

Woodchurch High School

A Church of England Academy



ADMISSIONS POLICY DOCUMENT

Approved by the Curriculum Committee: Autumn 2023

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ADMISSIONS FOR YEARS 7-11

Our School

Woodchurch High School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive, serving the communities of Woodchurch, Birkenhead, Prenton, Oxtan, Greasby, Beechwood, Moreton and surrounding areas.

Woodchurch High School is a Church of England Academy, therefore parents/carers should be aware before applying to the school that Religious Studies, Collective Worship and our whole ethos are based upon the teachings of the Church of England.

In working alongside such a highly-respected partner as the Church of England we are seeking to share best practice, broaden opportunity for both our pupils and the staff we employ and provide a high quality education for all. Being an Academy also fosters a great sense of ownership amongst our school community.

In addition, Woodchurch High School has received national recognition for the work carried out in many areas of school life and practice. Please see our website for more details: www.woodchurchhigh.com.

Although we are a Church of England Academy, we remain part of Wirral's family of schools and are funded and inspected in the same way as every other secondary school. We are also part of the wider 'church family' of schools, consisting of over 4,000 primary schools, 200 secondary schools and 13 universities.

The Admissions Number as detailed below is determined by the Academy Trust's Board of Directors (hereafter referred to as the Governing Body) in consultation with the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Local Authority Admissions Officer in line with the School Admissions Code, School Admission Appeal Code and other laws relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation.

Admission Numbers

Woodchurch High School, a Church of England Academy, has a published admissions number. The school published admissions number is 281. Places will be allocated up to, but not beyond that number.

Admission Criteria for Year 7

As an Academy, the Governing Body is the Admissions Authority for the school and is ultimately responsible for the decisions on all admissions. Thus, it is the Governing Body that determines the admissions arrangements. Nevertheless our admissions procedure is coordinated by the Local Authority (Wirral Council) in accordance with the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme. This scheme fulfils the requirements for a scheme coordinating admissions arrangements under the Schools Admission

(Coordination of Admissions Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2008, made under the Schools Standards & Framework Act 1998. All deadlines within the scheme should be adhered to by applicants. We do not have any requirements for an aptitude test by prospective pupils, nor do we operate a 'faith-based' criterion, thus there is no requirement to complete a 'supplementary form'. Neither is admission to school based on a 'voluntary' contribution.

Prospective parents/carers are strongly advised to consult the Local Authority's website and published information booklets. These are published in line with the Schools Admission Code (2014 and as subsequently amended). These publications detail the timetable for admissions to secondary schools for each subsequent September, as well as set out additional information pertaining to admissions.

Applications for admission to the school should be made through the "Citizens' Portal" available via the Local Authority's website: www.wirral.gov.uk. Ideally applications should be made electronically, although hard paper copies of the form are available from the Local Authority on request. It is not normally possible to change the order of preferences for schools after the closing date.

The Local Authority will provide the school with details of applicants who request a school place, but will not share the order of preference expressed by parents/carers.

Although it is legally the school's responsibility, the Local Authority, on behalf of the Governing Body, will then rank each applicant, using the criterion below. This is always completed by the Local Authority Mainstream Admissions Team, who rank applicants by the prescribed date.

Where a pupil is eligible to receive an offer of two or more school places, then the Local Authority will allocate the highest priority preference from those indicated on the form.

The Mainstream Admissions Team will notify the Governing Body of pupils allocated to the school by the 1st March each academic year. Parents of children not admitted will be offered an alternative place by the Local Authority.

Applications will be dealt with in order according to the following criteria:

- a) Children who are in the care of or looked after by the Local Authority (this includes children who have been looked after or were in care overseas). This also includes children who have previously been in care, but have been adopted or are subject to a residency order or special guardianship order.
- b) Children who have an exceptional and valid medical or social reason for a specific placement. This criterion is NOT about educational needs. Parents / carers must give details on the preference form and this may be checked by a medical officer of the Health Authority. A letter in support from a senior health care professional will be required as evidence when you submit your preference form and/or an EHCP (Educational Health Care Plan). The letter and/or EHCP is usually written following a professional medical examination of the child concerned by a health care professional, and not based simply upon

an interview with the parents/carers. It needs to be made it clear why only this school is appropriate for your child's medical needs. It is the Local Authority, acting on behalf of the school, who then make the judgement whether a child fulfils this admission criteria. Due to the high level of intervention and support these pupils require, the LA will already be aware of the child's needs from the primary phase, as these are 'high tariff pupils'. These pupils are allocated by the LA to schools following discussions concerning the capacity of the school to meet specific children's need. Please note, an IHCP (Individual Health Care Plan), a PFA (Pupil Funding Agreement) or a Pupil Profile does not automatically qualify under this criterion. Please also note, this criterion is about the child's needs, not the needs or requirements of parents / carers, such as if their physical needs makes it more difficult to transport their child to a school that is further away.

- c) Children of UK Service Personnel and/or Crown Servants returning from overseas to live in the area. Places for these children will be allocated in advance if accompanied by an official letter with a relocation date and/or a Unit postal address or quartering postal address as per Section 2.18 of the School Admissions Code of Practice, published in February 2012. These pupils should also be admitted post-allocation, even if that takes the school above its planned admissions number.
- d) Pupils who have a brother or sister (including half-brothers and sisters or step brothers and step sisters living in the same household. Sibling also includes adoptive siblings and children under the same guardianship of the same parents, living at the same address) on roll at the school and of statutory school age when the child joins the school in the subsequent September. If there are more children with older brothers or sisters at the school than there are places available, we will give priority to children as the distance criterion, as set out below. NB, the school has never been in a position where the entry of siblings has also been dependent upon distance from school as, to date, there have always been enough places to accommodate siblings. Please also see the information regarding 'Late Applications' below. If a child is refused a place at the school and they have an existing sibling on roll, it is more than likely the application has been treated as late by the Local Authority.

For clarity, children who have had siblings at school, who are not or will not be on roll when they are "due" to join in September do NOT qualify under this criterion. Thus, the siblings criterion is not and never has been "historic".

- e) We will then take account of where your child lives. We will give priority to those children who live nearest to the school. The Local Authority use a mapping system, based on Ordnance Survey maps, to measure the distance from your home to the school gate nearest to your child's home using the shortest road route, unless it is possible to use a footpath which they (that is, Wirral Council) consider a safe walking route. This distance is calculated using the Authority's electronic Ordnance Survey address point based routing system.

NB, In the case of twins, triplets etc., all the multiples will be admitted to the school, even if this means that the Published Admissions number is exceeded.

Where parents are separated, only one application per child should be submitted. It is essential that agreement is reached by the parents of a child as to the preferences for school places. If agreement cannot be reached, or if either parent has been granted a Specific Issues Order in this respect, then we will accept the application from the parent with whom the child is 'ordinarily resident', by this, we mean the address of the main carer as defined by the Children's Act 1989. For the purpose of school admissions, the main carer's address is that where the 'Child Benefit' payment is registered.

Parents/carers must inform the Local Authority immediately of a change of address, even if the details of a future address were included on the application form. The Local Authority will require evidence to show that the place of residency has changed. Wirral Council regularly check addresses and any deliberate misrepresentation will result in any place offered at Woodchurch High School being withdrawn.

Applicants from Non-Wirral Residents

Applications for Woodchurch High School by parents/carers residing in a different Local Authority (e.g. Cheshire West and Chester) should be made on the preference form issued by their Local Authority. Parents/carers will be informed by the Local Authority where they reside of the outcome of their application and not by Wirral Local Authority. Details of any 'Out of Borough' applications will be received by the school on the same date as those advised by Wirral Local Authority.

Overseas Applications

Parents who have already moved to the UK from overseas who are British or European Economic Area nationals (EU and EFTA nationals, excluding Switzerland), or who have an endorsed passport showing the right of abode, can apply for places for their child at any school in line with the procedures outlined above. The Local Authority may require to see passports for verification.

Parents and children who do not yet live in the UK can apply before the date they move to the UK. However, the address to be used in the allocation of a place will be the address that the child is living at on the closing date, unless a subsequent house move has been accepted up to the last date for changes in the co-ordinated scheme. A UK address will only be used once the child is residing at that address, and not before. It may be that evidence will be required of proof of address and residency.

Withdrawal of Offers

Any offer of a place may be withdrawn if it is discovered that misleading information has intentionally been provided in order to secure an offer, for example a false claim to residence, and the award of the place denies a place to a child with a stronger claim. In such circumstances, the Governing Body is required to withdraw the offer of a place. The application can then be considered afresh and a right of appeal offered if a place is refused.

Late Applications

If places remain at the school after all 'on time' applicants have been allocated, places will be allocated using the above criteria, in date order of receipt, up to the school admission number. Where the school and the Local Authority accepts that there are extenuating circumstances for an application being received after the last date for applications, and if it is before the list of pupils to be admitted has been devised, the late application will be considered alongside all others. Otherwise, applications which are received after the last date will be considered after all the others (i.e. 31st October each year). However, the School Admissions Code states school must not refuse to admit a child solely because they have applied later than other applicants. School can however refuse to admit children if the published admission number has been reached as to do so would prejudice the provision of efficient education and/or the effective use of resources.

If places become available before the start of the Autumn term, the Council will reallocate those places up to the school's admission number. The Council will use the same criteria as used in the initial allocation of places.

The Fair Access Protocol

In view of the 'Guidance on Hard to Place Children' (2004 and the subsequent 'Guidance on Fair Access Protocols 2007), there are a small number of pupils for whom the normal arrangements will be varied. School will be expected to admit the following categories of pupils above the admissions number:

- Children in care will be placed in the school of their carer's preference
- Children who have recently experienced a traumatic family or domestic event, for whom there are clear medical grounds to support placement in the school
- Children of refugees or asylum seekers, homeless children, children with unsupportive family backgrounds, where a place has not been sought
- Children without a school place who have a history of attendance problems
- Traveller children
- Children who are carers
- Children who have been out of education for more than two months
- Children from the criminal justice system or pupil referral units who are being reintegrated into mainstream education

NB. Such cases will be discussed with the Headteacher and considered by the Academy Trust (Board of Directors) and consequently, although these places do merit special consideration, evidence will need to be provided to show children meet one or more of the above criteria. The Local Authority are usually heavily involved in this process.

Admissions during the Academic Year 7

In year requests for admission into Year 7 will be considered by the Academy Trust (Board of Directors) but will initially be coordinated by the Local Authority. Applications should be made using the “Citizens’ Portal” available via the Local Authority’s website: www.wirral.gov.uk . Any decisions with respect to admissions are made with reference to the same criteria as above.

Appeals

If an application for admission to the school has been turned down, parents can appeal to an Independent Appeals Panel set up by the Local Authority on behalf of the Academy Trust (Board of Directors). An appeal must be sent in writing to the Local Authority within twenty-one days of the refusal. Parents must give their reason for appealing in writing and the decision of the Panel is binding on the Governors. Appeals that are received within the twenty-one days after refusal has been notified (i.e., those relating to decisions sent on the national offer date) are heard by the 6th July or the next working day, if 6th July falls on a weekend each academic year.

Appeals for late applications are heard within thirty school days (not including Staff Development Days, Bank Holidays etc) of the appeal being lodged.

Please note that the right of appeal does not prevent parents from making an appeal in respect of any other school.

Waiting List / Oversubscription Criterion

A waiting list for children who have not been offered a place will be kept and will be ranked according to the Admission Criteria upon receipt, and **not** in the order of receiving requests to be placed upon the waiting list. Thus it is possible that a child who moves into the area later than a higher priority pupil may be placed ahead of that pupil, despite them being on the waiting list first. Parents/carers wishing their child to be placed upon the waiting list must notify the school of their intention to do so. Parents will be informed on request of their child’s position on the waiting list which will not be operated for longer than the end of the Autumn term, that is the 31st December of the year of admission, and not the last day of term.

Admission Criteria for other Year Groups

Other in year requests will be considered by the Academy Trust (Board of Directors), but will initially be coordinated by the Local Authority. All applications must be made by using the “Citizens’ Portal” available via the Local Authority’s website: www.wirral.gov.uk. Any decisions with respect to admissions are made with reference to the same criteria as for the Year 7 placements. The Appeals process is the same as outlined above.

This document and other information pertaining to admissions is also available on the school website: www.woodchurchhigh.com

NB Information pertaining to admissions under the “Managed Move” and/or “Negotiated Transfer” system is dealt with in separate documentation.

Children Educated Outside of their Normal Age Group

Where applications are made by parents / carers to be considered for admission into a year group that is outside of their age group, any decisions made will take into account the circumstances of the request, as well as the child’s needs, including their social and emotional needs. For many children, it will remain right for them to remain in their adopted year group - if already placed by another school outside of their normal age group - but it is possible that others may be better off joining their normal year group.

Conclusion

Information relating to the Admissions Criteria is subject to change and review. It is advisable for parents/carers to ensure they have the most up to date documentation available from school.

Addendum

In line with Government requirements, you are free to make comments on the above policy. These can be forwarded to either the Admissions Authority, in this case, that is the Governing Body of the school, marked for the attention of the Clerk to the Governing Body, or to the Local Authority, via School Admissions.