



ADMISSIONS POLICY – 2026/2027

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Last Reviewed	Spring 2025
Next Review	Spring 2026
Date Ratified by the Board of Trustees	Spring 2025

The Board of Trustees of Inspire Multi Academy Trust is the admission authority for the Inspire family of academies which include Burnside Academy, Farringdon Academy, Fatfield Academy, New Penshaw Academy and Plains Farm Academy. The Board of Trustees has responsibility for the Admission Policy.

Published Admission Number (PAN)

The PAN is the number of places we intend to make available for our normal intake (September). Once the Academy sets this number, we will not refuse applications below the PAN.

If, however there is unexpectedly high demand and we believe we could admit more children, we will inform the LA and either admit children above our agreed PAN or increase the PAN accordingly to accommodate additional children.

The current set PAN for Reception classes in our Academies is -

Academy	Published Admission Number (PAN) for Reception
Farringdon	60 places (2 classes with 30 children per class)
New Penshaw	30 places
Plains Farm	30 places
Burnside	30 places
Fatfield	30 places

For other year groups, the agreed admission limit will be the PAN, which was determined for that cohort as it entered the Academy in the Reception year, unless this was varied, in response to a change of circumstances at the Academy.

For further information, please contact the Academy or consult the LA Admissions Team.

Application for a Place

Applications must be made on the Common Application Form (available from the LA website www.sunderland.gov.uk/admissionsonline) by the determined closing date (timetables are published on the LA website). An offer of a place will be made by the LA, on behalf of the school, on or around the National Offer date.

Applications received after the closing date will only be considered after all applications received by the closing date have been considered. Parents must indicate which category they are applying for and should provide supplementary evidence in support of the application, which will enable the Board of Trustees to make an informed decision when considering their application.

Parents (a parent is determined as a person with parental responsibility) have the right to express a school preference of their choice. In the first instance, all preferences expressed will be considered on an equal weighting basis, however where a child is eligible for more than one place it will be the highest ranked School/Academy for which they are eligible that they will be offered.

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, which names an Academy within the Trust, will be admitted to the named Academy.

The Board of Trustees, as Admission Authority will seek to apply the Admission Policy if the number of applications exceeds the number of published places available.

Admissions Criteria

We will admit applications, up to the indicated PAN in accordance with the following criteria in the following order of priority: -

1. **Looked After** - A 'Looked-after' child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residency/child arrangement or special guardianship order.

A child that is looked-after' by a Local Authority in accordance with Section 22(1) of the Children's Act 1989 and a child who was looked after, but ceased to be so, because of adoption (or become subject to a child arrangements order, residence order or special guardianship order).

A 'Looked-after' child who appears to the Admission Authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as result of being adopted – a child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society.

2. **Sibling Link** – Children who have an older sibling attending the school at the time of their application. Sibling refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, foster brother or sister.

The child of the parent/carer's partner is also classed as a sibling if the child for whom the place is sought is living in the same family unit at the same address as that sibling.

3. **Exceptional medical or psychological reasons** – You must include a medical or psychological report, prepared by a professional, to confirm information that you include in this section. This report should explain why only this school could meet your child's medical or psychological needs.

Common childhood medical conditions such as asthma or giving a child's nervousness at starting a new school as a psychological reason for choosing a particular school are unlikely to be accepted as exceptional.

If you intend to use this criterion when expressing a preference, please contact the School Admissions Team before completing the application form. (Eligibility under this category will be considered by a meeting of Senior LA Officers).

4. All Other Children

Notes

Within each of the above, places will be offered on the basis of distance from the center of the home address to the main entrance of the school with priority being given to those living closest to the school.

Distance is measured by the shortest safest walking distance using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system (GIS – Geo-Information System).

Proof of residency will be sought in the form of a Council Tax Bill and should be sent in as supplemental information with each application. No other means of proving residency will be accepted.

Parents who are unsuccessful in securing a place for their child at the Academy have a statutory right of appeal. Further details of the appeals process are detailed below.

Appeals are heard by an independent panel. Children who do not receive an offer of a place are automatically placed on a waiting list which will be held by the Academy indefinitely, in conjunction with the Local Authority. Should a place become available then the admissions criteria will be applied again to every child on the waiting list at the time of the vacancy.

Exceptional Circumstances

An academy may be asked to increase its PAN (Planned Admission Number) only where:

- An event/incident occurs in another educational establishment which could not possibly have been planned for, e.g. fire;
- To comply with other agreed protocols, e.g. children in care, fair access, SEN;
- A child moves into an area outside the normal admissions round and no other school would provide suitable education within a reasonable distance of their home;
- An allocations error has occurred and a place should have been offered;
- Multiple birth siblings would be split and therefore will be offered together;
- Children of armed forces personnel.

Exceptional Medical or Psychological Need

Exceptional medical need means that the child's health and welfare would be best served if they attended the Academy. Parents would need to provide medical evidence in the form of a letter or report from a doctor to support their case.

The evidence would have to establish that the Academy is the best/only school to serve the child's needs and clearly state why other schools could not provide the appropriate support.

Waiting Lists

Following allocation of Reception places, the LA will retain a waiting list until the end of the first full week of the autumn term as per the primary co-ordinated admissions scheme. Following this, the Academy will retain the waiting list in partnership with the LA Admissions Team.

Waiting lists will be kept in order of the oversubscription criteria above. List placement will not be prioritised according to how long a child's name has been on that list and it remains possible that a child's name could move up or down the list when the criteria is applied against other waiting applicants.

Deferred Admission

September is the earliest point for admission to the Reception class however this is not a compulsory start date. Parents who are awarded a place for their child may request that the date their child is admitted to the Academy is deferred until later in the year or subsequent year, for example until the start of term when the child reaches compulsory school age.

Parents may also request that their child takes up the place part time, if it is in the interests of the child to do so, until the child is of compulsory school age. In this instance, parents must discuss this with the academy Headteacher.

Compulsory school age is determined as the term after a child's fifth birthday.

In Year Admissions

Parents can make a request for admission after the normal round of admissions (after 31 August) using the Common Application Form.

If you were seeking an in-year place because your child has just moved in to the area and does not already have a school place, admission would be as soon as possible. If your child already has a school place locally, admission will normally be at the beginning of a term or half-term.

Fair Access Protocol

All Local Authorities are legally required to operate a Fair Access Protocol across their area and all schools and academies are required to co-operate with that protocol. This ensures that children who are vulnerable, unable to access an appropriate school place under the standard admission arrangements for the area have an admissions safety net.

For primary schools in Sunderland, a child meeting the criteria of Fair Access Protocol will be admitted to the primary school designated for his or her address even where it has reached its PAN or other agreed admission limit where possible. The Fair Access Protocol is not intended to provide additional spaces for children who already have a local school place.

Information Provided by Parents in an Application

If there is an incomplete application for a child, in circumstances where parents cannot agree on a preferred school or the main address where the child resides, the Board of Trustees will suspend the application until parents can reach agreement. This will mean that if the closing date has passed, your child will not be considered in the admission round and if all places have been allocated then your child will not be given a place.

We would like all applications to be completed honestly and fairly. It is important that where we offer places to some children and refuse others that we do so fairly and consistently, in line with the Admission Policy framework. Information provided by parents, which is found to be intentionally fraudulent, will result in the offer of your child's place being withdrawn.

The Admissions Authority is required by law to consider the information supplied by you on the application form, including any supplementary information/evidence offered. It is very important that you take great care to ensure the form has been completed accurately and in full before submission.

Any advice or support you require in completing this form can be sought via the Academy office or the LA Admission Team.

Transport

All parents should consider how their child would get to school during their time on roll. Parents are encouraged not to rely on lifts, car shares or public transport always being

available and try where possible to have a contingency plan in place to ensure their child's attendance.

Where a parent could have applied on time but failed to do so, there will be no entitlement to seek assistance from the LA with education transport to the alternative school as suitable arrangements had been made by the LA to enable parents to become a registered pupil at a closer school.

Extended Schooling

Further information on extended schooling, including breakfast and after school provision is available from the Academy office or the website.

Home-School Agreement

Admission to school is not conditional on signing a home-school agreement. However, we will offer such an agreement to all parents after children have been admitted as we consider agreements to be a positive way of promoting greater involvement between parents and their child's education.

Uniform Policy

Children attending our Academies are expected to wear a uniform. Some of the items required can be purchased directly from the Academy office and the rest from retail outlets.

School Fees and Charges

There is no charge for applying for a place within our Academies, for admission or for the provision of education. We will not request donations before or during the admissions process and any donations made to the school following admission are voluntary. No activities such as school trips are compulsory. A policy on charging for activities is available from the website or the Academy office.

Admission Appeals

At Inspire Multi Academy Trust, we wish to be fair, reasonable and transparent throughout the admissions process. If your application for admission is unsuccessful, you have a statutory right of appeal to an Appeals Panel, which is independent of the individual Academy and Academy Trust.

Please note that the appeal process does not apply to children with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Appeals for these children are dealt with by the SEN and Disability Tribunal.

If my child is not offered a place at the Academy, can I appeal?

Yes – if your child is not offered a place at one of our Academies, you have the right to appeal against this decision to an independent appeal panel.

How do I make an appeal?

If it has not been possible to offer a place within one of our Academies, information would have been included within your offer letter from the School Admissions Team or from the Academy for any in year applications, which would direct you to telephone the Academy office for further information.

If you wish to appeal against the decision, you would need to request a form from the Academy office.

You will then need to complete the form, in full, outlining your reasons for appeal, and return it to the person indicated on the Appeals Form, the Clerk to the School Admissions Panel of the City Council, who is administering the appeals process on our behalf.

What happens next?

Appeal hearings are usually held between June and July to facilitate September starts however may still be held up-to and during the summer holidays. You should complete and return your Appeal Form as soon as possible, so that an appeal hearing can be arranged.

You will be notified of the date of the appeal hearing at least two weeks prior to that date. A week before the hearing is due to take place, you will receive a copy of the Academy's statement of case. The statement of case will explain why it was not possible to offer your child a place at the school and the implications of more children admitted above the admissions number.

What happens at the appeal hearing?

The appeal hearings for our Academies will usually be held at the City Hall, Sunderland, SR1 3AA and you will be invited to attend. Although there is a set process to follow for the appeal hearing, the panel members do try to keep the meeting as informal as possible, to put attendees at ease. It is possible to bring along a friend or relative to provide you with additional support if you wish.

The panel members are completely independent of the Academy or Academy Trust and are made up from skilled volunteers.

The panel will consider the Academy's case against your reasons for appeal and will make a decision to uphold or reject your appeal. You will be notified of the panel's decision in writing, within five working days of the hearing via the LA who is acting on our behalf.

My appeal will be considered under the 'class size regulation', what does that mean?

If you have been refused a place at a School/Academy, the reason for refusal will be explained in the refusal letter and the statement of case for the appeal, if it will be considered as a 'class size' appeal.

This means that the appeals panel must consider the implication of admitting another child to a class that already has 30 pupils in Reception, Y1 or Y2. There are only certain circumstances in which an appeal panel can uphold (agree) a 'class size' appeal, which is as follows: -

1. The admission of additional children would not breach the infant class size; or
2. The admission arrangements did not comply with admissions law or were not correctly and impartially applied and the child would have been offered a place if the arrangements had complied or had been correctly and impartially applied; or
3. The decision to refuse admission was not one, which a reasonable admission authority would have made in the circumstances of the case.

If an appeal was upheld (agreed), the Academy would need to take 'qualifying measures'. This could mean either employing another teacher and/or possibly moving to mixed-aged classes.

What if my appeal is successful?

If your appeal is upheld (successful) then you have secured a place in the Academy for your child. Your child's details will be forwarded to the Academy and they will be included in any induction visits, etc.

If you have accepted a place at any other school (e.g. second or third preference school), then the offer of a place at our Academy will be cancelled and your child's name will be removed from the Academy's list.

What happens if my appeal is unsuccessful?

If your appeal is dismissed (not successful), the decision is final. Your child will remain on the waiting list in case any vacancies arise in the future.

It is only possible to have one appeal for the same Academy within the same year group, unless there is a significant change in circumstances.

The School Admissions Team will continue to encourage you to consider other Schools/Academies for your child, whilst remaining on the waiting list for our Academy.

What can I do if I am unhappy about the panel's decision?

There is no further appeal. The letter that you receive explaining the decision of the Appeal Panel will inform you about the limited options that are available.

There is no further right of appeal to the Board of Trustees or the LA. There is also no right of appeal to the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State cannot review or overturn decisions of appeals panels but does have limited power to intervene in very exceptional circumstances.

The Local Government Ombudsman is not able to overturn an appeals panel's decision but can investigate written complaints about maladministration on the part of the admission appeals panel. This is not a right of appeal and must relate to issues such as failure to follow correct procedures or failure to act independently, rather than complaints where you simply feel that the wrong decision has been made.

Contacts and Further Information

School Admissions Team
Telephone 0191 561 1425
www.sunderland.gov.uk

Department for Education (DfE)
Telephone 0870 000 2288
www.education.gov.uk

The Education Funding Agency (EFA)
Telephone 0370 000 2288
www.education.co.uk/educationfundingagency

Office of the Schools Adjudicator
Telephone 01325 735 303
www.education.gov.uk/schoolsadjudicator

Children's Education Advisory Service
Telephone 01980 618 244
enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

A full consultation exercise was last undertaken in January 2021 (next due by spring 2028)