child.

4. Application Process

How to apply

For applications in the normal admissions round you should use the common application form provided by the Local Authority applicable to your place of residence. You can use this form to express your preference for a minimum of 3 state-funded schools, in rank order. The application process will begin on 1st September.

Local Authority	Link to Application Form
Wirral	https://www.wirral.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-admissions

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

It is important to note that pupils already attending our nursery will not transfer automatically into the main school. A separate application must be made for a place in reception.

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 in 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 within this document. 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.

Concordia Multi Academy Trust processes all personal data in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. For further details, please see our Privacy Notice on the Trust website.

5. Allocation of places

Admission Number

The school has agreed number of pupils for entry in Reception as 90

Oversubscription Criteria

All children whose statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHCP) plan names the school will be admitted before any other places are allocated.

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

In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order until all places are filled.

1. Highest priority will be given to a child in care and all previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school.

2. Priority will next be given to children with siblings at the school in Reception through to year two, and Year 3 to Year 6 who attend Higher Bebington Junior School. 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 nor siblings who are due to leave the school and move to high school the next year. (see note below for definition of a sibling)

3. Priority will next be given to children resident within the designated catchment zone of the school. Children will be classed within this category if they and their parents or carers are resident within the areas served by the school at the time of application. However, for the normal admission rounds, the authority may consider a change of address providing the child is resident in the new property and supporting documentation is received by the deadline as specified by the Local Authority for reception applications, when the authority will begin the allocation of places process. School catchment maps can be seen via the link below.

   Primary school catchment area finder | wirral.gov.uk

4. Pupils living nearest to the school measured from the seed point of the home address to the school gate nearest to the child's home using the shortest road route, unless it is possible to use a footpath which Wirral Local Authority considers to be a safe walking route, using Wirral Council's computerised routing system.

Attending an onsite school nursery is NOT a criteria for entrance to school and no applicant will be disadvantaged if they did not attend our on site nursery.

Where it is not possible to accommodate all pupils qualifying under one of the criteria stated above, the next criteria will also be applied to determine priority for admission. For example, if it is not possible to accommodate all siblings for whom an application has been received, all sibling applicants will be prioritized in the order of:

- Siblings who live within the school's designated catchment area
- Siblings who do not live within the school's designated catchment area

All applicants within each criterion will be put into distance order with priority being given to those that live nearest to the school, as stated above.

Where it is identified that there are a limited number of places available and the local authority cannot differentiate between the applications using the nearest school criterion, a random allocation tie-breaker will be applied. This may be required for example, where applicants reside in the same block of flats or separate addresses measuring the same distance from school.

Notes to be read in conjunction with the criterion listed above

The term sibling relates to -

- brothers and/or sisters who share the same parent(s)
- a half-brother, half-sister or legally adopted child living at the same address
- a child in care placed in a foster family with other school age children
- a stepchild or children who are not related but live as a family unit, where parents both live at the same address as the child.

Where parents/carers have shared responsibility for a child, the place of residency - for the purposes of the school admissions process - will be determined as the address where the child resides for the majority of the week. That is where the child wakes up from Monday to Friday.

Equal Preferences

All preferences will be considered on the basis of the equal preference model for allocating places, in accordance with legal requirements. This means that in the first instance, all preferences will be considered against the school's published oversubscription criteria only, without reference to the preference ranking. Where a pupil can potentially be allocated more than one school place stated on the application form, the single offer, determined by the home authority, will be the school ranked highest on the application form by the parents or carers.

If the local authority in which the pupil is resident is not able to offer any of the preferences stated on the form, a place will be allocated at the nearest school within the local authority (including faith schools) with known vacancies using the authority's mapping system for measuring straight line distances from the Basic Land and Property Unit point of the home address to the Basic Land and Property Unit point of the school in miles.

Where an application has been received from a parent resident in another authority and a place cannot be offered, the local authority will not allocate an alternative school place.

Children of multiple births

In relation to children of multiple births, exceptionally it may be necessary to offer places over the published admission number. This is to ensure that, as far as possible, siblings (twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) can attend the same school.

In normal circumstances, the local authority will not be able to agree admission over the published admission number where to do so would result in a breach of infant class size legislation, which requires that infant classes, where the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven contain no more than 30 pupils with a single qualified teacher.

However, the School Admissions Code, 2021, allows the admittance of a sibling in the same school year (twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) as excepted pupils where one sibling can be offered the place and not the other. This is a discretionary excepted pupil and may not be agreed if the admittance of more children into a particular year group would cause prejudice to the efficient education and efficient use of resources to other children in that year group.

Children of UK Service Personnel

Places will be allocated in advance of the family arriving in the area for children of UK service personnel and veterans, if accompanied by an official government letter which declares a relocation date and a unit postal address or quartering area address for considering the application against local authority oversubscription criteria.

In addition, it may be necessary to offer places above the published admission number as the School Admissions Code 2021 allows the admittance of a forces child as an excepted pupil in relation to infant class size legislation. This is an excepted pupil and may not be agreed if the admittance of more children into a particular year group would cause prejudice to the efficient education and efficient use of resources to other children in that year group. Consideration for applications for children of UK Service Personnel and veterans is given in accordance with the Local Authorities Armed Forces Covenant.

Parents and Carers with shared responsibility for a child

Where parents or carers have shared responsibility for a child, the place of residency will be determined as the address where the child lives for the majority of the week, for example, where the child wakes up between Monday to Friday. Full details must be submitted in writing to enable the local authority to determine which address will be used for the purpose of admission. A panel of officers will consider the information provided. If the panel agree that sufficient evidence has been provided, then this address will be used for the purpose of assigning a criterion to the application.

Where the local authority is unable to reach a decision based on the information received, for example, where a child lives equally with both parents, the address provided for claiming child benefit and where appropriate, child tax credits or equivalent will be applied to the admission application. In such circumstances, documentary evidence must be provided. Any delay in receiving any required information will result in the local authority determining residence for the purpose of admission based on the information available to it.

Moving House

Parents and carers must inform the authority immediately of a change of address, even if details of a future change of residency were included on the application form as this may change a child's oversubscription criteria for a particular school. The authority will require supporting evidence to show that the place of residency has changed, for example completion of sale, tenancy agreements, council tax and utility bills and any other information considered relevant to the application, including disposal of previous property. In addition, proof that the child now resides at the new property will be required i.e. child benefit or child tax credit. For normal admission round supporting evidence must be received by the date as stated in appendix A.

In respect of applications made as part of the normal admission round, information and supporting evidence must be received by the dates as stated in Appendix A of these arrangements. Proof of residency received after the published dates will not be used to process the application but will be used to send the decision letter on the published offer date.

Waiting Lists

Waiting lists will be held in oversubscription criteria order and not on a first come, first served basis. A vacant place will be reallocated to the child with the highest oversubscription criteria on the school's waiting list on the day the place became available.

Placing a child's name on a waiting list does not affect the statutory right of appeal.

Waiting lists for reception places must be held until the end of the autumn term.

Changing preferences

In respect of applications made for the normal point of entry, the local authority will not accept a change of preference made after the published closing date without a genuine reason, such as a recent house move. Full details must be provided to the local authority for consideration, along with supporting documentation. If the authority's decision is that the reason, based on the evidence provided is not valid, then the application will be treated as a late application and as such notification of the outcome of that application will be after the accept/decline date as stated in Appendix A. It is important therefore that parents and carers give full consideration to the preferences they make on their on time application form.

Other relevant changes of circumstances (e.g. admission of sibling)

Further information received after the supporting documentation deadlines (appendix A), will not be considered as part of the on time allocation process. The information will be assessed after the accept/decline date and any changes that would assign a different criterion to an application, for example, sibling, in catchment, will be applied to the application and used to determine where the child falls on a waiting list.

Late applications – Normal admission round only

Late applications for places in Concordia Schools, i.e. applications not submitted to the authority by the relevant statutory closing date will be considered after all on time applications unless the local authority considers that there are good reasons for the application being late, which must be stated

at the time of application, for example, exceptional medical reasons preventing an earlier application, late removal into the area. Supporting documentation must be provided.

Where supporting documentation has been received by the date specified in Appendix A of these arrangements and the authority has accepted reasons stated for the late application, the application will be considered as if it had been received on time.

Late applications and supporting documentation received after the dates specified will be considered after all on time applications even where the authority accepts that there are good reasons for the late application and as such these applications may be disadvantaged in the consideration of their preferences.

Late applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application after the published offer date specified in appendix A.

Accepting and declining places – Normal admissions round only

There is no longer an expectation for parents to accept their place however, if the family choose to not take up a place, we ask that you let local authority admissions know as soon as you are able that you are declining the place.

Fair Access Protocol

All Concordia schools participate in the local authority'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.

Consultation

The Trust Board will consult on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements. Consultation will take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year, and last for a minimum of six weeks. The Trust Board will consult on admissions arrangements at least once every seven years, even if no changes have been made in that time.

The Trust Board will consult with the following:

- Parents and carers of children between the ages of two and 18
- Stakeholders
- Other admission authorities within the relevant area
- Local Authorities
- Any Local Authorities in which pupils have historically come from

Determination and publication of admissions arrangements

The Trust Board will publish a copy of the full proposed admission arrangements and the contact details of the individual responsible for admissions liaison on both the Trust's and each school's website. A copy of the proposed admission arrangements will be made available upon request.

Admission arrangements will be determined by 28 February in the determination year on an annual basis, even when no changes to the arrangements have been made.

The Trust Board will notify all appropriate bodies of the finalised admissions arrangements when they have been determined.

Where consultation is required, the Trust Board will publish the proposed admission arrangements and details of how stakeholders may respond during the consultation period. Once determined, a copy of the final admission arrangements will be sent to the relevant Local Authorities by 15 March in the determination year. The determined admission arrangements will also be published on the Trust and individual school websites by 15 March in the determination year and will remain available for the whole offer year.

Any objections to the admission arrangements will be directed to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year. For example, objections must be referred by 15 May for the admissions intake for September.

The Trust's schools will provide the Local Authorities with all of the information it needs to compile the composite prospectus by 15 March in the determination year.

The Trust Board will not revise the admissions arrangements for a school year once they have been determined, unless this would be necessary to give effect to a mandatory requirement, a determination of the Schools Adjudicator, or any misprint in the admission arrangements.

In exceptional circumstances, the Trust Board may propose variations where there have been major changes in circumstances that necessitate a change. As detailed in the School Admissions Code 2021, any proposals to vary the admissions arrangements will be referred to the Secretary of State for approval.

Frequently Asked Questions (for parents and carers)

Do I need to apply for a Reception place if my child attends the school nursery?

Yes. Attendance at a school nursery does **not** guarantee a place in Reception. Parents and carers must make a separate application for a Reception place through their home local authority. Applications will be considered in line with the oversubscription criteria set out in this policy.

Can I change my school preferences after I have submitted my application?

Changes to preferences after the published closing date will only be accepted in limited circumstances, for example where there has been a recent house move. Any request to change preferences must be made to the local authority and supported by appropriate evidence. Further details are set out in Section 5 of this policy.

What happens if I move house after submitting my application?

Parents and carers must inform the local authority immediately of any change of address. Supporting evidence will be required and, depending on the timing, a change of address may affect

how an application is ranked against the oversubscription criteria. Full details are set out in the *Moving House* section of this policy.

Is my catchment area school guaranteed?

No. Living within a school's catchment area does not guarantee a place. Where a school is oversubscribed, places are allocated strictly in accordance with the oversubscription criteria published in this policy.

Will my application be considered fairly if I list a school as a lower preference?

Yes. All applications are considered using the equal preference system. This means that each preference is assessed against the school's oversubscription criteria, without reference to the order in which schools are ranked on the application form.

6. In year Applications

In year applications are those received after the 1 September into the relevant age group or at any time into any other year group.

Parents and carers, irrespective of where they reside who are seeking in year school places for one of Concordia's schools are required to apply.

Parents and carers must complete a request via the Local Authority website.

Waiting lists will be held by the school in oversubscription criteria order and not on a first come, first served basis. Any child refused a school place will automatically be placed on the school's waiting list and will be considered together with children for whom an appeal has been received and any new applicants. Schools will be responsible for administering and updating their waiting lists: families will be called at the end of the school year to see whether they wish to continue to be on the waiting list for September of the following year.

A school place is not considered available until the school or academy is able to remove a child from roll according to the local authority's safeguarding protocol. Parents and carers must notify the school if there are any changes in circumstances that would impact their oversubscription criteria for the waiting list.

7. Right of Appeal

Understanding Appeals

If school has reached its Published Admissions Number (PAN) they have no flexibility to offer more places for classes in reception and Key Stage 1 due to infant class size regulations.

Where a refusal relates to an infant class size limit, the appeal panel can only uphold the appeal in limited circumstances, as set out in the School Admission Appeals Code. Parents and carers retain the statutory right to submit an appeal against the refusal of a place.

- An administrative error with catchment or sibling information
- An excepted pupil applies such as multiple births or children of UK service personnel

When the Admission Authority can show to an appeals panel that any further admissions would breach the infant class size limit an appeal could only be upheld (supported) if the appeals panel decide either:

- the child would have been offered a place if the admission arrangements had been properly implemented or correctly and impartially applied; or
- the child would have been offered a place if the arrangements had not been contrary to mandatory provisions in the School Admissions Code and part 3 of the SSFA 1998; and/or
- the decision to refuse admission was not one which a reasonable admission authority would have made in the circumstances of the case.

When the Local Authority informs a parent of a decision to refuse their child a place at a school, correspondence will include:

- The reason why admission was refused
- Information about the right to appeal
- The deadline for lodging an appeal
- The contact details for making an appeal

Parents and carers who are not offered a place for their child at a school stated as a preference have a right of appeal to an independent appeals panel. Parents can submit an appeal in respect of each school for which admission has been refused. The determination of the Panel will be made in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code and will be binding on all parties.

Appeals Process

Prior to submitting your appeal, we offer the opportunity to explain the appeals process to you. If you wish to obtain further advice, please email Trust@concordiamat.co.uk who will arrange a convenient time to call you to discuss the process.

The application form to appeal against a decision by the local authority to refuse admission can be obtained by contacting the school office or Trust@concordiamat.co.uk

On the form you will be required to provide details of why you believe the admissions criteria were incorrectly applied and why your child should be allocated a place.

The Trust will establish an independent appeals panel to hear the appeal. The appeal panel will perform its judicial function in a transparent, accessible, independent, and impartial manner, and operate according to principles of natural justice.

The Local Authority and appeal panel will ensure that it acts in accordance with this Code, the School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2022, the School Admissions Code, other law relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation, for example, the Equality Act 2010.

Timescales

The Trust will set a timetable for organising and hearing appeals that:

- Includes a deadline for lodging appeals which allows appellants (person appealing against the decision) at least **20 school days** from the date of notification that their application was unsuccessful to prepare and lodge their written appeal.
- Ensures that appellants receive at least **10 school days'** notice of their appeal hearing.
- Includes reasonable deadlines for appellants to submit additional evidence, for admission authorities to submit their evidence, and for the clerk to send appeal papers to the panel and parties.
- Ensures that decision letters are sent within **5 school days** of the hearing wherever possible.
- The Local Authority will publish the appeals timetable on their website by 28 February each year.
- For applications made in the normal admissions round, appeals will be heard within **40 school days** of the deadline for lodging appeals
- For late applications, appeals will be heard within **40 school days** from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within **30 school days** of the appeal being lodged.
- For applications for in-year admissions, appeals will be heard within **30 school days** of the appeal being lodged.

Repeat applications and appeals

Repeat applications and appeals will not be considered within the same school year, unless the parent, carer or school's circumstances have changed significantly since the original application was made. Full details of the change of circumstances must be provided for consideration.

Vacancies occurring in a year group which was fully subscribed at the time of the initial application will be deemed to constitute a significant change in the school's circumstances and a repeat application will be permitted.

8. Roles and responsibilities

The Local Authority is responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance when carrying out the overall admission of pupils into the school.
- Clearly communicating any reasons for rejecting the admission of a pupil, as well as the parent's right to appeal and the appeal process.
- Implementing any advice or recommendations given by the Schools Adjudicator without undue delay.

The Trust is responsible for:

- Liaising with the LA where relevant regarding admitting pupils to the school.
- Working with the LA when determining the school's capacity.
- Ensuring that the LA has all the information it needs to set admissions arrangements.
- Determining the admission arrangements on an annual basis and publicly consulting stakeholders on any proposed changes to the admission arrangements.
- Setting clear, fair and effective oversubscription criteria which do not discriminate against any pupil.
- Communicating oversubscription criteria clearly to parents.
- Notifying the LA of any in-year admissions and their outcomes.
- Making arrangements for pupils admitted through in-year admissions to start as soon as possible.
- Publishing a link to the full, determined admissions arrangements on the school's website.

The Schools Adjudicator (Department for Education) is responsible for:

- Acting in line with the relevant legislation and guidance pertaining to admissions.
- Receiving concerns and objections regarding the admission of pupils and making recommendations to the admission authority as a result of these concerns and objections.
- Approving variations to determined admissions arrangements where there has been a major change in circumstances or law.

The appeals clerk is responsible for:

- Having an in-depth knowledge of the relevant appeals codes and other relevant law.
- Providing an independent and impartial service for admission appeals.
- Making the necessary administrative arrangements for hearings.
- Notifying all parties of the order of proceedings in advance of an appeals hearing.
- Responding to queries from appellants in advance of an appeals hearing or identifying who will be appropriate to respond.
- Being an independent source of advice on procedure and admissions law.
- Keeping accurate records of proceedings and providing written notification of the appeals panel's decisions.

9. Appendix A: Timetable

The timetable changes every year and varies by local authority. Please visit the local authority pages using the below links:

Local Authority	Link
Wirral	School admissions | wirral.gov.uk

Details	2028/29
Application process starts. Online application facility opens and paper application forms available. Composite prospectus available	Sept 2028
Closing date for applications	Jan 2029
Deadline for receipt of supporting documentation. Information received after this date will not be considered until after the accept/decline date listed below	Feb 2029
Offers released parents will be informed of the school place offered	April 2029
Waiting lists prepared and vacancies reallocated. Waiting lists will be held in criteria order	May 2029
Deadline for application appeals against local authority / governing board decisions	May 2029
Appeal hearings (on time applications)	July 2029
Appeal hearings (late and in year applications)	Within 40 school days of the appeal being lodged
Late applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application after this date	TBC

10. Appendix B: Appeal Process

If you receive notification from LA that a place has not been allocated with the reasons why and you believe that the correct admission criteria were not applied or that your application was not processed correctly, please email Trust@concordiamat.co.uk

A member of staff from Concordia will contact you and provide advice on the appeal process.