



Outcomes Focused, Child Centred

Northern Education Trust – Merlin Top Primary Academy

Admissions Policy 2025/2026

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Contents

1.	4
1.2	4
2.	4
3.	5
4.	6
5.	6
5.1	6
5.2	7
5.3	7
5.4	7
5.5	7
5.6	8
5.7	8
6.	9
6.1	9
6.2	9
6.3	10
7.	11
7.1	11
8.	14
10.	14
11.	14
12.	15

1. Introduction

Northern Education Trust ('the Trust') is 'Outcomes Focused, Child Centred' and recognises that all children, regardless of background or ability, have a common entitlement to an accessible broad and balanced curriculum, and should be fully included in all aspects of daily academy life. No child is offered or refused a place on the basis of his or her general ability.

- 1.1 As the admission authority, the Trust Board has overall responsibility for all admissions in Northern Education Trust academies.

1.2 Trust Vision and Values

We constantly focus on standards as we understand outcomes are paramount. Our decision-making is driven entirely by what is best for children. By doing this we enhance the life chances of the children and young people in our care.

The 10 values which underpin our vision can be seen on our website here - <https://www.northerneducationtrust.org/about-us/vision-values/>

2. Scope and purpose of the policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to explain how to apply for a place at the academy; it sets out the academy's arrangements for allocating places and explains how to appeal against a decision not to offer a child a place. **The academy enters into an agreement with the local authority (LA) who administer many aspects of this policy on behalf of the trust, including, but not exclusive to, the receipt of applications; correspondence to parents/carers; the recruitment, training and appointment of appeal panel members and arrangements for the appeals process to be independently administered and clerked.**
- 2.2 This policy may be amended in writing at any time following a decision of the Schools Adjudicator and the trust.
- 2.3 This policy is based on mandatory requirements and Department for Education (DFE) statutory guidance, School Admissions Code 2021 & School Admission Appeals Code 2022 ("the Codes").
- 2.4 The trust, through its agreement with the LA, will act in accordance with, and will ensure that the Independent Appeal Panel is trained to act in accordance with, all relevant provisions of the Codes as they apply at any given time; and with equalities law and the law on admissions as they apply to maintained schools. For this purpose, reference in the Codes or law to "admission authorities" shall be deemed to be references to the trust.
- 2.5 The trust, and all academies within the trust, are required by the funding agreement to comply with the Codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This policy complies with the funding agreement and the trust's Articles of Association.
- 2.6 This policy must be published on the academy website.
- 2.7 There is a statutory requirement to have this policy in place in multi-academy trusts.

- 2.8 The academy will take part in the Admissions Forum set up by the LA and will have regard to its advice; and will participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by the LA and the local in-year fair access protocol. The fair access protocol will take precedence over existing waiting lists. 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.
- 2.9 Notwithstanding any provision in this agreement, the Secretary of State may:
- Direct the trust to admit a named student to the academy on application from the LA, where it considers that an academy will best meet the needs of any child.
 - Direct the trust to admit a named student to the academy if the trust has failed to act in accordance with this policy or has otherwise failed to comply with applicable admissions and equalities legislation or the provisions of the Codes.
- 2.10 Through its agreement with the LA, the trust shall ensure that parents and ‘relevant children’ will have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision of the trust. The Independent Appeal Panel will be independent of the trust. The arrangements for appeals will comply with the School Admission Appeals Code published by the DFE as it applies to academies. The determination of the appeal panel is binding on all parties.
- 2.11 The trust shall ensure that guidance is available for parents and relevant children about how the appeals process will work and will provide them with a named contact who can answer any enquiries they may have about the process.
- 2.12 In paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11 above, ‘relevant children’ means children who are above compulsory school age, or will be above compulsory school age by the time they start to receive education at the Academy.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 As the admission authority, the Trust Board has overall responsibility for all admissions, including: -
- Acting in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance when carrying out the overall admission of students into the academy.
 - Overseeing, and determining admissions arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted to the academy, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applicants than places at the academy.
 - Ensuring that the oversubscription criteria does not discriminate against any child.
 - Ensuring that the practices and criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective.
 - Publishing the admissions arrangements on the academy website, including the oversubscription criteria.
 - Publicly consulting on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements.

- Clearly communicating any reasons for rejecting the admission of a student, as well as the parent's right to appeal and the appeal process (via the LA).
 - Implementing any advice or recommendations given by the Schools Adjudicator without undue delay.
- 3.2 Responsibility for the decision related to entry to the academy is delegated from the Trust Board to the principal of the academy.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of the principal to carry out the requirements of this policy when requests are made by parents/ carers for admissions to full-time education for their child.
- 3.4 The executive principal is accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of this policy and compliance with it.
- 3.5 The Schools Adjudicator is a statutory office-holder who is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education but is independent. The Schools Adjudicator provides advice on requests to the Secretary of State by LAs to direct academies to admit children. They are responsible for: -
- Acting in line with the relevant legislation and guidance pertaining to admissions to the academy.
 - Receiving concerns and objections regarding the admission of students and making a direction to the trust as a result of these concerns and objections.

4. Applying for a place at the academy

- 4.1 Parents have a right to apply for a place at the academy.
- 4.2 If the academy is undersubscribed, then any parent who applies for a place for their child will be offered a place at the academy.
- 4.3 If the academy is oversubscribed, the trust (through its agreement with the LA) will rank applications in order against the published admission arrangement and oversubscription criteria, further details of which are set out below under paragraph 7.
- 4.4 Unsuccessful parents will be notified of the reason(s) for rejecting their application for a place at the academy, and will be given the right to appeal to an independent appeal panel (arranged through the trust's agreement with the LA).

5. Procedure for determining admission arrangements

5.1 Consultation

- 5.1.1 The trust shall set the admission arrangement annually. Subject to 5.1.3 it shall consult the following parties regarding the academy's proposed admission arrangements for a minimum of six weeks between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year (which is defined as "*the school year immediately preceding the offer year*", which is the school year in which the trust determines the admission arrangements): -

- a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
- b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the

- admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
- c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
- d) the local authority;

5.1.2 Such consultation shall be in line with the requirements of the Codes and relevant admissions legislation, which at the date of this agreement is section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended, and Regulations under that section.

5.1.3 Consultation in line with paragraph 5.1.1 **is not required** in any year where the following conditions are met:

- There have been no changes, or proposed changes, since the last consultation; and
- The published admission number (PAN) is increasing;

and provided always that the admission arrangements have previously been consulted upon within the preceding seven years.

5.1.4 As soon as any changes are proposed to be made to admission arrangements, (with the exception of an increase to the published admission number, which does not require consultation), the consultation process and timeframe must be followed for the next determination year.

5.2 Determination of admission arrangements

5.2.1 Where changes are proposed to the existing admission arrangements, the trust will consider comments and representations made by those consulted in accordance with paragraph 5.1.1 before determining the admission arrangements for the academy.

5.2.2 The trust will determine the academy's admission arrangements annually by 28 February of the determination year and will notify consultees listed in paragraph 5.1.1 what has been determined within 14 days of that decision being made.

5.3 Representation & admission arrangements

5.3.1 Where the trust is required to consult with the consultees listed in paragraph 5.1.1, if any of those persons or bodies objects to the academy's admission arrangements, including the proposed admission number, they can make representations to the Schools Adjudicator. Any representations must be made by 15 May in the determination year.

5.4 Publishing the admission arrangements

5.4.1 The trust will send a copy of the determined admission arrangements to the LA and will publish a copy of the determined admission arrangements on the academy's website by 15 March in the determination year and published for the whole offer year.

5.5 Schools adjudicator's power to accept, modify or reject admission arrangements

5.5.1 Where the Schools Adjudicator has received any representations made in accordance with paragraph 5.3.1, the Schools Adjudicator must consult the trust on such representations. Following such consultation, by 31 July in the determination year the Schools Adjudicator may direct that the trust amends the proposed admission arrangements for the academy. The trust shall comply with any such direction.

5.6 Publication of admission arrangements

5.6.1 The academy shall each determination year publish their agreed admission arrangements by:

- Copies being made available to persons consulted in paragraph 5.1.1
- Copies being made available to primary and secondary schools in the LA area
- Copies being sent to the offices of the LA
- Copies being made available without charge on request
- A copy being uploaded to the academy's website.

5.6.2 The published admission arrangements will set out:

- The name and address of the academy and contact details
- A summary of the admission policy, including full oversubscription criteria
- Numbers of places and applications for those places in the previous year and
- Arrangements for hearing appeals.

5.7 Proposed changes to admission arrangements after arrangements have been published

5.7.1 Subject to paragraph 5.7.2, once the academy's admission arrangements have been determined for a particular year and published, the trust will not make any change to such arrangements unless there is a major change of circumstances and the following procedures have been followed:

- The trust has consulted those who are required to be consulted under paragraph 5.1.1 above on the proposed variation;
- Following such consultation, the trust referred the proposed change to the Schools Adjudicator setting out:
 - The proposed change
 - Reasons for wishing to make such a change
 - Any comments or objections to the proposal from those consulted.

5.7.2 The trust shall follow any direction of the Schools Adjudicator to vary the academy's admission arrangements where such changes are necessary to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes as they apply to maintained schools. Such changes may be made at any time.

5.7.3 Any changes to the academy's admission arrangements brought about through the variation processes in paragraphs 5.7.1 or 5.7.2 above must be published in the academy prospectus and on its website and be communicated within 7 days to those persons who must be consulted under paragraph 5.1.1.

- 5.7.4 A parent of a child who has attained the age of two but is not above compulsory school age and who has been, is, or will be eligible to apply to be admitted to the academy, may make representations to the Schools Adjudicator that any aspect of the academy's admission arrangements do not comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes.
- 5.7.5 Where a representation is made in accordance with paragraph 5.7.4, the Schools Adjudicator may, after consulting the trust, direct that the trust modify its arrangements for the admission of students to the academy so that they comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law and the Codes as they apply to maintained schools. The trust must comply with any such direction.

6. Procedure for admitting students

6.1 Published Admission number

- 6.1.1 The trust has the following published admission number for the academy for the year 2025/2026 and, subject to any changes required by the Schools Adjudicator, for subsequent years:

60 students in Reception.

- 6.1.2 The academy may admit above their PAN through in-year admissions. The PAN only applies to the relevant age group. This means that the academy may not refuse admission to other age groups on the grounds that they have already reached their PAN. They may, however, refuse admission where the admission of another child would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources.

In any specific year, the trust may set a higher admission number than the academy's published admission number for an applicable year group. Before setting an admission number higher than its published admission number, the trust will notify the LA of any proposed increase and following such notification, will reference any changes on the academy website. The trust will notify the LA in good time so that the LA can deliver its coordination responsibilities effectively.

- 6.1.3 The Trust Board will consult those bodies listed at paragraph 5.1.1 on any proposal to decrease the academy's published admission number. Consultation with the bodies at paragraph 5.1.1 will not occur where it is proposed to increase or keep the same published admission number.

6.2 Process of application

- 6.2.1 Arrangements for applications for places at the academy will be made in accordance with the LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements and will be made on the Common Application Form (CAF) provided and administered by the LA. Parents will be provided with a CAF by the LA where they will note a minimum of three preferred schools in rank order. The schools do not have to be located in the LA area where the parents live. Parents are not guaranteed to have their preferences met. Parents will provide LAs with the following information within the CAF:

- Their name and their child's name and date of birth
- Their and their child's address and proof of residence

6.2.2 The trust will use the LA timetable for applications to the academy each year (exact dates within the months may vary from year to year). This will fit in with the timetable for the co-ordination of admission arrangements within the LA, as agreed by the Admissions Forum, LA, local schools and academies.

- By September – the trust will publish in the academy prospectus information about the arrangements for admission, including oversubscription criteria, for the following September (e.g. in September 2023 for admission in September 2024). This will include details of open evenings and other opportunities for prospective students and their parents to visit the academy. The trust will also provide information in relation to the academy to the LA for inclusion in the composite prospectus, as required
- September/October – the trust will provide opportunities for parents to visit the academy
- 15th January – Deadline for reception school places. This process is administered by the LA on behalf of the Trust
- The academy requests the list of names who have made application from the LA
- 16th April - national offer day for primary school places, where parents are notified of any offers

6.2.3 There is a national closing date for applications of 15 January for primary school applications. The academy will ensure its application processes enable parents to apply before these deadlines.

6.3 Consideration of applications

6.3.1 Where fewer than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year groups are received, the trust will offer places at the academy to all those who have applied. The Trust Board will not refuse admission for a child on the basis that:

- They have applied later than other applicants
- They are not of the faith of the academy
- They followed a different curriculum at their previous school
- Information has not been received from their previous school.

6.3.2 For children of UK service professionals and crown servants, the following procedure will be adhered to:

- A place will be allocated to the child in advance of the family arriving in the area named in the application form, where one is available
- The application must be accompanied with an official letter confirming the relocation date
- The address at which the child will live will be used when considering the application against the oversubscription criteria – a Unit or quartering address must be used where this is requested by the child's parent
- The application will not be refused on the grounds of the child not currently living in the area or not currently having an intended address, nor will places be uniquely reserved
- The arrangements for service children will be in line with the government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children.

6.3.3 An offer will only be withdrawn if it has been made in error, a parent has not responded within a reasonable period of time, or if the offer was made via a fraudulent or misleading application. Where an offer has not been responded to within the designated time frame, the trust will give the parent a further opportunity to respond and will explain that the offer will be withdrawn if they do not. If any application is found to be fraudulent after a child has started at the academy in the first term of the new academic year, the academy may withdraw the place. If the fraudulent application is found after this time, the student will not be removed.

7. Procedures for when the academy is oversubscribed

7.1 Admissions to Reception

7.1.1 Where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admission number, applications will be considered against the criteria set out below. After the admission of students with Special Educational Needs where the academy is named on the Education, Health Care Plan, the criteria will be applied in the order in which they are set out below:

a) Students who are in the care of the LA or a child who was previously looked after (including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and cease to be in state care as a result of being adopted). Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted, or subject to a child arrangement or special guardianship order.

b) Admission of students whose siblings currently attend the academy and who will continue to do so on the date of admission. Siblings (brothers or sisters) are considered to be those children who live at the same address and either:

- Have one or both natural parents in common
- Are related by a parent's marriage
- Are adopted or are fostered
- Their parents are married/co-habiting and children permanently live together in the same household, including step-siblings

c) Children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances:

i) Where the member of staff has been employed by the trust for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the academy is made; and/or

ii) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

d) Students who have social, medical or SEN reasons for being admitted to the academy which would, should the child not be admitted, cause him or her to be seriously disadvantaged or put their personal safety at risk. For each case the academy will need proof from an independent person such as a medical specialist who has been involved with the child over a period of time, a social worker, an attendance officer or another professional. The academy will not offer places within this category, based on a child's ability or intelligence.

e) Children whose normal address is closer, based on distance from the academy, using the distance calculation and approach set out below:

Distance calculation:

If the academy becomes oversubscribed within a single criterion, it will prioritise on the basis of the proximity of the *normal address to the academy closest first. The distance, which determines how close a student lives to the academy, is the measurement in a straight line distance from a single fixed central point at the school to a point in the centre of the home address of the child, using the Local Land and Property Gazetteer and British National Grid Easting and Northing co-ordinates.

*(Normal address: Where parents live at separate addresses and have joint custody, the address used will be the one where the child spends the main part of the school week i.e. Sunday night to Thursday night inclusive. Child care arrangements involving relatives' addresses do not qualify as normal family addresses for this purpose unless there is a court Residence Order in place. The qualification date is the closing date for applications under the coordinated admissions scheme. Where families change normal address after the closing date but before the allocation process has finished, this can be considered under the LA's co-ordinated scheme.)

Tie breaker - Where the distance between 2 children's homes and the academy is the same, random allocation will be used to decide between them. This process will be independently verified.

- 7.1.2 Parents will have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision of the academy. The Appeal Panel will be independent of the academy and administered by the LA. The arrangements for appeals will be in line with the School Admission Appeal Code 2022. The determination of the appeal panel will be made in accordance with the Schools Admission Appeals Code and is binding on all parties. Guidance will be available for parents about how the appeals process will work and provide parents with a named independent contact who can answer any enquiries parents may have about the process.

7.2 Operation of Waiting Lists

- 7.2.1 Where in any year more applications for places are received than they are available, a waiting list will operate for each year group for one academic year during which time it will be the responsibility of the applicant's parent/carer to inform the academy (via the LA) of their wish for their child to remain on the shortlist.
- 7.2.2 After one year the applicant's name will be removed from this waiting list unless the LA has heard from the parent. This waiting list will be maintained by the LA on behalf of the academy and it will be open to any parent to ask for his or her child's name to be placed on the waiting list following an unsuccessful application.
- 7.2.3 Children's position on the waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria set out in paragraph 7.1 above. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.
- 7.2.4 The academy will not refuse to admit a child on behavioural grounds in the normal

admissions round or at any point in the normal year of entry. The academy may refuse admission in certain cases where the specific criteria listed in the School Admissions Code (paragraph 3.8) apply, i.e. where section 87 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is engaged.

- 7.2.5 The academy may refuse admission for an in-year applicant for a year group that isn't the normal point of entry, only in such a case that the academy has good reason to believe that the child may display challenging behaviour that may adversely affect the provision the academy can offer. In this case, the academy will refer these students to the Fair Access Protocol. The academy will not refuse admission on these grounds to looked after children, previously looked after children and children with EHC plans listing the academy.

8. Requests for admission outside the normal age group

- 8.1 If a student's parent wishes to apply for their child to be admitted outside of their normal age group they must complete this in writing to the Principal which will be considered in line with the school admissions code, the academies delayed and deferred admissions policy and the best interest of the child. The outcome will be sent in writing and parents will only have the right to appeal if their child was refused a place at the school but not if they are refused a place in their preferred year group and not their chronological year group.

9. In year admissions

- 9.1 Parents can apply for a place for their child at any time outside the normal admissions round. As is the case in the normal admissions round, all children whose EHC plans name the academy will be admitted.
- 9.2 Likewise, if there are spaces available in the year group applied for, the child will be offered a place.
- 9.3 If there are no spaces available at the time of the application, the child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. When a space becomes available, it will be filled by one of the children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in section 7.1 of this policy. Priority will not be given to children on the basis that they have been on the waiting list the longest.
- 9.4 Applications for in-year admissions should be sent to the following address:
admissions.information@newcastle.gov.uk
- 9.5 Parents will be notified of the outcome of in-year application in writing within 15 school days. 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 academy but it is not in their preferred age group.
- 9.6 The academy will inform the LA by 1 August of whether it will participate in the LA's in year co-ordination scheme and will send any relevant information for the LA to publish on its website.
- 9.7 Where the academy is participating in the LA coordination scheme, it will provide the LA with details of the number of places available no later than two school days following the request of such information from the LA. The academy will also provide information to parents about how they can find details on the relevant scheme.

10. Appeals

- 10.1 If an application for a place at the academy is unsuccessful, parents will be informed why admission was refused and given information about the process for hearing appeals. If a parent wishes to appeal, they must set out the grounds for the appeal in writing and send it to the following address:

schoolappeals@newcastle.gov.uk

10.2 Details of the academy's appeals timetable on the following webpage:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/about-our-schools/appeals-school-places>

10.3 The appeals panel will be convened by the LA and will act in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance. The judicial function of the appeals panel will be transparent, accessible, independent and impartial, and will operate in accordance with the principles of natural justice. More information on the appeals process can be found here <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/apply-school-place>

10.4 The appeals panel must not have a vested interest in the outcome of the hearing.

10.5 When reaching a decision, due regard will be given to section three of the 'School Admission Appeals Code'

10.6 Appeals decisions will either be upheld or dismissed – there will be no conditional decisions made, in line with section 94(6) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The final decision will be decided by a simple majority. If votes are split equally, the chair will make the casting vote

10.7 The final decision and accompanying reasons will be communicated in writing to the appellant, the academy and the LA.

10.8 If a child is alleged to have been refused admissions due to any SEND, this will be considered by the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) and not the appeals panel

10.9 If appellants have an issue with the appeal process, they can complain to the Secretary of State.

11. Monitoring arrangements

11.1 This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Principal each year.

12. Relevant Links

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-schools-adjudicator>

<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions>

<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/appealing-a-schools-decision>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents>