

Diocesan Guidance on Admissions

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Foreword

School admissions can be a complex area for parents and for schools.

All schools are required to comply with the DfE's *School Admissions Code*, the purpose of which is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

This updated *Diocesan Guidance on Admissions* supports schools in this endeavour and includes a selection of model policies and supplementary information forms (SIFs) which will help ensure schools have clear, transparent and robust admission arrangements. It will also provide enhanced consistency in format and content across schools, something which can only assist parents when applying for schools for their children.

I am very grateful indeed to those who have been involved in producing these newly revised policies and SIFs. They should be used by all maintained schools and Academies in the diocese and any local variations will need to first be agreed by the Diocesan Education Service.

With continued thanks for all that you do in the work of Catholic Education and with the assurance of my prayers,

Bishop of Arundel & Brighton

20th August 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Catholic voluntary aided schools the 'admission authority' is the governing body. In Catholic voluntary academies the admission authority is the academy trust company. The term "school" is used throughout this guidance to refer to Catholic schools and academies. The term "governing body" is used throughout to refer to the admission authority under the appropriate constitutional arrangements.

It is the responsibility of admission authorities to ensure that admission arrangements i.e. the overall procedure, practices, criteria and supplementary information to be used in deciding on the allocation of school places and any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered, are compliant with admissions legislation, and the prevailing School Admissions Code ("the Code") issued under section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("SSFA 1998").

The Code provides that admission authorities of schools designated as having a religious character **must** have regard to guidance from the person representing the religion or religious denomination (i.e. the bishop) when constructing faith based admission arrangements. It also requires the admission authority to consult the person representing the religion (i.e. the bishop) when deciding how membership or practice of the faith is to be demonstrated.

This guidance is provided by the diocese to support governing bodies in applying their responsibilities as admission authorities. It provides guidance about the construction of admission arrangements and diocesan requirements in relation to membership and practice of the Catholic faith **to which all Catholic schools within the diocese must have regard. This document, which is effective from August 2016 replaces all previous guidance issued by the bishop as the appropriate religious authority for all Catholic schools situated in his diocese.** This includes all Catholic maintained schools and academies.

The bishop expects schools to comply with this guidance, including the use of one of the model admission policies and supplementary information forms (SIFs), unless there are good local reasons for not doing so. He expects such a position to be the exception, and only to be reached following discussions and with the agreement of diocesan officers.

This guidance complements, but does not reproduce the Code. Rather, it focuses on those areas that are of most concern to the governing bodies of Catholic schools. Governors and panel members most directly concerned with admissions and appeals against admission decisions will need to be thoroughly familiar with the Code as well as this guidance. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the guidance, it must be noted that it does not provide a definitive interpretation of the law; that is entirely a matter for the courts.

General Principles

Admission policies in Catholic schools are a key element in preserving and developing the distinctive religious character of Catholic schools. This guidance also reflects that there are some underlying principles which should inform admission arrangements in all Catholic schools. Some of these are set out here.

A Catholic education must:

- encourage the formation and growth to maturity of the whole human person;
- enable physical, moral and intellectual talents to be developed harmoniously;
- teach all to know and live the mystery of salvation;
- assist all to work towards their eternal destiny;
- promote the common good of society;
- ensure that all develop a greater sense of responsibility and a right use of freedom; and
- provide formation for every person to take an active part in social life.¹

In England and Wales, the Bishops have also said that "*whether or not market forces are regulated in some way by a supervising authority, it remains the Christian duty of individual schools themselves to*

¹ Code of Canon Law (*Codex Juris Canonici*: CJC) cann.795, 217; Gravissimum Educationis.

*promote the common good and support “the poor, vulnerable, powerless and defenceless” by reviewing and, where necessary, amending their admission procedures; accepting that sacrifices sometimes have to be made by individual institutions for the sake of the common good; and working at local, diocesan and national levels to ensure an equitable distribution of the resources available to education.*²

Each Catholic school is established in the diocese to form, in partnership with home and parish, an integral part of that local Catholic faith community which bears the mission of the Church to embrace the gospel of Christ, to live by its values, and to proclaim Christ as the light of all peoples. A key role of the school is to assist parents of baptised Catholics to fulfil the responsibilities taken on at their child’s baptism. By striving to be a Christ-centred community providing excellent education, the school will also play its part in the witness and mission of the local Church.

Catholic schools are established and maintained as part of the education system, in which the Catholic community undertakes a responsibility to provide for the education of Catholic children in schools whose philosophy, recruitment, admission of pupils, delivery of the curriculum and daily life are determined by the distinctive Catholic ethos of their faith community. **As part of the diocesan community of parishes and schools, no school should act for its own perceived interests alone.**

It is the responsibility of Catholic schools, in co-operation with each other, and with the assistance of the diocese, to ensure that the maximum number of Catholic children are able to take advantage of a Catholic education provided at a local Catholic school. Catholic schools should therefore work with each other to draw up admission policies which ensure that places are provided equitably for all local Catholic communities (including Eastern Catholic Churches and ethnic chaplaincies).



² The Common Good in Education, p.17.

2 ADMISSION PROCEDURES

A. The Role of the Governing Body

Admission criteria are set by the governing body and published in its admissions policy. In deciding on the admission arrangements for the school the governing body must comply with the law, including having regard to this diocesan guidance. In Catholic voluntary academies the admission authority is the academy trust company. In a Multi Academy Trust Company (“MAT”) the MAT is the admission authority for its member schools. This means that the MAT is responsible for determining the admission policies for all its schools and taking decisions on applications. The MAT may, however, delegate responsibility for determining the admission policies for an individual school within the MAT, and/or taking decisions on applications, to the local governing body or local committee of the individual schools.

Governing bodies are required by law to comply with the Trust Deed and constitutional documents in discharging their functions, including when determining admission arrangements. For Voluntary Aided (VA) schools the constitutional document is their Instrument of Government; for academies it is their Articles of Association. The constitutional documents include the school’s duty to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith, and to comply with the requirements of canon law.

Catholic school governing bodies have an over-riding duty to offer places to Catholics first. This is a requirement of the Trust Deed and therefore a legal requirement on governing bodies. Catholic schools must not operate any policies if the consequence is to offer a place to a non-Catholic and deny that place to a Catholic.

The Review of Admission Arrangements by the Governing Body

Every year, late in the summer term or early in the Autumn term, the admission authority needs to review their admission arrangements, particularly in the context of how well the admissions process worked in the previous round, but also in the context of any new guidance from, for example, the DfE or from the Diocesan Education Service.

Following this review, the governors will have to decide whether to maintain the same admission arrangements as the previous year or to amend them. If the governors are proposing to amend the admission arrangements, they will need to go out to consultation (unless the changes are required to make the admission arrangements compliant with the Code and/or Regulations). If schools are contemplating change, they are advised to liaise with the Education Service prior to formal consultation. Please refer to the flowchart on page 9 for the statutory timelines.

The Consultation (or not) of Admission Arrangements

The admission authority does not have to consult on its admission arrangements if there has been no change since the previous year. However, where no changes are made to admission arrangements over a number of years, the admission authority must, nevertheless, carry out a public consultation every 7 years. [*N.B. This time period is expected to be reduced in the next Admissions Code.*]

Where changes are proposed to the admission arrangements the admission authority must consult on the arrangements before they are adopted by them, except where the change is to increase a school’s published admissions number (“PAN”). **The governing body must not, however, increase its PAN without the agreement of the diocese.** The expansion of any Catholic school is part of the strategic place planning which falls within the canonical responsibility of the diocesan bishop.

Where the governing body does propose changes to the admission arrangements, **consultation must be for a minimum of 6 weeks.** Please refer to the flowchart on page 9 for the statutory timelines.

The Code also sets out those with whom the governing body are **required to consult. This includes the Local Authority and the Diocese** but also includes other persons or bodies. The Code lays out who the school must consult with and it is important for the governing body to give careful consideration to whom they need to consult, and the means by which they might effectively do so. It is good practice to consult with local priests (i.e. of the parish(es) or deanery(ies) referred to within the admission

arrangements). The diocese will be able to provide further guidance about the persons or bodies to be consulted and the governing body should contact the diocese at the earliest opportunity to seek its guidance.

The Determination of Admission Arrangements by Governors (Mandatory)

Governing bodies are **statutorily required to determine the school's admission arrangements every year**, even if the admission arrangements remain the same as the previous year. Please refer to the flowchart on page 9 for the statutory timelines.

It is important that governing bodies ensure that its decision to determine the admission arrangements each year is formally documented and that they keep records to evidence that they have done so.

The governing body can delegate the determination of admission arrangements to an Admissions Committee but it is good practice for arrangements to be ratified by the full governing body prior to determination.

Once admission arrangements are determined, the governing body must notify **all** those persons or bodies specified by the Code. **The governing body must also send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to their Local Authority and the diocese.** Please refer to the flowchart on page 9 for the statutory timelines

In addition, the Code requires that the determined admission arrangements must be published on the school's website for the whole of the school year in which offers for places are made.

Where an admission authority has determined a PAN that is higher than in previous years, they must notify the Local Authority that they have done so, and make specific reference to the change on their website as soon as determined. The governing body should always consult with the diocese in good time to obtain its consent to the increase in its PAN, allowing sufficient time for it to be factored into the next normal admission round, if approved.

The governing body must provide all the information that their local authority needs to compile the LA's composite prospectus within the time frame required by the Code.

The Allocation of Places

The governing body of a Catholic school is the admission authority, and is responsible for decisions on admissions to the school. Schools must offer a place to every child who has applied where they have enough places. If there are insufficient places available the governing body must allocate places on the basis of their determined admission arrangements only.

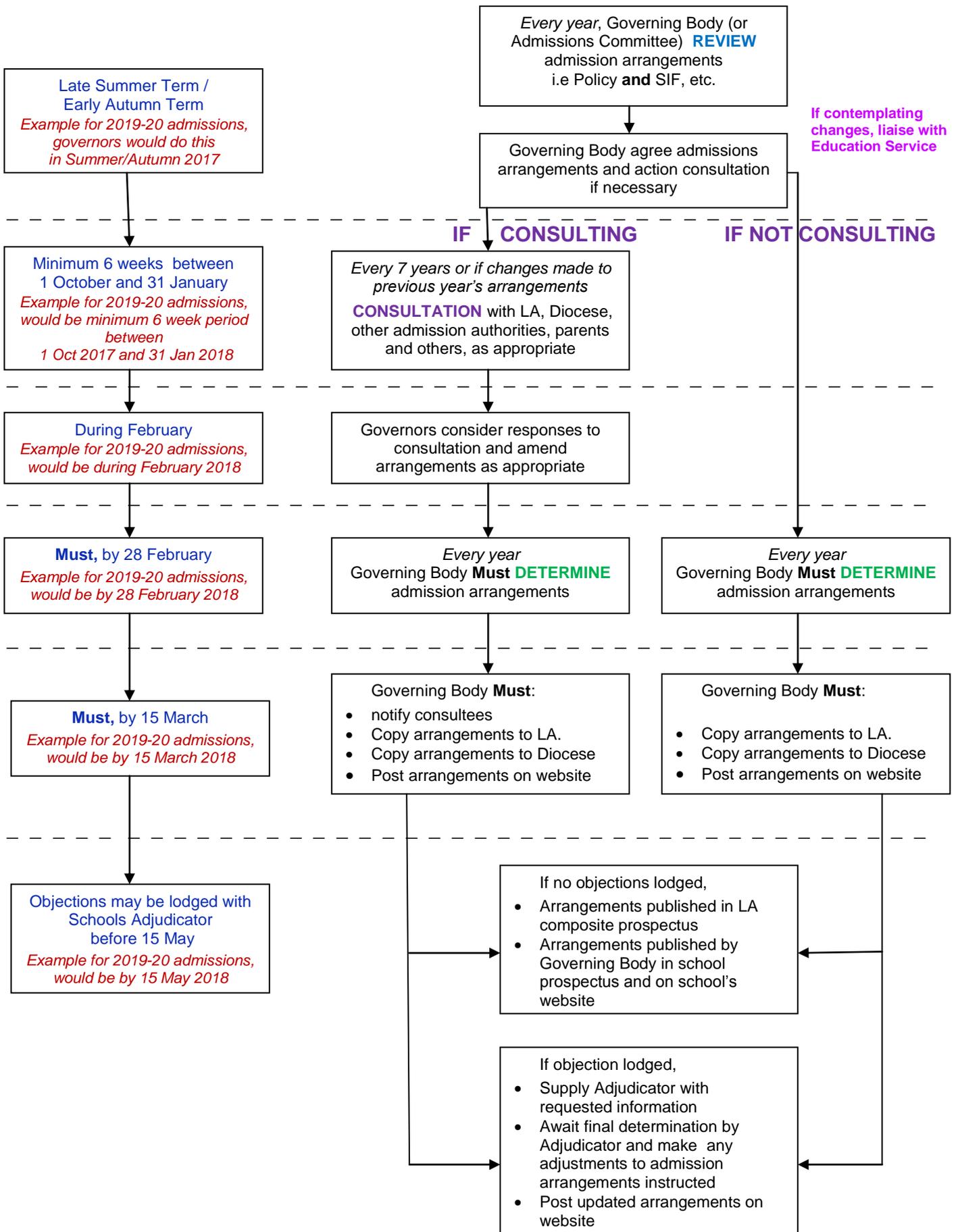
A decision to offer, or refuse admission must not be made by one individual in an admission authority. The whole governing body, or an admissions committee established by the governing body, must make these decisions. The governing body may delegate this responsibility to a committee and, if it does so, the head teacher should be a member. However head teachers have no individual role in school admissions and may not therefore be delegated the power to accept or refuse admissions on their own. The decisions of the governing body or the admissions committee must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting of the governing body and the minutes must be retained in accordance with the school's record retention policy.

The governing body must maintain a waiting list until at least 31st December of each school year for each relevant age group, which is the age group at which pupils are, or will normally be admitted to the school e.g. reception, year 7 and year 12. The diocese recommends that a waiting list is maintained by the governing body for the whole of the school year. The admission arrangements must set this out, and state that each child added to the list will be ranked in accordance with the published oversubscription criteria. Priority must not be given based on the date a child's application is received or their name was added to the list. Looked after children, previously looked after children, and those allocated a place through a local Fair Access Protocol, must take precedence over those on the school's waiting list, in accordance with the schools admissions criteria.

Admissions Review, Consultation and Determination Process/Timetable

TIMELINES FOR GOVERNORS

ACTIONS FOR GOVERNORS



B. The Role of the Local Authority

Normal Admissions Round

The local authority (LA) is the body which co-ordinates applications for admission to schools within its area in the normal admissions round.

Each year all LAs must formulate a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools within their area. They are required to publish the scheme on their website. All admission authorities in that area, including all Catholic schools, are required to participate in co-ordination and provide the local authority with the information it needs to co-ordinate admissions by the dates agreed within the scheme.

LAs must provide a **Common Application Form (CAF)** to enable parents to express their preference for a place at any publicly funded school, with a minimum of 3 preferences in rank order. Where additional information is required to enable an admission authority to allocate places, they may provide **Supplementary Information Forms (SIF)**.

The SIF must only request information which has a direct bearing on decisions about oversubscription criteria.

In-Year Applications

Whilst it is expected that the Department for Education will, in the next Admissions Code, require LAs to revert to coordinating in-year admissions, currently there is no requirement for LAs to do so. They must provide, however, information in the composite prospectus, published by the local authority, on how in-year applications can be made and will be dealt with. A parent can apply for a place for their child at any time to any school outside the normal admission round. They can do so directly to the school, except where local arrangements are in place whereby it has been agreed that the local authority will co-ordinate in-year applications.

Where the LA co-ordinates in-year applications, it does **not** make the decision about whether to offer a place at the school. As the admissions authority for the school, it is the governing body that makes all decisions about admission to the school including in-year applications.

It is important that applications for in-year admissions are processed as quickly as possible to avoid any delay in a child starting school. Usually the governing body will establish an Admissions Committee to which the governing body will delegate responsibility to make the decisions about admission to the school. The relevant regulations require that the quorum for any meeting of such committee must be determined by the committee, but in any event must be not less than three governors who are members of the committee.

It is often difficult to arrange meetings of the committee on short notice to deal with ad hoc in-year applications. The regulations do, however, provide that the governing body may approve alternative arrangements for committee members to participate or vote at meetings of a committee including, but not limited to by telephone or video conference. It should be noted that the requirement is for a meeting of the committee, albeit not necessarily in person. An exchange of emails would not amount to participation in a meeting and therefore would not be compliant with the regulations.

It is therefore advised that the governing body, when establishing the Admissions Committee, should include within the delegation an approval of alternative arrangements to facilitate a virtual meeting, in order to ensure that decisions in relation to in-year applications are not delayed.

The governing body must, on receipt of an in-year application, notify the LA of both the application and its outcome. This allows the LA to keep up to date figures on the availability of places in the area and to ensure that children in the area receive the offer of a school place and are not out of school for a significant period. **It is therefore extremely important that this information is provided to the LA without delay.**

Fair Access Protocols (FAPs)

Each LA must have a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) agreed with the majority of schools in its area and all admission authorities must participate in it. This is to ensure that, outside the normal admission round, unplaced children are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible. Not all children applying for a place in-year will fall within the FAP. The list of children to be included in the FAP should be agreed with the majority of schools and is intended to apply to children who have difficulty securing a school place. The Code sets out a list of the children to be included in the FAP, as a minimum.

Outside the normal admission round the governing body may give absolute priority to a child where admission is requested under any locally agreed FAP, even where this would mean admitting the child would exceed the school's PAN (subject to the infant class size exceptions). Alternatively, in places where a FAP headteacher panel is in place, the governing body may authorise the headteacher (or nominated representative) to partake in placement decisions under the LA agreed Fair Access Protocol.

C. The Role of the Diocese

A diocese is the portion of the people of God entrusted to a bishop. It constitutes a particular Church in which and from which the one and only Catholic Church exists.

The diocesan bishop governs the particular Church entrusted to him as Vicar of Christ: he has proper, ordinary and immediate jurisdiction, exercised by him personally in Christ's name. Canon law provides that each diocesan bishop has strategic responsibility to commission sufficient school places to meet the needs of baptised Catholic children resident in his area. A Catholic school is one which is recognised as such by the diocesan bishop.

With regard to faith schools, the Code refers to the 'religious authority'. **The religious authority for all Catholic schools is the diocesan bishop.** As works of the apostolate, all Catholic schools are subject to the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop. **Canon 806 §1** provides that the diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools.

Published admission arrangements must make clear how membership or practice is to be demonstrated in line with this guidance. In accordance with the Code it is for the diocesan bishop to decide how membership and practice is to be demonstrated. Therefore, in determining faith-based admission arrangements the governing body may only use the methods and definitions laid out in this guidance by their diocesan bishop. The governing body must have regard to this guidance in accordance with the Code.

The governing body is also required to consult with the diocese before making any changes to the schools admission arrangements. **The governing body should propose any changes to its admission arrangements to the diocese for approval in advance of going out to wider consultation. The governing body is also required by the Code to provide the diocese with a copy of its determined admissions arrangements.**

The diocese has carefully constructed four sets of model admission policies and model supplementary information forms that fit in with this Guidance and how the Bishop requires membership and practice to be demonstrated. The Bishop expects schools to utilise one of the model policies and supplementary information forms produced with this Guidance.

The diocese recognises that dealing with admissions can be one of the most difficult tasks facing governing bodies; it is hoped that this guidance will be of some assistance. Where school governing bodies have any uncertainty or concern about any aspects of admissions and the process, the diocese is always happy to assist and governing bodies should contact the diocesan Education Service.

D. The Role of the Priest

The role of the priest in the admissions process in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton is important 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, in line with this Guidance, in relation to applications for school places. There are three areas where the priest may be asked to provide such evidence:

- (a) In the case of schools using 'Model 2' i.e. where a priest's signature is required, priests will need to sign and stamp the Supplementary Information Form with the parish stamp or seal. The priest concerned will be the priest of the church where the applicant normally worships or, if they do not practice their faith by attending Mass, the parish priest in the parish in which they are resident. The priest is not being asked to confirm practice.
- (b) Two of the other model policies and corresponding SIFs provided with this Guidance prioritise using a level of practice. One uses attendance at Mass at least once a month over at least one year prior to the closing date for applications. The other uses attendance at Mass at least three times a month over at least one year prior to the closing date for applications. It should be noted that the priest is only asked to corroborate an applicant's self-declaration regarding the frequency of Mass attendance they have declared.
- (c) If a school's admission arrangements include within them a provision to give a higher priority for children with an exceptional and compelling need, a priest may be asked to provide details of any such exceptional social/pastoral reasons which might apply in a particular case.

The priest should not be asked for any additional information other than that requested on the SIF.

The basis for the priest providing information is on the understanding that he is not part of the governors' decision to admit or refuse a child. 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.

It is recognised that priests have to maintain a balance between their pastoral and other roles. Priests who provide information on the Supplementary Information Form and 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.

E. The Role of the Parent/carer

Parents who seek a Catholic education for their children must 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 but care should be taken that this does not take the form of an interview.

For a 'valid school application', parents/carers must ensure that they complete the Local Authority's Common Application Form by the deadline. If the parent is applying to a Catholic school in relation to a 'faith criterion' (e.g. as a Catholic, as a catechumen, as an Eastern Orthodox member or from another Christian denomination or other faith) the parent/carer will also have to complete the school's Supplementary Information Form (SIF) and provide the appropriate evidence by the deadline. It should be noted that a separate SIF needs to be completed for each Catholic school to which parents/carers apply. If the parent/carer wishes the governing body to consider an 'exceptional and compelling need' that make it essential that their child goes only to the particular school, they will need to submit independent professional evidence by the deadline date.

An timetable outlining the process for parents when applying for school places can be found at Appendix 4.

3 DRAFTING (STRUCTURE) OF ADMISSION POLICIES

A. Drafting Oversubscription Criteria

General

As highlighted in the 'Role of the Governing Body' section, governing bodies are required by law to comply with the Trust Deed and constitutional documents when determining admission arrangements. This includes the duty to offer places to Catholics first.

Objectivity and Construction of Oversubscription Criteria

Oversubscription criteria must be reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair and comply with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. Parents should be able to understand how their application will be handled and what chance their child's application has of succeeding.

The way that the oversubscription criteria are constructed should be clear to those reading them. It is advisable to set out the criteria in a numbered list, with those who fall within criterion 1 being admitted before those in criterion 2, and so on.

The criteria themselves should be as simple as possible. Definitions, clarifications, and requirements in relation to supporting evidence should, therefore, be included in explanatory notes which form part of the admission policy.

Governing bodies should avoid proliferation of criteria which are not required. For example, a school which is routinely heavily oversubscribed with Catholic children is unlikely to require criteria which distinguish between different types of non-Catholic children.

It is the Bishop's wish that schools use one of the four diocesan model admission policies and Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs) attached to this guidance as appendices. Any variation to the model policy and SIF must first be agreed by the Diocese.

Religious Criteria: Diocesan Bishop's Guidance

As mentioned previously, in accordance with the Code, it is for the Diocesan Bishop to decide how membership or practice is to be demonstrated, and, therefore, in determining faith-based oversubscription criteria, governing bodies of Catholic schools should only use the methods and definitions agreed by their Diocesan Bishop. The admission authorities of Catholic schools must follow diocesan guidance, unless it is contrary to the Code or the school can demonstrate that it has considered and engaged with the guidance and has a clear and proper reason to depart from it. Published admission arrangements must make clear how membership or practice is to be demonstrated in line with guidance from the Diocesan Bishop.

In terms of guidance on how membership or practice of the faith is to be demonstrated, in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton the definition of membership of the Catholic Church is baptism or reception into the Church. The understanding of Catholic practice for the purpose of admission to schools in the diocese is membership of the Catholic Church and attendance at Sunday Mass. This is capable of being observed objectively, with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Schools that are oversubscribed with Catholic children may give a higher priority to children from families who are able to demonstrate their commitment to the faith by their frequency of attendance at Sunday Mass. If they do so, schools need to liaise closely with the priest(s) in the applicable parish(es), deanery(ies). Schools should not use practice within their criteria unless they are oversubscribed with Catholic children. **It is therefore the Bishop's wish that schools use Model 1 or Model 2 of the model Policies/Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs) wherever possible.**

With schools where practice is an element of the criteria, parents are required to 'self-declare' practice on the Supplementary information Form. Priests cannot confirm a level of practice unless they are satisfied they are able to do so through their own observations, through consulting with others or being satisfied with evidence presented to them. It is recognised that there are many different local situations across the diocese. In parishes where, for example, there are very large congregations and/or multiple

Masses or 'multi-priest parishes' where the clergy rotate between churches, it will be important for parents to make themselves known to the priest(s) in plenty of time before the application process commences. This can be facilitated in a number of different ways. The onus, however, is on the parent/carer to satisfy the priest's own mind that the claim is accurate.

For those applicants where a parent claims practice but the priest initially cannot verify this from his own observations, as well as meeting the parents, he may want to liaise with an assistant priest or deacon (where applicable) and/or with other parish personnel or senior members of the parish. Where priests are new to a parish, they may also want to liaise with their predecessors where appropriate.

In cases where the parent has been attending Mass at another parish, the parent should be guided to the priest of that parish. If the parent has been attending more than one parish, their Supplementary Information Form (SIF) should detail this. More than one priest verification can be made on the SIF where this occurs.

Some parishes may consider using a registration schemes for Mass attendance. These should only be used with extreme caution and with full and appropriate consultation as there is no requirement in Canon Law for Mass attendance at a particular church. Additionally, there can be possible effects on neighbouring parishes, there may be many potentially legitimate reasons why an applicant might not be able to attend Mass at that Church and the scheme, if not administered properly, may be open to potential abuse such as the register being signed by other people.

Schools **must not** use criteria related to the following or similar matters: financial contributions, registration in parishes; active participation of parents or pupils in a parish; parish related or other Church activities; or service in Church ministry in any capacity. Such criteria also contravene the Code.

Highest priority for Catholics

Catholic schools in the diocese are **required by the diocesan bishop** to give priority to Catholic children, as defined in this guidance, when determining admission criteria. **No exceptions will be permitted except where the diocesan bishop has issued a written dispensation.** Diocesan guidance will be issued by the Diocesan Education Service. Further copies can be obtained the Education Service website at www.abeducaationservice.org.uk

Governing bodies must therefore ensure that none of their criteria could have the effect of giving children who are not Catholic preference over those from Catholic families.

Definition of 'Catholic' for the purposes of admission criteria

For the purposes of admission criteria, the term 'Catholic' means a baptised person who is a member of any Catholic Church that is in full communion with the See of Rome. This includes members of the Eastern Catholic Churches in full communion with the See of Rome (see Appendix 3). Members of these Churches have the full rights of any member of the Catholic Church and must not be discriminated against in any way, directly or indirectly.

In admission arrangements, the designation 'Catholic' is to be preferred to any other, and the term 'Roman Catholic' should not be used.

Membership of a Catholic Church is gained in one of two ways.

- (a) an unbaptised person becomes a Catholic by baptism in a Catholic Church. This is recorded in the Church's Baptismal Register.
- (b) Other baptised Christians become Catholics by being received into a Catholic Church. This is recorded in the Church's Register of Receptions or, exceptionally, in the Church's Baptismal Register.

Governing bodies should therefore require, and must accept either of the following as evidence of membership of a Catholic Church:

- (a) a certificate of baptism from a Catholic Church, or
- (b) a certificate of reception into the Catholic Church.

Here the term 'certificate' means a certified copy of an entry in the appropriate register. Since it is possible for parents to obtain duplicate certificates when required, it is reasonable for governing bodies to require the production of one of these documents to support an application for admission to the school, or, in exceptional circumstances, other documentary evidence acceptable to the governors.

The governing body may request additional supporting evidence if the written documents that are provided do not clarify the fact that the child was baptised or received into the Church, e.g. where the name and address of the Church is not on the certificate or where the name of the Church does not state whether it is a Catholic Church or not.

The diocesan model admission policies refer to situations where there may be difficulty in obtaining written evidence of baptism or reception into the Church. In such cases contact should be made with the parish priest who, after consulting with the bishop, will decide how the question of baptism/reception is to be resolved and how written evidence is to be produced in accordance with the law of the Church.

The use of different baptismal dates to distinguish between otherwise similarly qualified applicants should not be used. It is acknowledged that Canon Law expects Catholic parents to baptise their children in the first few weeks after birth. There are however no sanctions in Canon Law for those who do not follow this instruction. The Diocese feels it is wrong for school governors to make judgements about the rights or wrongs of a parent who does not, or is unable to, follow Canon Law.

Prioritisation for Catholics within the Model Policies/SIFs

In Appendix 1 and 2 are eight model Admission Policies /Supplementary Information Forms for schools to employ, depending on their local circumstances (four for primary schools and four for secondary schools). In terms of the Catholic element, these are:

1. Baptism only
2. Where priority is given to Catholics who have the priest's signature and parish stamp on their completed SIF. It should be the applicant's priest at the church where they worship (if practising), or the priest at the church where they are resident (if not practising).
3. Where priority is given to Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month and have done so for at least one year prior to the closing date for applications.
4. Where priority is given to Catholics who attend Mass 'frequently and regularly' (i.e. at least three times a month and have done so for at least one year prior to the closing date for applications).

Catechumens, Candidates and Members of Orthodox Churches

Governing bodies must make explicit provision for three particular categories of persons whom the Church regards as having a particular and special status, namely **Catechumens, Candidates** and **members of Orthodox Churches**.

- **Catechumens** are persons who wish to be baptised and have been accepted into the Order of Catechumens through the appropriate liturgical rite.
- **Candidates** for reception into the Church are persons who are baptised members of a non-Catholic denomination who are preparing for admission into full communion with the Catholic Church.
- The **Orthodox Churches** are those eastern Churches not in full communion with the Catholic Church, which have retained the Catholic tradition regarding the sacraments. In this group are included (for admission purposes) members of other Churches which the Apostolic See judges to be in the same position of the aforesaid eastern Churches so far as the sacraments are concerned.

Catechumens, Candidates and members of Orthodox Churches should be given priority over all other non-Catholic applicants (except looked after and previously looked after children).

Proof of acceptance into the catechumenate, and evidence for a candidate, should be by letter from the appropriate priest.

Membership of an Orthodox Church (or membership of one of those Churches which the Apostolic See judges to be in the same position as the aforesaid eastern Churches as far as the sacraments are

concerned) is normally demonstrated by a certificate of baptism or a certificate of reception from the authorities of that Church.

Other Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Admissions legislation allows for priority to be given not only to those who are members of the school's own faith designation, but also to those of other faiths. Where such criteria are adopted they must always rank below Catholic criteria and below looked after and previously looked after children.

If a school is routinely heavily oversubscribed with Catholic children it will not require criteria which distinguish between different categories of children who are not Catholic.

The model policies and SIFs outline what evidence is required from parents/carers applying under these criteria.

Definitions of 'Children of other Christian denominations' and 'Children of other faiths' can be found in the model policies in Appendix 1 and 2 and in the Glossary (Appendix 5).

B. Diocesan Model Admission Policies and Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)

The diocesan model policies and SIFs have been carefully drafted to help schools comply with admissions legislation, including the Admissions Code. The Bishop expects schools to use one of the diocesan model policies and the corresponding SIF. This aims to minimise the risk of schools producing policies which are non-Code compliant and to ensure that governing bodies continue to provide priority to Catholic children.

Use of the diocesan model documents will also afford a level of consistency across Catholic schools in the diocese. With the proliferation of new admission authorities within education, consistency across the Catholic sector will provide a level of strength in upholding the Catholic requirements. It will also mean that parents will see less variation between policies and SIFs; they should therefore have a clearer understanding of how their children may gain admission to their local Catholic schools.

With this Guidance are four model policies for primary schools and four model policies for secondary schools. In terms of Catholic applicants for each phase, these are differentiated for 1. 'Baptism only'; 2. 'With the priest's signature' ; 3. 'Practice at least once a month for at least one year prior to the closing date for applications' ; and 4. 'Practice at least three times a month for at least one year prior to the closing date for applications'. The model policies can be found at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Supplementary Information Form (SIFs)

Where governing bodies require information over and above the information on their Local Authority Common Application Form (CAF), they are permitted to use SIFs. To complement and to be used in association with the different model policies mentioned above, are four model SIFs for Catholic primary schools and four model SIFs for Catholic secondary schools. The model SIFs can be found at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The SIF may only request information that has a direct bearing on decisions about oversubscription criteria. In the event that the SIF, together with all supporting documentation, is not returned to the school by the closing date given in the policy, a child will still be ranked within the appropriate criteria if the relevant information is provided. As long as the governing body has the relevant information and supporting documentation, then the child should be ranked in the relevant criteria regardless of the lack of a SIF.

Statements of support for the school's aims and ethos

Governing bodies **must not** give priority in their oversubscription criteria to applicants who indicate that they are willing to give support to the aims and ethos of the school, or include any statement to this effect on the Supplementary Information Form.

It is, however, really important for the Catholic character, and the school's aims and ethos, to be clear so that parents understand what is asked of them and their children once the child is a pupil. They will therefore be in a position to make an informed choice about whether it is a suitable school for their child. Governing bodies are permitted to make a factual statement about the school's aims and ethos in the preamble to the policy. The diocese expects the inclusion of such statement, and this is included in the diocesan model admissions policies.

Published Admission Numbers

The governing body is required to set an admission number for each 'relevant age group' i.e. the age group at which pupils are, or will normally be admitted. For primary schools this is likely to be Reception, but there may be other entry points, and if so the admission number for that age group must also be specified in the policy.

Likewise for secondary schools, there are likely to be entry points at Year 7 and to Year 12. Should there be any other points of entry, the admission number for this age group must also be specified.

'Looked After' and 'Previously Looked After Children'

Highest priority must be given to 'looked after children' and 'previously looked after children'. A definition is provided in Note b. of the model policies.

The law permits Catholic schools to differentiate between Catholic and non-Catholic 'looked after' and 'previously looked after children'. They must give the highest priority to Catholic 'looked after' and 'previously looked after children' above other Catholic children. Schools must also give priority to non-Catholic 'looked after' and 'previously looked after' children above other non-Catholic children. This is laid out in the oversubscription criteria of the model policies which form part of this Guidance.

Residence in Parishes or Deaneries

The governing body may give higher or lower priority to children from particular parishes or deaneries (effectively a 'catchment area') but, if so, these parishes or deaneries must be named in the oversubscription criteria. Care must be taken not to appear to guarantee a place to a resident of a parish/deanery/ catchment area.

The Diocese has considered how the parishes and deaneries fit together and has therefore included in the model policies, relevant oversubscription criteria that prioritise parishes or deaneries.

Where geographical areas such as parishes or deaneries are used, a map showing the boundaries of any such parishes or deaneries should be provided with the admission arrangements. This enables the criteria to make it clear that, if there is any dispute as to the identity of the boundary, the map given to parents at the time will prevail.

Schools which serve more than one parish or deanery may wish to ensure that children from the more distant areas of the parishes or deaneries served are not disadvantaged. Such schools have used random allocation instead of distance as a tiebreaker. This is the sort of local variation to the model policies that would be supported by the diocese after appropriate liaison.

'Worship in Parishes'

Residence in a parish (see above) allows for worship elsewhere, for example in ethnic chaplaincies.

Criteria based on *worship* at a particular parish or church may NOT be used because:

- 1) Those attending an ethnic chaplaincy or a church in union with Rome 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

- 2) Families in parishes where there is no school (or where there is a school but which is not favoured/perceived as highly as another) 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/some schools.
- 3) There is no requirement in Canon Law.

Feeder Primary Schools

Attendance at one or more Catholic feeder primary school is a legitimate criterion for secondary schools in the diocese. However in areas where the demand for Catholic primary education exceeds the supply of places, care must be taken not to disadvantage Catholic children who have not been able to obtain a place in a Catholic primary school. Feeder school priority has been built into the diocesan model policies for secondary schools.

Brothers and Sisters

Priority for brothers and sisters helps bond links between the school and families. It also provides a degree of domestic convenience for parents. However, schools must not operate a 'siblings first' policy where the effect is to admit a non-Catholic sibling thereby denying a place to a Catholic child who may be the first or only child from a Catholic family.

For this reason the diocesan model policies for secondary schools allow for priority to be given to brothers and sisters who will be placed at the top of the criteria under which the application has been made, if that particular criterion is oversubscribed. For the diocesan model policy for primary schools, priority for brothers and sisters is given within specific oversubscription criteria.

Children of staff

While the Code permits admission authorities to give some priority in their oversubscription criteria to children of staff in certain circumstances, the diocesan advice is not to do so. Amongst a number of reasons, giving priority to Catholic staff could lead to challenge from members of staff that are not Catholic. Additionally, it could also lead to Catholic families in the local parish(es) not gaining places for their children in a Catholic school.

Infant Class Size

Current infant class legislation spells out that infant classes (Year R, Year 1 and Year 2) must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single school teacher. Additional children may only be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances. These exceptions are listed in the Code.

Nurseries

If the school has a Nursery, attendance in the Nursery does not guarantee admission to the Reception Year; parents must make a specific application to the primary school.

Interviews

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (sec. 88) (as inserted by sec. 44 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) makes it unlawful to interview children and/or parents as a method for deciding whether a child is to be offered a place at school. This includes face to face interviews or those by telephone/other means.

Governing bodies must ensure they do not set up any practice which could be seen as an interview and Supplementary Information Forms must not have sections that ask parents to give reasons why they wish their child to attend the school as this can be viewed as a 'written interview' and could disadvantage those who have English as a second language.

‘Exceptional and Compelling Need’

In previous diocesan admissions guidance, model policies/SIFs included a criterion for ‘exceptional and compelling need’. This provided scope to offer places in exceptional circumstances. In many ways this is a good idea and consistent with our Christian calling. However, it has not been included in model policies/SIFs with this update of the Diocesan Admissions Guidance for two reasons. The first is that the feedback from a number of schools is that sadly, the facility can be abused. The second reason is that caution is needed as it can easily be seen as lacking objectivity.

If schools do want to use this criterion, the following factors should be borne in mind:

- Admission arrangements must make it clear what evidence will be needed to demonstrate this.
- Evidence under this criterion must be made at the time of application and on time. Governing bodies should not accept a case which is put forward retrospectively.
- The needs should be the needs of the child, not the social or domestic convenience of the family.
- The case must be made for a place at the particular school in question not a general need.

If schools use this criterion, the applicant will need to provide the school with evidence that the child has an ‘exceptional and compelling need’ which can most appropriately be met at the school. We would suggest the following process: A submission, at the time of application, addressed to the Chair of Governors should be sent to the school and include the appropriate evidence. If for example the child has a serious medical condition/disability such that the parent/carer feels the child must go to this particular school, this **must** be included in the submission. Governors can only consider applications under this category if supporting evidence is attached e.g. a letter from a registered health professional, setting out the particular reasons why this school is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child attended another school. Similarly, if the parent/carer feels there are sensitive, individual circumstances, perhaps involving the support services (e.g. social care) these will need to be specified in the submission and evidence provided e.g. a report from Social Services or from a priest detailing why the school is the most appropriate placement for the child given the circumstances of the case.

If schools use ‘exceptional and compelling need’ within the oversubscription criteria, they will need to include one criterion for Catholics, inserted at the appropriate place within the priority order (with ‘x’ and ‘y’ as the appropriate numbers within the priority order and ‘z’ the appropriate note number):

- x. Catholic children with an exceptional or compelling need, supported by written evidence (*see note z.*).

Lower down the priority list and certainly after other looked after children, the oversubscription criteria should also include a criterion for applicants who are not Catholics:

- y. Other children with an exceptional or compelling need, supported by written evidence (*see note z.*).

Schools will also need to add an accompanying note in the notes section of their admissions policy. The following is suggested:

- z) **‘Exceptional and compelling need’:** *Governors will take into account children with exceptional and compelling needs in the applicable oversubscription criteria. However, parents should bear in mind that any school is able to cope with special educational needs such as Dyslexia etc., and in managing common childhood complaints such as asthma and allergies. Parents wishing to have exceptional and compelling needs considered with their application must submit independent professional evidence which explains clearly why it is essential for the child to attend [School Name]. This evidence should be posted to the school by Recorded Delivery Mail or, alternatively, hand delivered to the school.*

The supporting evidence from the qualified professional (such as a medical consultant or a psychologist or a priest) must detail fully the child’s needs and address the reason why these needs can only be met at [School Name]. Letters from parents alone are not sufficient nor are letters that do not address the question of which school the child must attend.

The school will not contact third parties to obtain information relating to an application. It is the parent/carer’s responsibility to send any evidence relating to their child to support their application. The application will not be considered if the supporting evidence is not provided, which must be received by the deadline of 15 January 20xx, in the case of the normal Reception Year admissions round.

Please note that provision of evidence does not guarantee that a child will be given priority for admission at this school. Governors will consider and make a decision on the merits of each case.

Finally, schools will need to add an 'evidence box' on their Supplementary Information Form. The following is suggested for a primary school. For a secondary school the applicable closing date for applications would be 31 October 20xx.

Children with Exceptional and Compelling Needs:

Parents/carers wishing to have an Exceptional and Compelling Need considered with their application (criterion x or criterion y) must submit independent professional evidence which explains clearly why it is essential to attend xxxxxxxxxxxxxx School (this evidence should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and either posted to the school by recorded delivery or, alternatively, handed in to the school office and a receipt received).

For an entry into the Reception Year in September 20xx, the evidence should be received by the closing date for applications of 15 January 20xx. Please refer to 'Note x' in the school's admissions policy.

Tiebreakers - Proximity/ Random Allocation

Proximity: If distance from the school is being utilised a 'tiebreaker', the Code is unequivocal in saying that the school must clearly set out how distance from home to the school will be measured. The diocesan recommendation is to use the measuring system that is employed by the Local Authority. **As we have more Catholic schools in Surrey than any other LA, we have used the wording in the Notes section in the model policies that is applicable to Surrey. Please note that schools in other LAs will have to amend the wording to suit the measurement system used in their LA.**

Governing bodies must take account of factors that might unfairly advantage or disadvantage one child compared to another. If using the proximity criterion, schools should ensure that families who are less able to afford property nearest the school are not excluded as a result. That is when random allocation might be more suitable.

The Admissions Code prohibits local authorities from using **random allocation** as the principal oversubscription criteria for allocating places. As stated on page 12, with schools required by the bishop to prioritise Catholic children, it is also not suitable for schools in the diocese to use it as the principal oversubscription criteria. 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. It is a legitimate tiebreaker to use when, for example, one school serves more than one parish and if distance was used it would favour one parish above the others.

The context of the law

The Diocesan Admissions Guidance does not offer formal legal advice. Governing bodies should contact the Education Service if they have queries on admissions and the law.

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates the law prohibiting discrimination, harassment and victimisation and expands the list of protected characteristics. All schools need to be aware of their obligations and to 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.

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against applicants on the grounds of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. However, the Act contains limited exceptions and schools designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character are exempt from some aspects of the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief and means Catholic schools can make a decision about whether or not to admit a child as a pupil on the basis of religion or belief.

Admission authorities are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty and therefore must consider how they can eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations in relation to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Primary School Model Policies and Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)

- 1.1 Primary School Model 1 – Admissions Policy ('Baptism Only')
- 1.2 Primary School Model 1 – SIF ('Baptism Only')
- 1.3 Primary School Model 2 – Admissions Policy ('With Priest Signature')
- 1.4 Primary School Model 2 – SIF ('With Priest Signature')
- 1.5 Primary School Model 3 – Admissions Policy ('Practise at least once a month')
- 1.6 Primary School Model 3 – SIF ('Practise at least once a month')
- 1.7 Primary School Model 4 – Admissions Policy ('Practise frequently and regularly')
- 1.8 Primary School Model 4 – SIF ('Practise frequently and regularly')

Appendix 2 Secondary School Model Policies and Supplementary Information Forms (SIFs)

- 2.1 Secondary School Model 1 – Admissions Policy ('Baptism Only')
- 2.2 Secondary School Model 1 – SIF ('Baptism Only')
- 2.3 Secondary School Model 2 – Admissions Policy ('With Priest Signature')
- 2.4 Secondary School Model 2 – SIF ('With Priest Signature')
- 2.5 Secondary School Model 3 – Admissions Policy ('Practise at least once a month')
- 2.6 Secondary School Model 3 – SIF ('Practise at least once a month')
- 2.7 Secondary School Model 4 – Admissions Policy ('Practise frequently and regularly')
- 2.8 Secondary School Model 4 – SIF ('Practise frequently and regularly')

Appendix 3 Churches in Union with Rome

Appendix 4 Timetable outlining the process for parents when applying for school places

Appendix 5 Glossary

Appendix 3

List of Churches in Full Communion with the Holy See

Churches in Full Communion with the Holy See

The Catholic Church consists of twenty-three autonomous churches, each with its own hierarchy, traditions, and discipline. All of these churches are in full communion with the Holy See.

The Latin Church

In practice, the majority of applicants will be from the Latin Church. They will commonly describe themselves as “Roman Catholic” or simply as “Catholic”. These days, too, there will be members of the “Anglican Ordinariate” who fall within this category. NB those describing themselves as “Anglo-Catholics” are members of the Anglican Communion, and therefore not in full communion with the Holy See.

Should you discover that a Catholic has stated that he or she is of the “Ambrosian Rite” (from Milan) or of the “Mozarabic Rite” (from Toledo), the applicant is still a Catholic of the Latin Church.

Increasingly, there will be applications from Polish Catholics. Whilst these will largely be from Polish Catholics of the Latin Church, members of the “Polish National Catholic Church” are not in full communion with the Holy See, even though this church has been judged to be in the same condition as the eastern (Orthodox) churches in regard to the sacraments of penance, the Most Holy Eucharist, and the anointing of the sick.

Eastern Catholic Churches

Churches from the Alexandrian Tradition:

The Coptic Catholic Church

The Ethiopian Catholic Church

The Eritrean Catholic Church [established 19 January 2015]

Churches from the Antiochian Tradition:

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

The Maronite Catholic Church

The Syrian Catholic Church

Churches from the Armenian Tradition:

The Albanian Catholic Church

Churches from the Chaldean Tradition:

The Chaldean Catholic Church

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church

Churches from the Constantinopolitan or Byzantine Tradition:

The Albanian Catholic Church

The Belarussian Catholic Church

The Bulgarian Catholic Church

The Greek Catholic Church

The Italo-Albanian Catholic Church

The Yugoslavian Catholic Church

The Melkite Catholic Church

The Romanian Catholic Church

The Russian Catholic Church

The Ruthenian Catholic Church

The Slovakian Catholic Church

The Ukrainian Catholic Church

The Hungarian Catholic Church

Since the Churches of this last group largely use the Byzantine Rite, they are sometimes described as “Greek Catholics”. NB they are not to be confused with the Greek Orthodox Church, nor Orthodox Christians who use the Byzantine Rite. **Orthodox Churches, including Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Churches are NOT in full communion with the See of Rome.**

Appendix 4

Timetable outlining the process for parents when applying for school places

Timetable outlining the process for parents when applying for school places:

AUTUMN TERM PRIOR TO ADMISSION THE NEXT SEPTEMBER - The Local Authority's coordinated scheme will set the dates for applications to be submitted. Parents apply to the LA in which they live for places at their preferred schools by the closing date (i.e. 31 October (Secondary); 15 January (Primary)).

AUTUMN TERM PRIOR TO ADMISSION THE NEXT SEPTEMBER - An application to a Catholic school is only 'valid' if the LA's Common Application Form (CAF) has been completed/ returned. In addition, Catholic schools utilise a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) to collect the appropriate information for entry into a Catholic school. If a parent/carer is applying for a place in connection with a faith criterion, they must complete a SIF. If the SIF and other supporting documents (nb the SIF details what is required) are not received, it may affect the child's chance of being offered a place.

AFTER THE CLOSING DATE The governing body receives a list of applicants from the Local Authority and ranks them in strict accordance with their oversubscription criteria. It then sends the ranked list back to the Local Authority.

OFFER OF PLACE After collation, parents receive an offer from the LA at the highest preference school where a place is available; the offer is made by the LA on behalf of governors. Offers are made on the applicable national offer days. For secondary schools this is **1 MARCH**; for primary schools this is **16 April** (or nearest working day after)

AT TIME OF OFFER OF A PLACE If admission is refused, parents have the right to appeal. They should contact the school for details.

Appendix 5

Glossary

Glossary

Academic Year

A period commencing 1 August and ending with the next 31 July, as defined by Section 88M of the SSFA 1998.

Admission Authority

The body responsible for setting and applying a school's admission arrangements. For voluntary aided schools, this is the governing body. For Academies, this body is the Academy Trust.

Admission Arrangements

The overall procedure, practices and oversubscription criteria used in deciding the allocation of school places including any device or means used to determine whether a school place is to be offered.

Admission Number (or Published Admission Number – (PAN))

The number of school places that the admission authority must offer in each relevant age group of a school for which it is the admission authority. Admission numbers are part of a school's admission arrangements.

'Children of other Christian denominations'

Children who belong to other churches and ecclesial communities which, acknowledging God's revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and, in obedience to God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit commit themselves: to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body; and to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. An ecclesial community which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition, is included if it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and is committed to working in the spirit of the above.

All members of Churches Together in England and of Churches Together in Wales are deemed to be included in the above definition, as are all other churches and ecclesial communities that are in membership of any local Churches Together Group (by whatever title) on the above basis.

'Children of other faiths'

Children who are members of a religious community that does not fall within the definition of 'other Christian denominations' and which falls within the definition of a religion for the purposes of charity law. The Charities Act 2011 defines religion to include:

- A religion which involves belief in more than one God and,
- A religion which does not involve belief in a God.

Case law has identified certain characteristics which describe the meaning of religion for the purposes of charity law, which are characterised by a belief in a supreme being and an expression of belief in that supreme being through worship.

Common Application Form (CAF)

The form parents complete, listing their preferred choices of schools, and then submit to local authorities when applying for a school place for their child as part of the local co-ordination scheme, during the normal admissions round. Parents must be allowed to express a preference for a minimum of three schools on the relevant common application form as determined by their local authority. Local authorities may allow parents to express a higher number of preferences if they wish.

Composite prospectus

The prospectus that a local authority is required to publish by 12 September in the offer year. This prospectus must include detailed admission arrangements of all maintained schools in the area (including admission numbers).

Co-ordination / Co-ordinated Scheme

The process by which local authorities co-ordinate the distribution of offers of places for schools in their area. All local authorities are required to co-ordinate the normal admissions round for primary and secondary schools in their area. Schools can take in-year applications directly from parents, provided they notify their local authority of each application and its outcome.

Determined Admission Arrangements

Admission arrangements that have been formally agreed by the admission authority, for example, agreed at a meeting of the admission authority and the decision recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Determination Year

The school year immediately preceding the offer year. This is the school year in which admission authorities determine their admission arrangements.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

An Education, Health and Care Plan is a plan made by the local authority under Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014 specifying the special educational provision required for that child.

Governing Bodies

School governing bodies are bodies corporate responsible for conducting schools with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement. Governing bodies have three key roles: setting strategic direction, ensuring accountability, and monitoring and evaluation.

Home Local Authority

A child's home local authority is the local authority in whose area the child resides.

Infant Class Size Limit

Section 1 of the SSFA 1998 limits the size of an infant class (i.e. a class in which the majority of children will reach the age of five, six or seven during the school year) to 30 pupils per school teacher.

In Year Admissions

Applying for a school place at times other than the normal admissions round are termed 'In Year'.

Local Government Ombudsman

An independent, impartial and free service that investigates complaints about maladministration of certain public bodies.

Looked After Children (see also Previously Looked After Children)

Children who are in the care of local authorities as defined by Section 22 of the Children Act 1989. In relation to school admissions legislation a 'looked after child' is a child in public care at the time of application to a school.

Maintaining Local Authority

The area in which a school is located is referred to as the maintaining local authority.

National Offer Day

The day each year on which local authorities are required to send the offer of a school place to all parents of secondary age pupils in their area. For secondary pupils, offers are sent out by the home local authority on 1 March. For primary pupils, offers are sent out by the home local authority on 16 April.

Normal Admissions Round

The period during which parents are invited to express a minimum of three preferences for a place at any state-funded school, in rank order on the common application form provided by their home local authority. This period usually follows publication of the local authority composite prospectus on 12 September, with the deadlines for parental applications of 31 October (for secondary places) and 15 January (for primary places), and subsequent offers made to parents on National Offer Day.

Offer Year

The school year immediately preceding the school year in which pupils are to be admitted to schools under the admission arrangements in question. This is the school year in which the offers of school places are communicated.

Oversubscription Criteria

This refers to the published criteria that an admission authority applies when a school has more applications than places available in order to decide which children will be allocated a place.

Previously Looked After Children

Previously looked after children are 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).

Reception Class

Defined by the SSFA 1998 (Section 142) as a class in which education is provided which is suitable for children aged 5 and any children who are under or over 5 years old whom it is expedient to educate with pupils of that age.

Relevant Age Group

The age group to which children are normally admitted. Each relevant age group must have admission arrangements, including an admission number. Some schools (for example schools with sixth forms which admit children into the sixth form) may have more than one relevant age group.

Relevant Area

The area for a school (determined by its local authority and then reviewed every two years) within which the admission authority for that school must consult all other prescribed schools on its admission arrangements.

Schools Adjudicator

A statutory office-holder who is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education, but is independent. The Adjudicator decides on objections to published admission arrangements of all state-funded schools and variations of determined admission arrangements for maintained schools.

School Year

The period beginning with the first school term to begin after July and ending with the beginning of the first such term to begin after the following July, as defined by Section 579 of the Education Act 1996.

Waiting Lists

A list of children held and maintained by the admission authority when the school has allocated all of its places, on which children are ranked in priority order against the school's published oversubscription criteria.

