

GUIDANCE ON ADMISSIONS

Department for Schools & Colleges

October 2015

1. Introduction

Whilst our schools are not exclusively for Catholic pupils, they were established to provide Catholic education for Catholic children whose parents wish for them to be educated in a school that will teach them about the faith and provide opportunities for them to practice it. Our schools are conducted in accordance with canon law, the teachings of the Catholic Church and their school Trust Deed. In the Diocese of Clifton, the Bishop expects all Catholic schools to give first priority to Catholic applicants. This guidance is designed to support governing bodies and academy boards of directors, as the admission authorities, to draw up and implement a policy and process that is in accordance with the School Admissions and Appeals Codes and to fulfill the Bishop's expectations.

2. Diocesan Guidance

The guidance in this document must be read alongside the Admissions and Appeals Codes and does not replace them. It does not offer comprehensive coverage of all school admission matters. Its purpose is to highlight diocesan policies on school admissions and to give guidance on the important issues relevant to voluntary aided Catholic schools and Catholic academies operating as their own admission authorities.

Whilst in itself this is not a legal document the diocese expects the guidance to be followed.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Diocese

The Diocese is not an admissions authority but offers support wherever possible to schools. The purpose of this guidance is to help school admission authorities draw up their own admission policies and criteria in relation to the Catholic Church and practice, and the Bishop's wishes. It acknowledges that different schools are in different situations and recognises that some schools are oversubscribed with Catholic children and others oversubscribed with a mix of Catholic and other applicants.

The governing bodies of Catholic schools are required to consult with the Diocese before determining admission arrangements. This provides a further opportunity for the Diocese to support schools, including any explanation of this guidance where necessary.

As the Diocese has an overarching responsibility in the provision of Catholic places, it is important that all schools in the Diocese consult with the Schools & Colleges Department when any change to the school's published admission number (PAN) is being considered and secure the approval of the Bishop and trustees.

The Diocese is committed to the principle that as many Catholic children as possible should be able to take advantage of the education provided in Catholic schools. To this end Catholic schools should work with each other and the Diocese to draw up admissions policies which ensure that places are provided equitably for all members of their local Catholic communities.

The definition of membership of the Catholic Church is 'baptism or reception, evidenced by a certificate or statement from the parish in which the baptism or reception took place'.

Whilst many schools are heavily oversubscribed and wish to implement further oversubscription criteria of 'practising', the Bishop does not support this and so it should not be used. The Diocese is represented on Admissions Forums in local authorities with whom the Diocese works. Admissions Forums monitor and report on compliance with the law and on the impact of admission arrangements in the area. The Diocese also maintains close contact with the local authority school admissions officers and the Catholic Education Service to see what is happening nationally.

3.2 Governors

For voluntary aided schools the governing body is the admissions authority. For academies the academy trust is the admissions authority, although the implementation of the policy will normally be delegated to the local governing body.

Governing bodies and academy trusts have a statutory duty to draw up, consult on and determine their admissions arrangements within the statutory timeframes. The admission arrangements define how children will be admitted to the school and must include criteria against which places will be allocated when there are more applications than places.

It is the responsibility of admission authorities (governors/directors) to ensure that admission arrangements are compliant with the Admissions Code. Governors of all diocesan schools have a responsibility to comply with the trust deed of their diocese and with their instrument of government (VA schools) or articles of association (academies). The Admissions Code places a mandatory requirement for schools to both consult the Diocese when membership or practice is to be demonstrated and to have regard to any diocesan guidance 'when constructing faith-based admission arrangements' All oversubscription criteria in the admissions arrangements must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation.

Admission arrangements include not just the policy but the overall procedures, practices, criteria and supplementary information elements.

Appropriate admissions arrangements which, first of all, serve the needs of the Catholic population contribute significantly to securing the religious character of the school. Foundation governors are appointed to ensure that the religious character of the school is preserved and developed.

In drawing up admission arrangements the Bishop expects an ethos statement to be included either in the policy or in the preamble.

All schools **must** pay due regard to the Equality Act of 2010 and draw up and review their policies and practices to make sure these meet the requirements of the Act, even if they believe that they are already operating in a non-discriminatory way. Governing bodies should not require worship in a particular parish as it can be deemed discriminatory because:

a) Those attending ethnic chaplaincies may claim discrimination under the Equality Act. Not all chaplaincies have a church or permanent base, but they are a 'parish community' for a significant number of Catholic families. For the purposes of admission arrangements, an ethnic chaplaincy should be considered as a parish.

b) Families in parishes where there is no school may leave their parish to worship in the named parish, so increasing their chances of a place. This favours the more mobile and has an adverse effect on the life of some parishes;

c) Families may have elderly or disabled relatives that may rely on them to take them to church and it may be easier or more accessible to use a church other than the one in their own parish.

Failure to abide by this may lead to the Diocese, Appeal Panel members or the LA referring the admission authority to the adjudicator.

3.3 The Head Teacher

Whilst a head teacher can be a member of an Admissions Committee he or she cannot act in place of the governing body in determining the school's admission policy, or in deciding on the admission of an individual child. The head teacher should declare an interest should a family be known to them. Head teachers, or any other member of staff, must not interview prospective applicants or their parents.

3.4 The Priest

The role of the priest in the admissions process is fundamental in enabling the Bishop's expectation that all Catholic schools will give first priority to Catholic applicants. Part of that role is to provide evidence, where applicable, about membership of the Catholic Church. Membership of the Catholic Church is evidenced by a certificate of baptism. However, there may be circumstances when the priest may be asked to provide evidence that a child / parent has been received into the Church. Sometimes membership may be confirmed by using a Supplementary Information Form (SIF). The priest should not be asked for any additional information other than this

The information provided by the priest in relation to school admissions will be available to all involved in the admissions arrangements including admission appeal panel members and parents.

Governing bodies should consider carefully the composition of the admissions committee, guarding against any possible conflicts of interest for those who make decisions. It is recognised that priests have to maintain a balance between their pastoral and other roles and that there is a potential conflict of interest for any priest who is a governor of a school**. As a result of this, priests who provide information on a Supplementary Information Form**

who are also governors in the school must not be members of the Admissions Committee and must not take part in the governors' discussions relating to applications and decisions on who should be offered places. There must be at least 3 people on a committee.

The Parent/Carer

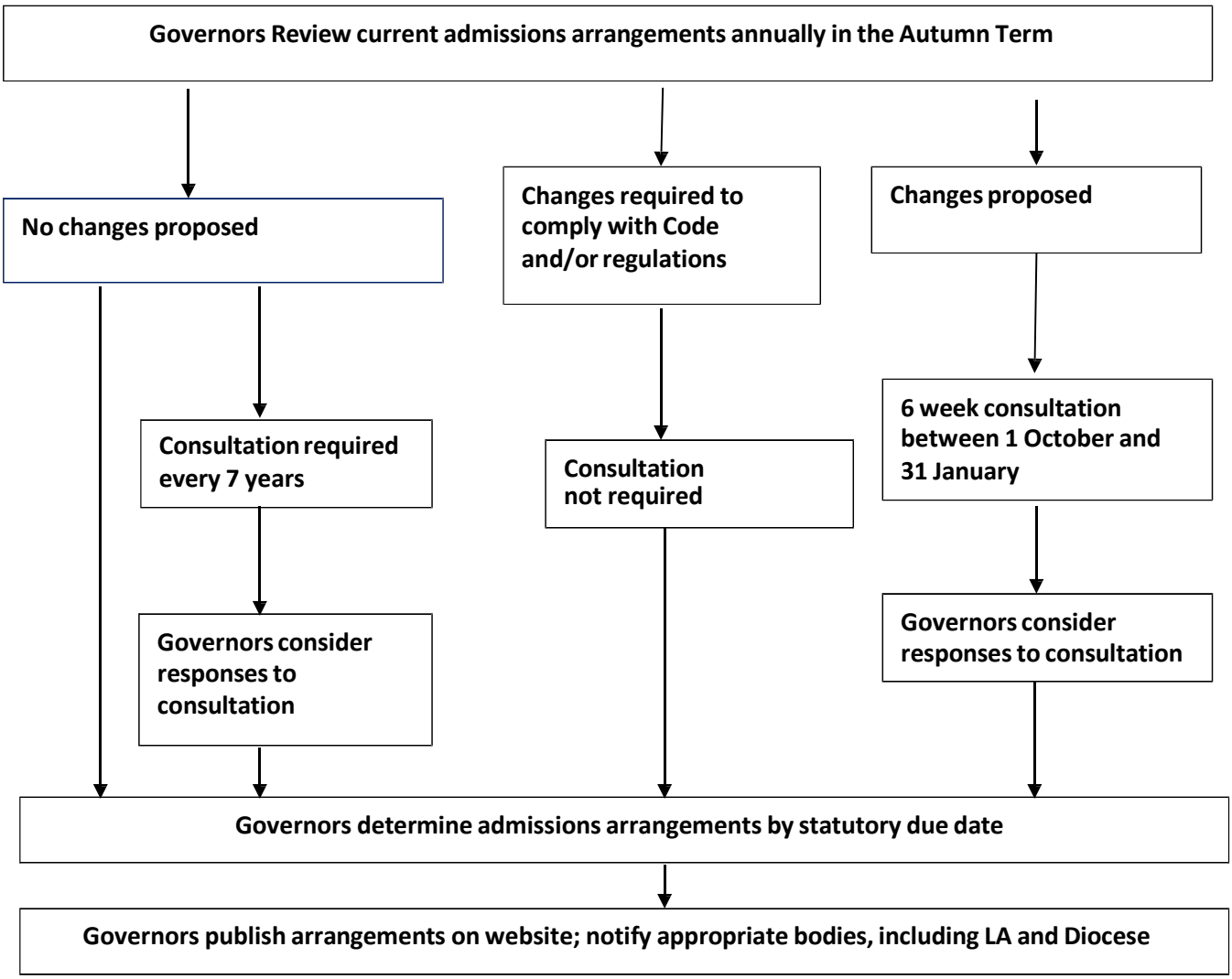
It is a parent's responsibility if they are seeking a Catholic education for their children to find out the admission arrangements for each school to which they may wish to apply. If anything is unclear they should seek clarification from the school. Schools may need to provide guidance and translated information to some parents or carers to support them in the process.

Some Catholic schools request the completion of a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) to establish membership of other Christian and faith traditions (although please note the Diocese no longer supports such criteria and recommends that they are not used). The completion of a SIF is not obligatory. Parents may provide all the necessary documentation needed for an oversubscription criteria to be applied without completing the SIF and **must not** therefore be penalised for not completing it.

Whilst copies of baptismal certificates are acceptable it should be made clear that originals should be available for inspection if required.

Review, consultation and determination of admission arrangements

Process



4. Review

The governing body/board, must review their admissions arrangements (including any supplementary information form) annually, in the Autumn Term. The purpose of the review is to consider how effective the arrangements have been in serving the local Catholic population in the previous year, and how it will serve any future year's population, and that oversubscription criteria are reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation.

The review and drawing up of recommendations for changes can be carried out by an admissions committee (where the governing body has established this committee) as part of its delegated functions, but determination of the arrangements must be ratified by the full governing body/board.

It is important that all schools in the Diocese consult with the Department for Schools & Colleges when any change to the school's admission arrangements is being contemplated. The Code makes clear that, when reviewing and drawing up admissions arrangements, the admission authorities of Catholic schools must have regard to the guidance provided by their religious authority when constructing faith-based oversubscription criteria. For all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Clifton the guidance referred to is provided by the Schools & Colleges Department on behalf of the Bishop, the religious authority for the Diocese.

5. Statutory consultation Process

Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult annually, but admission authorities **must consult** on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals. Clerks to governors should keep a record and advise on when the admissions arrangements need to be consulted upon.

The consultation **must** run for a minimum of 6 weeks between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year in order to fulfill the statutory consultation requirements.

6. Consultees

Admission authorities must consult with the following:

- the Diocesan Department for Schools
- the local authority (LA)
- all other admission authorities within the relevant area* (NB: primary schools need not consult secondary schools)
- parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen
- other persons in the relevant area* who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions, e.g. nurseries, children's centres, minority ethnic groups

*Contact your Local Authority for details of the relevant area

In some cases LAs will inform consultees on behalf of admission authorities in their area, but this should not be taken for granted and there will be a charge (usually a part of a Service Level Agreement). However, the ultimate responsibility for the consultation rests with the admission authority.

It is good practice to bring the consultation personally to the notice of the parents of the current school population who may have siblings who could be affected by any proposed change.

Notice of the consultation should be advertised in a local newspaper, posted on parish and school notice boards, school & parish newsletters and sent to groups indicated in the above list.

For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority **must** publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements which also includes any supplementary form to be used and the proposed published admission number (PAN), on their website together with details of the person within the admission authority to whom comments should be sent.

In case of subsequent complaints it is important that admission authorities keep a record of comments received during consultation.

Following the consultation the governors need to record all responses received and a summary of discussion thereon and determine the final arrangements by 28 February.

Following determination admission authorities **must** notify all consultees of the determined arrangements and **must** publish a copy of them on their website immediately. They **must** also send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the Diocesan Department for Schools & Colleges and the Local Authority before 15 March.

7. Supplementary Information Form (SIF)

Admission authorities of Catholic schools sometimes need information additional to that collected on the Common Application Form (CAF) in order to apply their oversubscription criteria to applications. A SIF is used to collect such information. The information requested on a SIF **must** have a direct bearing on decisions about oversubscription criteria. SIFs **must** not request:

- any personal details about parents and families, e.g. maiden names, criminal convictions, marital or financial status
- anything that is already available on the CAF
- gender
- the first language of parents or the child
- details about parents' or child's disabilities, special educational needs or medical conditions
- parents to agree to support the ethos of the school or abide by school rules
- both parents to sign the form ***(ensure you make clear only one parent needs to provide details and signature)***, or the child to complete the form

Questions on the SIF which seek information should correspond exactly to what is stated in oversubscription criteria and any explanatory notes to the criteria.

8. Other information

Admission authorities can also request:

- proof of address
- proof of birth date, but only after a place has been offered
- copy of adoption order, child arrangements order or special guardianship order
- letter from LA confirming previously looked after status

9. Information to consider when drawing up admission arrangements.

9.1 Published Admission Number (PAN)

Admission authorities **must** publish an admission number (PAN) for each "relevant age group". This is defined in law as "an age group in which pupils are or will normally be admitted" to the school in question. It may be necessary for some schools to have more than one admission number. For example:

(a) ***secondary***: where a secondary school operates a sixth form and admits children from other schools at age 16, for instance, an admission number will be required for year 12 as well as for the main year or years in which children join the lower school (normally year 7). Admission numbers **must** refer in each case to children to be admitted to the school for the first time. The number **must** not include children transferring from earlier age groups already on the school roll.

(b) ***primary***: where a primary school makes nursery provision, the admission number for reception will be, as for schools without nursery provision

9.2 Admission of children below compulsory school age

Admission arrangements for primary schools **must** provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. Admission authorities **must** state clearly in their admissions arrangements that:

a) the arrangements do not apply to those being admitted for nursery provision if on site,
b) parents of children who are admitted for nursery provision must apply for a place at the school if they want their child to transfer to the reception class,
c) attendance at an onsite nursery or playgroup does not guarantee admission to the school. (Schools cannot give preference to children attending an onsite nursery or playgroup unless in line with that in the amendments Dec 14 to the admissions code.)
d) where offered a place, parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which it was made ,
e) where offered a place, child may attend part-time until the child reaches compulsory school age,
f) where offered a place, a child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday,
g) the process for requesting children to be admitted outside their normal age group (including for summer born children).

9.3 Infant class size

In setting the PAN, admission authorities for primary schools must ensure that they can comply with the Infant Class Size Regulations. Classes where the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6 or 7 during the school year must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single teacher other than in exceptional cases as defined in the Admissions Code.

9.4 Increasing the PAN

A school's PAN can be increased without the need to consult, but the admission authority **must** notify their local authority of their intention to increase the school's PAN and reference to the change should be made on the school's website. However, in accordance with their Trust Deed, the Diocese expects governing bodies/boards of directors of Catholic schools to discuss any such proposal with the Diocesan Schools & Colleges Department and secure the approval of the Trustees before determination.

9.5 Admissions above the PAN

Following determination of the PAN, an admission authority can admit above its PAN in exceptional circumstances, but it **must** notify the LA in good time to facilitate effective coordination. An admission authority can also admit above their PAN in-year. In either case, schools are advised to consult the Schools & Colleges Department for advice. Admission authorities should have good reasons to admit above the PAN and should avoid ad hoc decisions. They should be aware that admitting over PAN may be a factor that appeal panels will take into account at any future appeal

9.6 Reducing the PAN

Admission authorities **must** consult with all appropriate bodies (see 1.42 – 1.45 of the School Admissions Code 2014) if they are proposing a decrease in their PAN

9.7 Oversubscription criteria

9.7.1 *Clarity, objectivity and fairness*

Admission authorities **must** set out an 'oversubscription criteria' in the order in which they will be applied when there are more applications than places. Oversubscription criteria **must** be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and comply with all relevant legislation. They **must** also include an effective, clear and fair tie-breaker to decide between two applications that cannot otherwise be separated. **All terminology must be clearly defined** e.g. sibling, Christian, Other faith etc.

9.7.2 *Prohibited practices for oversubscription*

a) the order of schools named as preferences , including "first preference first"
b) practical or financial support parents may give to the school or associated organisation, e.g. church or parish
c) occupational, financial, marital or educational status of parents
d) any previous schools attended unless a named feeder school
e) reports from previous schools about the child or other children in the family
f) name fee-paying independent schools as feeder schools or attendance at a specific nursery unless in line with the amendments in the Dec 14 Code
g) interview children or parents
h) request financial contributions
i) request photographs of a child

Language issues

The wording within arrangements must be clear and not ambiguous. The following words or terms should generally (depending on the context) be avoided:

- admissions criteria (it is an over-subscription criteria)
- will usually/normally be (use 'will be')
- may or may not (use 'will' or 'will not')
- reasonable evidence (use evidence)
- sibling (use 'brother or sister' and ensure it is singular not plural)
- application and supplementary forms – these must be submitted by (not received by) the closing date.

9.7.3 ***Children with an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP)***

The admission arrangements **must** clearly state that children with an EHCP which names the school will be admitted before the oversubscription criteria is applied. They must be counted towards the admission number when considering whether there is still a place available for other children without plans.

9.7.4 ***Looked after children and previously looked after children***

The Code states that the highest priority **must** be given to looked after children and previously looked after children. The admissions arrangements should include definitions such as those listed below:

a) A 'looked after child' is a child who is in the care of a local authority, or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services at the time of making an application to a school.
b) A "previously looked after child" is a child who was looked after, but ceased to be so because she/he was adopted* or became subject to a child arrangements order** or special guardianship order***.

*This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Childrens Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders).

**Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by s.12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order.

***See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

The Code allows Catholic schools to give first priority to baptised Catholic looked after children and previously looked after children, followed by all other Catholic children, then priority to other looked after children and previously looked after children, followed by all other non-Catholic children.

9.7.5 ***Siblings/brothers/sisters***

To make it clear for parents, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, the Diocese now recommends that schools do not use the term 'sibling', but uses 'brother or sister'. Admission authorities **must** state clearly what /"brother or sister" means in their arrangements, whether the term refers to step/foster/adopted

/brothers or sisters and other children living in the same household. The following is an example of a definition of brother or sister:

To be considered as a brother or sister a child must be living at the same address for the majority of the time* as a full, half, step or adoptive brother or sister. Full and adoptive brothers/sisters are defined as children who have the same either biological or adoptive parents. Half brothers/sisters are defined as children who share only one either biological or adoptive parent. Step brothers/sisters are defined as children who are not necessarily related biologically (including Foster children) but are living in the same household for the majority of the time* at the address considered to be the address of the child for whom the application is made.
* A child must be living at an address for at least 50% of the time to be considered as living there for the majority of the time.

A brother or sister must be attending (or is expected by the school and/or the Local Council to be attending) the school at the time of admission.

While giving a degree of priority to siblings is generally regarded as good practice, admission authorities should note that the Diocese expects priority to be given to baptised Catholic children above all others.

9.7.6 ***Children of UK personnel staff***

Applications for children from service families moving into Clifton Diocese are considered as for other applications in the normal admission round but proof of posting may be needed.

Admission of children of UK armed forces personnel may be considered as a 'permitted exception' admission to infant class size limits should the preferred school be full.

9.7.7 ***Children of other Christian denominations or other faiths***

The diocese does **not** support the use of this as oversubscription criteria as it is not easily defined. The prime aim of the Catholic school is give priority to Catholics but to operate in all other ways as inclusively as possible.

9.7.8 ***Children of staff***

Admission authorities can give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff in certain circumstances. However, the diocese advises its schools not to do so if it would lead to Catholic families in the local parish(es) or pastoral area not gaining places for their children in a Catholic school. By giving this priority to Catholic staff it could be subject to challenge by those members of staff who are not Catholics. It will also have the effect of depriving another higher ranked child of a place. Priority to staff should only be given to all staff after all of the criteria for Catholic children/parents.

9.7.9 ***Distance***

Admission authorities are required to set out clearly how distance from home to school will be measured. Admission authorities should if possible use measurements provided by their local authority. Example statement in admissions arrangements: "Distance will be measured in a straight line from the front door of the child's home address (including flats) to the main entrance of the school by the local authority using a
computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving the highest priority." However if using measurements provided by your LA, you must

ensure the wording is compatible with the exact method used by the LA.

Admission authorities **must** also define the "home address" for admission purposes. You may wish to use the wording that may be included in the Coordinated Admission Scheme. In cases where the child lives for part of the week with each parent, for example, "the address where the child lives for the majority of the time" should be used.

Schools need to consider if random allocation may be a fairer process as if a school is consistently oversubscribed those living closest may always get in, which could lead to those with greater finance being able to purchase houses closest to the school.

9.7.10 ***Feeder schools***

Secondary schools can name primary schools as feeder schools. The selection of feeder schools as an oversubscription criterion must be transparent and made on reasonable grounds. The Diocese expects secondary schools to only give priority to feeder schools defined as being in their agreed parishes' areas of responsibility as agreed with the Diocese.

9.7.11 ***Social and medical need***

If social and medical need is used as an oversubscription criterion, the admission authority **must** set out in their arrangements how they will define this need and give clear details about what supporting evidence will be required, e.g. a letter from a doctor or social worker and what the letter needs to state in order to meet the criterion.

9.7.12 ***Random allocation***

This cannot be used as the principal oversubscription criterion for allocating places. Where it is used, e.g. as a tiebreaker, the admission arrangements must state clearly how it will operate and it must be supervised by someone independent of the school. An example of its use is: "In the unlikely event of the distance between two children's homes and the school being the same, random allocation (the drawing of lots) will be used, which will be supervised by the Diocese."

9.8 Waiting Lists

Where a school is oversubscribed, the admission authority must maintain a waiting list until at least 31 December in the academic year of admission. It must include the fact it will do this in their school's published admission arrangements and actually provide a date e.g. 31st December. It must also make clear that each child added to the list will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. Children will be ranked in order of the published oversubscription criteria not based on when they were placed on the list. The position on the waiting list can change as a result of a need for the list to be re-ranked following additional applicants.

9.9 Admission appeals

Parents and carers have the right of appeal against an admission authority's decision if their child is not allocated a place at their preferred school. The appeal is to an independent panel arranged by the governing body of the school or by the clerk to the appeal panel. The panel must be clerked by a person independent of the school and the LA's education provision. The Department for Schools & Colleges selects and provides training for panel members and clerks where they are responsible for hearing the appeal or providing panel members. Admission appeals are governed by the School Admission Appeals Code to ensure that hearings are impartial, structured and fair to both parents and schools. It is essential that all presenting officers are fully conversant with the code, and have up-to-date information about the school situation. It is not advisable for heads to act as presenting officers.

9.10 Fair access protocols

All admission authorities must have fair access protocols (formerly called a 'hard to place pupils' protocol). In addition all schools and academies must participate in their local authority's protocol

Although governing bodies cannot insist on accepting only Catholic children under the protocols, they should work with local authorities with the aim of establishing local agreements which would give priority to children who would be placed highest under the school's oversubscription criteria in normal admission arrangements, i.e. baptised Catholics. For other children, it is important the parents and children understand the religious nature of the school.

Governing bodies must not adopt procedures or criteria that disadvantage children who arrive in their area outside the normal admission round. The Code lists those children to be included in the Fair Access Protocol.

9.11 Churches in Communion with Rome

9.11.1 ***For Churches in full communion with Rome please see Appendix 1.***
NB: There are a number of Eastern Orthodox Churches with similar names that are NOT in union with the See of Rome. The general rule is Eastern Rite Churches in union with the See of Rome will have the word Catholic in their titles. Churches with the word Orthodox in their titles are not in union with the See of Rome and children from these Churches should be considered after Catholic children.

9.11.2 ***Members of Eastern Orthodox churches***
There are members of some of the Orthodox churches living within the Diocese who, because of the closeness of their church to the Catholic Church in sacramental and doctrinal terms, apply for their children to attend Catholic schools. Members of these churches can form a distinct oversubscription criterion which should be placed after the "other looked after children" and before the "other Christians" criterion. As for Catholics, membership is evidenced by a baptismal certificate

9.11.3 ***"Heritage Catholics"***
Some governing bodies may wish to give priority to unbaptised children with (a) baptised Catholic parent(s). If such a category is used it must be placed after all Catholic categories and after "Other looked after children and previously looked after children".

9.11.4 ***Members of other Christian denominations***
Whilst as stated earlier it is not recommended to include criteria for other denominations. But if they are included in admissions arrangements, other Christian denominations should be defined as full members of "Churches Together in England" Appendix 2 lists the current members of "Churches Together in England".

9.11.5 Admission authorities should not insist on baptismal certificates as proof of membership for all Christian churches. Some Christian churches do not practice infant baptism. Evidence of membership can be a baptismal certificate, dedication certificate or statement of membership made on a supplementary information form by a priest / minister.

9.11.6 Admission authorities should not expect members of other Christian denominations to demonstrate Catholic expectations of religious practice. It is for the religious leader of the relevant Christian denomination to determine commitment to/membership of that denomination.

9.11.7 ***Members of other faith***

Whilst as stated earlier it is not recommended to include criteria for other faiths, But if they are included, evidence of membership should be a statement of membership made on a supplementary information form by a faith leader. Again admission authorities should not expect members of other faiths to demonstrate Catholic expectations of religious practice. It is for the leader of the relevant faith to determine commitment to/membership of that faith.

9.12 Late Applications

Any late applications will be considered by the Governors' Admissions Committee, in the event of there being any available places using the oversubscription criteria. If all places have been filled, parents will be offered the opportunity of placing their child's name on the waiting list. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

9.13 Tie-breaks

Schools are sometimes faced with the situation that they are oversubscribed in any one given criterion e.g. number of Catholics living in the parish. Governing bodies are then required to draw up tie breakers. Acceptable ones are:

a) A brother/ sister in the school at the time of admission (the definition of brother/sister needs to be appropriately defined);
b) Proximity of the home to the school (needs to be clearly defined as to how this will be measured);
c) random allocation i.e. drawing of lots (needs to clearly define how this will operate).

FREQENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ADMISSIONS

Q: Are we obliged to take difficult pupils if we have space?

Unless you can prove that you would not be able to meet a child's needs, and this is usually only in the case of a child with an EHC plan, then you have to accept any child.
Admission authorities must not refuse to admit children on the basis of their poor behaviour elsewhere. However in exceptional circumstances, the admissions authority can refuse a place where the admission of a child with challenging behaviour may prejudice the provision of efficient education even though there are places available This is normally only appropriate where a school has a particularly high proportion of children with challenging behaviour. You should check the LA Fair Access Protocol before doing refusing such applications.

Q: Where do the parish boundaries lay?

The school's parish priest should be able to inform you of the parish boundary and a map showing those boundaries must be produced if the policy states you take from a certain parish (es). **For the purposes of admissions the term 'parishioner' is one who lives within the territorial area of the defined parish and not where they worship.** If in doubt contact the Department for Schools & Colleges for clarification.

Q: Who holds the official waiting list and how long does it have to be held for?

For bulk admissions i.e. reception and Year 7 the school is responsible list until at least December 31st. Beyond this, and for other year groups, the school can hold a waiting list but it needs to be made clear in their policy/arrangements how long it will be held and the procedures for going on the list.

Q: Can a Local authority keep a place open for a child?

It is the Admission authority that makes decisions on entry. A child can have a deferred entry for reception (in some circumstances) but the school has to make this clear in the admissions arrangements.

Q: How long does a parent have to take up the offer of a place?

The admissions authority, i.e. school governors, can determine this but they need to have consulted with the LA and informed the LA of their decision, so the LA can make this clear in the offer letter which they send out on behalf of the governors.
The governors also need to make this clear in the policy/admissions arrangements document and should check the LA Coordinated Admission Scheme.

Q: Can the local authority make you extend your numbers in key stage 2

No, only the admissions authority i.e. the governors can do this. However in exceptional circumstance the LA does have the legal power to direct a school to admit a child (even when the school is full).

Q: Where is all the paperwork for applications including supplementary forms sent?

For bulk admissions the official application form is sent directly to the local authority.
Supplementary information forms should be sent to the school directly and this needs to be clear in the policy/arrangement documents but diocesan advice would be to advise parents to send a copy to both the school and local authority. Whilst the school will only receive a copy of a child's baptism certificate it should make clear that it can request sight of the original. A copy should also be sent to the local authority.
NB: For in-year admissions all documentation goes directly to the school.

Q: Is it acceptable to ask for a copy of the parent's baptismal certificate.
Yes if one of the criteria is "child of a baptised parent" and it is written clearly in your policy. It must only be one parent's certificate and not both.

Q: Is it acceptable to ask for a copy of a mother's marriage certificate if their baptismal certificate is in their maiden name?
Yes as long as it is stated clearly in your policy that you will request this.

Q: What is the acceptable process by which the admissions committee members meet to determine places for in year applications?
Governors should, wherever possible meet in person. However arrangements can be made for members to be present at committee meetings 'virtually' for example by telephone or video conferencing; participating in discussions/decision making remotely. Minutes should be kept of all meetings giving a clear audit trail as to how and why decisions are made regardless of how the meeting took place and indicating who was present remotely or otherwise.

Q: Can a school guarantee a place for those attending a Catholic school - even if they are not necessarily a Catholic?
There can never be a guarantee made to any applicant. All parents are entitled to apply for a place. The relevant part of the Trust Deed for Schools states that the purpose of the Catholic school is for Catholic pupils; and therefore preference always has to be for Catholic children or you would be contravening the Trust Deed.

Q: What should the make-up of the admissions committee be and can the head sit on the committee?
The Head can sit on the committee but should not be making decisions alone nor should any other panel member. The Head should not chair or clerk such a committee. Any priest who signs a Supplementary Information form must not sit on an admissions committee.

Q: What is acceptable evidence for medical conditions?
This can be a letter from a GP or hospital consultant or other clinical practitioner or specialist. However you can only use this if you have used medical circumstances as part of the oversubscription criteria (although you can use it when considering individual in-year applications).

Q: What is considered to be a reasonable amount of time for a LA to contact the school to inform them of an application for a place?
The LA should set out the time span for offers etc. in their published documents and LA admission arrangements. If a school is aware of an application for a place and has not heard from the LA they should contact them.

Q: What happens if the LA does not set out the reasons for the refusal of a place in the letter they send out to parents for bulk admissions?
The code says they should and therefore the school has the right to bring this up with them directly or use the schools admission forum representative to raise it at their meeting. Schools must ensure that they always inform LAs of the reason for refusal.

Q: How often can a parent apply for a place at a school?
Generally a parent can apply once in any academic year. However if there is a material change in circumstances i.e. if a family move into a catchment area or change faith this may place them in a higher category and so they can reapply.

Q: Do children in care have the same rights as a child with an EHC Plan in terms of admissions.
No they should be considered for a place in line with your criteria.

Q: Can a child awaiting papers confirming an EHCP be considered as a child with a plan?
Only if the school has something in writing from the LA confirming that the process has been completed and that the paperwork is forthcoming.

Q: Can we, or do we, differentiate between Catholic children and non-Catholic children with an EHCP?
No.

Q: What is actually meant by oversubscription?
Where there are more applications than the planned admission number within the year group.

Q: Can Governors go over their planned admission number?
NOT in the case of infant class size (unless it meets the exceptional circumstances criteria). Yes in Key stage 2 or beyond Y7 **but** the advice is not to, as it can cause difficulties when others go to appeal. If you do breach you need to have gone through a process and be clear why you have breached. Ensure you have minutes of the meeting where this is discussed and decided upon. You will also need to be accepting of the consequences i.e. if you breach once or more an appeal panel may decide you can therefore breach again.

Q: If you have spaces does the Admissions committee still have to be involved to decide to offer a place.
Yes.

Key reasons for appeals being upheld

- Schools offering places to pupils who are waiting to be baptised – *children must be baptised Catholic at the time of the application deadline.*
- Presenting officers not having all the correct facts or information.
- Schools already having breached admission numbers.
- Schools acting in a discriminatory manner.

Churches in Communion with Rome

Personal Ordinariate. Baptised children of parents who are members of the Ordinariate established under The Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus of November 4th 2009 are to be given equal preference to that offered to children baptised in a Catholic church. It is important to note that these children may have been baptised in the Church of England.

Oriental Rite (or Eastern Catholic) Churches in union with Rome

Alexandrian
Coptic Catholic Church
Ethiopian Catholic Church ('Gheez rite') (Includes Eritrean Catholic Church)

Antiochean (West Syrian)
Syrian Catholic Church
(Syro-)Maronite Catholic
Church Syro-Malankar Catholic
Church

Armenian
Armenian Catholic Church

Chaldean (East Syrian)
Chaldean Catholic Church
Syro-Malabar Catholic
Church

Constantinopolitan (Byzantine)
Albanian (Byzantine) Catholic Church
Belarussian Catholic Church
Bulgarian (Byzantine) Catholic Church
Georgian Catholic Church
Greek (Hellenic) Catholic Church
Greek-Melakite Catholic Church
Hungarian (Byzantine) Catholic
Church
Italo-Albanian (Byzantine) Catholic Church
Church of the Byzantines of the Diocese of Krizevci (Krizevci Catholic Church)
Macedonian Catholic Church
Romanian (Greek) Catholic Church
Russian Catholic Church
Ruthenian (Byzantine) Catholic Church
Slovak (Greek) Catholic Church
Ukrainian (Greek) Catholic Church

There are an equivalent number of Eastern Orthodox Churches with similar names that are not in union with the See of Rome. The general rule is Eastern Rite Churches in union with the See of Rome will have the word Catholic in their titles. Churches with the word Orthodox in their titles are not in union with the See of Rome and children from these Churches should be considered after Catholic children. Please refer any queries to the Commission.