



Orchard Multi-Academy Trust

Admission Arrangements Policy

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Admission Arrangements for 2027-2028

Oversubscription Criteria for Orchard Multi-Academy Trust

Introduction

Orchard Multi-Academy Trust is the admissions authority for all schools within the Trust. The implementation of this policy is delegated to the Advocate Boards (Local Governing Boards) of each school. This policy outlines the principles and procedures for admissions across all Trust schools, ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance with the School Admissions Code.

Admission Number

Each school within the Trust has a Published Admission Number (PAN). The following table outlines the PAN at each of the academies:

Burghill Community Academy	15
Canon Pyon Church of England Academy	15
St James Church of England Primary School	30
St Paul's Church of England Primary School	60
Stretton Sugwas Church of England Academy	30

Oversubscription Criteria

Priority 1- Looked after children and previously looked after children who have since been adopted, or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order, including those children 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.

*This is the 1st priority because Orchard Multi-Academy Trust wishes to protect children who were or are in public care from further disadvantage that can arise from possible changes of school when the care placement changes. 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).**

Priority 2 – Children living within the **defined catchment area**** of the academy with an **older sibling***** already attending.

A sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or half sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister or the child of the parent/carer's partner, and in every case the child should be living at the same address. The sibling must be in the academy at the time of application and be likely to remain in the academy at the proposed date of admission.

Priority 3 - Children living within the **defined catchment area**** of the academy.

This is the 3rd priority to try to ensure that children are able to attend the academy within their local community. Catchment areas of each academy can be found on their respective website, along with information on Herefordshire Council's website -

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schools-education/schools-catchment-map>

Priority 4 - Sibling connection - Children who have an **older sibling***** at the academy not only at the time of application but also when the younger child is due to start.

*This is the 4th priority to recognise the importance to daily family life, including travel arrangements, of having brothers/sisters at the same school where possible. The rule is **not** intended to favour parents with a previous but no longer current family connection with the school.*

Priority 5 - Staff - Pupils whose parent/parents are employed by the Academy for two years or more or recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

This is the 5th priority to recognise the importance of daily family life for the employees of the academy, including travel arrangements and wrap around/child care issues.

Priority 6 - Pre-School Attendance – Children who attend a pre-school located on-site at an Academy and operated by Orchard Multi-Academy Trust may be given priority for admission to the associated Academy’s Reception class. To meet this criterion, the child must have attended the pre-school for at least one full academic year (starting September 2026) prior to entering the Reception class. The table below outlines which academies have an on-site pre-school run by the Trust:

Burghill Community Academy
Canon Pyon Church of England Academy
Stretton Sugwas Church of England Academy

Please note

Attendance at the pre-school does not guarantee a place at the associated academy. Places will be ranked according to:

- a) Number of sessions attended per week at the pre-school.
 - The school week is divided into 10 sessions (morning and afternoon sessions across five days).
 - Children attending more sessions will be given higher priority. For example, a child attending 8 sessions per week will be ranked above a child attending 6 sessions per week.
- b) Distance to the Academy, measured by the shortest available walking route, will be used to rank children who attend the same number of sessions.

This is the 6th priority to recognise the strong educational and pastoral links between the pre-school and the Academy, and the value placed on supporting a smooth transition for children within the same educational setting.

Priority 7 - Exceptional circumstances - Children with exceptional **medical, social or compassionate** grounds for admission and whose parents can show that entry to a particular school only is necessary for the wellbeing of their child. Parents are required to produce a medical certificate or other appropriate information preferably from an independent source. Applications on such grounds will not be considered by the Board of Directors unless this supporting information is attached to application forms received by 31 December 2026.

This is the 7th priority to be sensitive to exceptional needs that individual children and families may have.

Priority 8 - Distance**** - Children who live **nearest** to the school by the shortest available walking route.

The 8th priority is a measurable, objective way of allocating the remaining places.

* An adoption order is an order under the Adoption Act 1976 (see Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see Section 46 adoption orders). A 'child arrangements order' is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by Section 14 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a *'special guardianship order'* as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

** In order to determine the relevant catchment area, the home address of a child is defined as the only or main permanent residential address, at the closing date for applications, where the child usually resides and which is the usual address of the parent/carer with main responsibility for the child. If arrangements are such that a child resides at two addresses for equal amounts of time, then parents must decide which address to use for admissions purposes.

Where more than one parent submits an application for a child, or where there is a parent not in agreement with the preferences, the Trust may not be able to process any application until agreement over the preferences is reached. Failure to ensure agreement prior to submission, may result in a delay in any application being processed and in some instances, where agreement cannot be reached we may not be able to proceed until a legal resolution has been sought and the courts determine which parent can make the final decision on schooling

*** A sibling connection refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, or a child of the parents/carer's partner, and in every case the child should be living in the same family unit at the same address.

**** Distance is measured by the shortest available walking route using a road and/or made up footpath using the nearest node on the transport network to the property point. The effect of this is to take you to the front door and not take into consideration other entrances (such as rear garden gates/ short cuts). This is particularly pertinent in a rural area like Herefordshire where rural properties can have multiple access points.

Infant Class Sizes

Infant classes (Reception, Year 1, and Year 2) must not exceed 30 pupils per teacher. Exceptions may apply under specific circumstances, including:

- Children with EHCPs admitted outside the normal admissions round.
- Looked After and Previously Looked After Children admitted outside the normal admissions round.
- Children admitted due to procedural errors or successful appeals.
- Children of UK service personnel or those with no other school within reasonable distance.
- Twins or multiple births where one sibling is admitted.
- Children with SEN attending a specialist provision hub within the academy.

In-Year Admissions

Requests for admissions to the academy into other year groups should be made on the In-Year application form and in accordance with the Local Authority's coordinated scheme for In-Year admissions. The form is available from the academy or downloaded from the Local Authority website.

Each academy within Orchard Multi-Academy Trust will keep a continued interest list, should there not be a space at the academy at the time of looking to transfer. Someone from the academy, which you have shown interest, will contact you if a space becomes available and to confirm whether you still wish to take up the place, or to remove your request from our records if it is no longer required. When a space becomes available, all children on the year group list will be prioritised in accordance with the school's published admissions policy.

Please be aware that a school's continued interest list is a dynamic document. As parents request for their children to be added, the position of any individual child already on the list may change. The list does not give priority based solely on the date an application was added. Instead, all entries are ranked in accordance with the school's published admissions criteria.

Appeals

Parents whose children are refused admission have the right to appeal to an independent panel. Any appellants must email Orchard Multi-Academy Trust's Governance Professional at the earliest opportunity - cweaver@orchardmat.org.uk.

Implementation of Scheme

This scheme will apply to all parents/guardians wishing for their children to be admitted during the academic year 2027/2028. Herefordshire Council operate all Reception admissions. Details can be found at: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schools-education/primary-school-admissions/3>

Number of Preferences and Closing Date

All parents will be invited to state three first preferences, in ranked order, on an online application, which will also apply to all voluntary aided and foundation schools and Academies. The National Closing date for primary school applications will be the 15 January 2026 (or the nearest working day after).

Date of Admission

All children will be admitted from the beginning of September in the academic year in which they turn 5.

Option for Delayed Entry

Parents/carers may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented, the parents/carers may seek early entry.

Children born in the summer term (i.e. 1 April – 31 August) are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could first have been admitted into a reception class (the point at which other children in their age range are beginning year 1). Parents/carers have the option of **requesting** delayed entry where they hold back their child from joining the correct year group for their age so that they start school a year later than they are due to. Please note this is a request and can be refused.

Paragraph 2.17A of the Admissions Code requires that, in any circumstance where a parents/carers requests their child is admitted out of their normal age group, the admission authority must make a decision based on the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child concerned.

The head teacher and the Board of Directors will take into account the parents/carers views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely in order to reach a decision as to whether or not it is appropriate for the individual child to delay or accelerate their entry into school and be taught permanently behind or ahead of their chronological age group. The reasons for the decision must be clearly set out. This process must be completed in advance of the closing date. In the event that the delayed entry is not approved, parents will need to make an application in time for the 2026 intake (by the 15 January 2026).

Please be aware that even if delayed or early entry is agreed, the normal admission arrangements apply and there is no guarantee of a place. You should therefore give careful consideration to requesting delayed or early entry.

Deferred Entry – for Summer Born Children

A child is not required to start school until they have reached compulsory school age which is the term following their 5th birthday. Parents/carers are not obliged to take up places for their children any earlier than the law requires. Schools cannot require children to start sooner than parents/carers wish.

Parents/carers therefore have the option of deferring their child's entry until later in the same academic school year.

Deferred entry to a school is where a parent decides to request that their child starts school later in the school year that follows their 4th birthday or when the child reaches compulsory school age (the term after the child's 5th birthday).

The effect is that the place is held for that child and is not available to be offered to another child.

Parents/carers would not however be able to defer entry beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday.

If you wish to defer taking up a place for your child, you are strongly advised to discuss the matter first with the school or with the Pupil Admissions Office, and you must apply by the closing date for applications (15 January 2026).

Allocation of Places

Places in reception classes for all maintained schools are allocated on the basis of applications received on or before 15 January 2026. Applications should be submitted to the Pupil Admissions Office. The date of 15 January 2026 applies for all admissions during the school year, including children who might be entitled to start school in January 2027 or April 2027.

The Primary National Offer Day for the 2026/2027 admission year will be: 16 April 2026 (or the nearest working day after)

Late Applications

Applications received after 15 January 2026 will be allocated to the preferred school on the understanding that admissions do not exceed the published admission number or conflict with the requirement not to exceed 30 pupils in a key stage one class. When considering the late application the council will have regard to the reason for the delay in applying together with the distance to the nearest alternative school.

6. Admission Outside Normal Age Group

Requests for admission outside the normal age group will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Parents must provide supporting evidence such as medical or educational reports. Decisions will be made in the best interests of the child.

7. Deferred Entry

Parents may defer their child's entry to school until later in the academic year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age. Children may also attend part-time until they reach compulsory school age.