

Date: 19 September 2025  
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To: Headteachers/Chairs of  
Governors, Chief Executives of  
Academy Trusts, of own  
admission authority schools

Dear Colleague

**Important information for schools who follow Suffolk County Council's (SCC)  
admission arrangements in full or in part**

A Schools Adjudicator has considered SCC's admission arrangements for the 2025/2026 school year and found that they do not fully conform with the School Admissions Code.

[The Schools Adjudicator's decision](#) is binding on SCC and the admission arrangements for the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 school years have been amended to comply with the Schools Adjudicator's determination. These amended arrangements were then determined by SCC's Cabinet at the end of the summer term. We also have to consult on these amendments for the 2027/2028 school year from 6 October 2025.

The amendments, which are shown in blue text within Appendix 1, seek to add clarity to the policy itself and make it clearer for parents to understand. They do not affect how school places have been and will continue to be offered, and to whom. The proposed amendments include:

- a) clarification on how applications would be prioritised within the sibling oversubscription criterion, if necessary.
- b) additional information to help parents understand the process for seeking a school place outside of the normal age group.
- c) clarification on admissions to a community school sixth form.

We are writing to all academies, free schools and voluntary aided schools to advise of these amendments. We strongly recommend that if you follow the SCC admission arrangements in full or have any of the amended sections in your own admission arrangements, that these are consulted on and changed for the 2027/2028 school year. You may wish to take your own legal advice.

If the admission arrangements are not amended, we will have to consider referring them to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) in line with our requirements in the Schools Admissions Code, as we have been advised that the admission arrangements are unlawful.

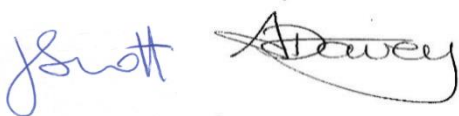
Further to this, if the admission arrangements are not amended and SCC currently ranks your school's applications for the normal year of entry, we will be unable to continue to do this.

Information on the consultation timescales and how to consult can be found in Appendix 2.

You may also want to consider seeking a variation to the admission arrangements for the 2026/2027 school year. Further information can be found on the [OSA website](#).

If you require any further information please contact your Multi Academy Trust or Diocesan Officer, if appropriate, or Georgina Beard by emailing [george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk) or calling her on 01473 264630.

Yours faithfully

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is 'J Scott' and the second is 'A Davey'.

**Jan Scott and Angela Davey**  
**Senior Education Officers (Admissions and School Travel)**  
**Children and Young People's Services**

## Appendix 1

### **Suffolk County Council's proposed admissions arrangements for all Suffolk community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2027/2028 school year**

If the number of applications for a school is greater than its Published Admission Number (PAN), we use our admissions oversubscription criteria to decide who gets a place.

**Children who have an Education, Health and Care plan which names the school must by law be offered a place at that school.**

The following admissions oversubscription criteria show the order of priority for places at community and voluntary controlled schools, [and community school sixth forms](#).

For applications to the normal year of entry at a school, these criteria will be applied according to the evidence provided to show the circumstances existing before midnight at the end of the closing date.

For in-year applications, these criteria will be applied according to the evidence provided to show the circumstances existing at the time of application.

1)	Children in care (looked after children) and children who were previously in care (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, immediately following having been in care, including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted).
2)	<p>Sibling: where the child has a sibling in the school or a sibling has already been offered a place at the school, and where the sibling will still be attending the school at the time of admission but not in a specialist unit or a specialist resource base for Hearing Impaired provision, a nursery or in the sixth form. Priority will be given, where necessary, to applications where there is the smallest age gap <a href="#">in calendar days between the child's date of birth and the date of birth of any sibling already attending the school, or who has been offered a place at the time of application</a>.</p> <p>The term 'sibling' includes: natural, half, step, and adopted brothers and sisters; a child of the partner of the parent; and children who are fostered into the family. In all these cases, the child and their sibling will both be living at the same address (that is where the child is ordinarily resident) in a single family unit. This means that children from different family units, where those separate families are living together at the same address, are not considered siblings under this criterion.</p> <p>The sibling criterion will also apply to applications to Fairfield Infant and Colneis Junior Schools, Felixstowe, as these are paired infant and junior schools. We will treat applicants as siblings when the older child is already attending Colneis Junior School or will be offered a place at this school in the normal year of entry. In cases where the younger child is about to start in the Reception Year group in Fairfield Infant School and the older child is due to transfer to Colneis Junior School, we will treat both</p>

	applicants as siblings. Similarly, we will use the sibling criterion for an application to Colneis Junior school if the younger child is already attending or has been offered a place at Fairfield Infant school.
3)	<p>Children who are ordinarily resident in the catchment area who live nearest to the school.</p> <p>We will measure the distance by a straight line ('as the crow flies'). All straight line distances are calculated electronically by Suffolk County Council using data provided jointly by the Post Office and Ordnance Survey. The data plots the co-ordinates of each property and provides the address-point between which the straight line distance is measured and reported to three decimal places. Where there is more than one home within a single building (for example apartments) we will measure to a single point within that building irrespective of where those homes are located.</p>
4)	<p>Children who live outside the school's catchment area who live nearest to the school.</p> <p>We will measure the distance by a straight line ('as the crow flies') as set out in criterion 3) above.</p>

## **Notes to Suffolk County Council's admissions oversubscription criteria:**

### **Parent**

For the purposes of education law, Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as:

- all natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person (this could be a step-parent, guardian or other relative);
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

A person has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child.

### **Children in care (looked after children)**

A 'child in care' or a 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

### **Children previously in care (previously looked after children)**

Children previously in care (previously looked after children) includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Section 46 adoption orders). Child arrangements orders are defined in Section 8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by Section 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.

### **Children adopted from state care outside of England**

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

### **Sibling tie-breaker**

Priority will be given, where necessary, to applications where there is the smallest age gap in calendar days between the child's date of birth and the date of birth of any sibling already attending the school, or who has been offered a place at the time of application.

In the unlikely event that two applicants competing for a single place at a school have the same number of days difference in age from their closest aged sibling, the place will be offered to one applicant on the basis of lots drawn by an officer of Suffolk County Council not involved with admissions.

### **Distance tie-breaker**

It is possible that the PAN of the school will be reached in any one of the categories set out above. For this reason, all applications will be prioritised according to the criteria described. Decisions will be made about the offer of places in accordance with those priorities. If it is necessary to use a tie-breaker to distinguish between two or more applications, a distance criterion will be used. We will give priority to the applicants who live nearest to the school as measured by a straight line.

In the unlikely event that two applicants competing for a single place at a school live the same distance from the school, the place will be offered to one applicant on the basis of lots drawn by an officer of Suffolk County Council not involved with admissions.

### **Twins, triplets and other multiple births**

If the final place available at a school is offered to a twin, triplet or other multiple birth and the remaining sibling/s would ordinarily be refused, Suffolk County Council will offer places to the remaining sibling/s at the same school. The law requires that this will apply even in those primary schools where this would mean that more than 30 pupils would be admitted to an infant class. Where a sibling of a twin, triplet or other multiple birth has a school named on their EHC plan, Suffolk County Council will from the date of issue of the EHC plan treat their twin, triplets or other multiple births under the sibling oversubscription criterion for the named school. This does not apply to siblings of children in a specialist unit or a specialist resource base for Hearing Impaired provision or a nursery, because they do not meet the sibling definition in the oversubscription criteria.

### **Waiting lists**

If you apply for a school place in the normal year of entry and one or more of your preferences are refused, your child's name will automatically be placed on a waiting list for these schools. Names are placed on the waiting list in the priority order set out in our admissions oversubscription criteria.

The order of the waiting list can change each time a child's name is added or the circumstances of a child already on the list changes. As a result, a child's place on the list can go up or down (for example due to withdrawals or late applications). If you change your address while your child is on a waiting list, you must let us know. Please be aware that this may change your child's position on the waiting list. Written evidence of this will be required.

Having your child's name on a waiting list will not affect your right to appeal for any of the schools you have been refused a place at. Late applicants will be added to any waiting lists in oversubscription priority order if their parental preferences cannot be met.

If a place becomes available at a school, it will be offered to the child who is ranked highest on the waiting list. Places are not offered based on the date on which names were placed on the list. The waiting lists will close on 31 December 2027.

Suffolk County Council does not hold waiting lists for in-year applicants.

### **Making another application for a place at the same school**

A parent or carer can apply for a place for their child at any time to any school outside of the normal admissions round. If your application for a school place is refused, we will not determine a further application for a place in the same school in the same school year, unless there has been a significant change in the circumstances of the parent/carers, child or school. Such circumstances might be a house move or a place becoming available at the school.

If there is no significant change in circumstances, you can make another application for the following school year. This will not normally be considered more than one term ahead of the date when you want your child to start at the school.

### **Ordinarily resident**

By ordinarily resident we mean the place where your child usually lives. We consider this to be where they sleep overnight. We may need proof of this address. If you use another address to give the impression that your child lives at a different address to where they are ordinarily resident, such as a second home or a grandparent's address, so that you have a higher priority for a place at that school; we consider this to be a fraudulent application. Where a child lives at two or more addresses, each for part of the week, the address at which the child is ordinarily resident will be considered to be the address that the child lives at for most of the week (excluding weekends and school holidays). Separate evidence in writing from each parent or carer must be provided to confirm the child's living arrangements at the time of application.

In cases where the child spends an equal proportion of the school week at two or more different addresses, evidence of which is to be considered the main contact address will be required to support the application. Agreement in writing by the parents/carers will be required to state which address is to be used as the ordinarily resident address. This address will then be used when processing all school preferences expressed. It is not acceptable to use one address for one school preference and another address for another school preference.

If we are aware of a parental dispute affecting the application, we may not be able to deal with the application and you may need to seek independent legal advice in order to resolve the matter.

### **Catchment area schools**

Every community and voluntary controlled school serves an area of streets or villages. Catchment area lists and maps are available online at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/catchmentmaps](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/catchmentmaps). If you live near to a boundary line on the map, please check your address against the catchment area and/or street lists. A list or copy of a map can also be obtained from the Admissions Team.

### **Applications for a place outside the normal age group**

It is expected that children will normally be educated within their [normal age](#) group (chronological year group). When requested to do so by the parent or carer, admission authorities will make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned in line with the School Admissions Code. This [may apply](#) [includes](#) when a parent or carer wishes [to delay](#) their summer born (April to August) child [entry](#) to [start](#) full-time education in the Reception Year group [until the following school year](#) when they [become reach of statutory compulsory](#) school age [rather than in Year 1](#).

Any decision made by an admission authority about a change to the ~~chronological year normal age~~ group will not be binding on any other admission authorities considering applications for the same year group or schools in later years. The admission authorities of the preferred schools named in such an application would have to consider the evidence provided and reach their own conclusion, in the light of the legislation and guidance available at that time.

For community and voluntary controlled schools, a request can be made in writing for a delayed or accelerated transfer to the Admissions Team. This will need to include, where relevant, any supporting ~~evidence information about why the child should be admitted out of their normal age group~~.

~~When considering the request this will include, but is not limited to, taking account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social, and emotional development; whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. Any evidence in respect of these or any other reasons can be submitted. Where relevant, consideration can be given to the child's medical history and any evidence from a medical professional involved with the child's care or treatment such as:~~

- ~~▪ a speech and language therapist~~
- ~~▪ an occupational therapist~~
- ~~▪ a social worker~~
- ~~▪ a paediatrician~~
- ~~▪ the child's nursery, childminder or current school.~~

~~The decision will also take into account the views of the headteacher of the school(s) concerned.~~

~~Parents and carers are not expected to get evidence that they do not already have.~~

An application for the child's normal transfer year group should be made at the same time. The request with a CAF1 application form must be sent to the Admissions Team by the relevant national closing dates. Even if the request is agreed there is no guarantee there will be a place available at the preferred school(s).

Officers at Suffolk County Council will make a decision on the request. ~~taking into account the views of the headteacher of the school(s) concerned~~. The Admissions Team will write to the parent or carer with the outcome including the reasons for the decision. If the request is refused the parent or carer will be given details of how to complain.

### **Deferred entry for the Reception Year**

Parents and carers offered a place in the Reception Year for their child have a right to defer the date their child is admitted, or to take the place up part-time, until the child reaches compulsory school age. Places cannot be deferred beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the offer was made.

Children reach compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March.



## **Appeals**

All applicants refused a place have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel constituted and operated in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code.

Information on how to make an appeal will be provided in the letter refusing your child a school place.

## **~~Criteria for admission to sixth form~~**

~~Schools deal directly with applications for entry to their sixth forms. For entry to individual courses, schools typically make an assessment based on an applicant's achievements at GCSE.~~

## **Admissions to a community school sixth form**

Year 11 students who are staying at their community school's sixth form are able to continue into Year 12, subject to meeting minimum entry requirements. The Published Admission Number (PAN) for a community school sixth form is the number of places available for external students to enter that sixth form. If the demand for those places exceeds the PAN, the oversubscription criteria listed above will be applied.

Each sixth form will have minimum entry requirements depending upon the course being applied for. For example, to enter an A Level course the school may make a decision based on an applicant's achievements at GCSE. Please see the individual school's sixth form prospectus for further details and how to apply. The link to these can be found on the schools' websites which are listed in the Directory of Schools in Suffolk for the relevant school year at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions).



## **Appendix 2**

### **School Admission Arrangements for the 2027/2028 school year**

#### **Important information for the headteachers, governing bodies and academy trusts of all Suffolk voluntary aided, free schools and academies**

Admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements **at least once every seven years, even if there have been no changes**. Admission arrangements include your oversubscription criteria, Published Admission Number (PAN) and Supplementary Information Form (SIF), if relevant.

Even if the school follows the Suffolk County Council admission arrangements, you are still required to consult once every seven years. This also applies to all schools that have become academies and have not yet consulted on their policy. This will be from the time the school last consulted on its admission arrangements or from when the school became its own admission authority, for example, by converting to academy status.

If you have not consulted on your admission arrangements or you would like to change your admission arrangements the next chance to do this, in line with the School Admissions Code (SAC), will be for the 2027/2028 school year. **A consultation must take place for at least six weeks between 1 October 2025 and 31 January 2026.**

All the statutory information regarding the consultation and determination of admission arrangements can be found in paragraphs 1.45-1.53 of the SAC, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2).

We will consult on our admission arrangements from 6 October to 17 November 2025. You can be part of our consultation, which means we will add your proposed admission arrangements to our website during our consultation period and advise the relevant consultees on your behalf, in line with the SAC. Any responses will be directed back to you. You will also need to add the proposed admission arrangements to your website.

If you wish to add your admission arrangements, including any SIF, to our consultation can you please send them to [george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk) by **Wednesday 1 October 2025** at the latest. For further advice regarding the arrangements please email this address or telephone Georgina Beard on 01473 264630.

If you decide to carry out your own consultation, please contact Georgina for the relevant area of consultees for your school. This is in line with paragraph 1.47 of the SAC.

All voluntary aided, free schools and academies must determine their admission arrangements by **28 February 2026**. These arrangements must then be sent to us and published on your website by **15 March 2026**.

It will remain your responsibility to ensure your school has complied with the statutory requirements.

Please contact your Multi Academy Trust or Diocesan Officer, if appropriate, or Georgina Beard (email [george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:george.beard@suffolk.gov.uk) or telephone 01473 264630) for further information and assistance in reviewing your admission policy.