

1.1a Admissions Policy: Secondary (11-16 Years) 2027 - 2028

Policy Version Control

Policy type	Trust Policy for Academies
Policy prepared by	KAC
Last review date	19 th December 2024
Description of Changes	Changes in red text
Date of Executive Board review	n/a
Date of Trust Board approval	18 th December 2025
Date released	19 th December 2025
Next review date	December 2026

1. Policy Aim

- 1.1 The Alpha Academies Trust intends that all admissions are given the same, fair treatment and the Trust will act in accordance with, and will ensure that the Members of its Independent Appeal Panel and any Clerks supporting the panel, are trained to act in accordance with all relevant provisions of the Schools Admissions Code and the Schools Admission Appeals Code published by the Department for Education, DFE (“the Codes”) as they apply at any given time to maintained schools and with Equalities Law and the law on admissions as they apply to maintained schools. For this purpose, reference in the Codes or law to “admission authorities” shall be deemed to be references to the Governing Body of the Trust.

2. Relationship to Guidelines, Procedures, Other Policies & Legal Requirements

- 2.1 Notwithstanding the generality of paragraph 1.1, of this Policy, the Trust will take part in the Admissions Forum, set up by Stoke-on-Trent local authority (LA), and have regard to its advice. They will participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by the LA and the local in-year fair access (IYFA) protocol.

- 2.2 Notwithstanding any provision in this policy, the Secretary of State may:

- a) Direct the Trust to admit a named student to an Academy within the Trust on application from a LA. Before doing so the Secretary of State will consult the Trust.
- b) Direct the Trust to admit a named student to an Academy within the Trust if the Trust has failed to act in accordance with this policy or has otherwise failed to comply with applicable admissions and equalities legislation or the provisions of the Codes.

- 2.3 The Trust shall ensure that parents/carers and ‘relevant children’ will have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision of the Trust. The Independent Appeal Panel will be independent of the Trust. The arrangements for appeals will comply with the School Admission Appeals Code published by the DFE as it applies to Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools. The determination of the Independent Appeal Panel is binding on all parties.

- 2.4 The Trust shall prepare guidance for parents/carers and relevant children about how the appeals process will work and provide them with a named contact who can answer any enquiries they may have about the process. The Trust may, if it chooses, enter into an agreement with an LA or any other organisation for it to recruit, train and appoint appeal panel members, and to arrange for the process to be independently administered and clerked.

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2.5 In paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 above, ‘relevant children’ means:

- a) In the case of appeals for entry to a sixth form, the child; and
- b) In any other case, children who are above compulsory school age, or will be above compulsory school age by the time they start to receive education at the school.

2.6 Relevant Areas – ‘relevant area for consultation’ means the ‘Relevant Area’ determined by the LA for maintained schools in the area (in accordance with the meaning of ‘Relevant Area’ within the School Admissions Code). If the Trust does not consider this meaning to be appropriate, it must apply to the Secretary of State by 1 August, two calendar years before the school year in which admissions are to be made, for a determination, setting out the reasons for this view.

The Secretary of State will consider each Academy’s application and will by 30 September in the Determination Year either determine:

- 2.6.1) The area for consultation; or
- 2.6.2) That the meaning within paragraph 2.6 should apply.

The Secretary of State may consult the LA before making such a determination, and:

- 2.6.3) Within 14 days of the Secretary of State’s determination, each Academy will notify the consultees listed in paragraph 3.1 of the determination, and
- 2.6.4) In the event of a paragraph 2.6.1 determination, a map of the relevant area (or a list of post-codes) will be attached as an appendix to this policy.

3. Policy Statements

Annual Procedures for Determining Admission Arrangements

Consultation

3.1 The Trust shall consult the following parties on each Academy’s proposed admission arrangements for a minimum of six weeks between 1 October and 31 January in the Determination Year.

- The LA;
- The Admission Forum for the LA;
- Any other admission authorities for primary and secondary schools located within the relevant area for consultation;
- Any other governing body for primary and secondary schools (as far as not falling within the above bullet point) located within the relevant area for consultation;

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- Affected admission authorities in neighbouring local authority areas;
- Parents/carers living in the relevant area for consultation whose children have attained the age of two but are not above compulsory school age and who are, or will be, eligible to apply to be admitted to an Academy within the Trust;
- Community groups which the Trust considers relevant; and
- Teaching unions if the consultation includes a change in the published admission number.

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

Alpha Academies Trust Determination of Admission Arrangements

- 3.2 The Trust will consider comments made by those consulted in accordance with paragraph 3.1, including any requests to amend the proposed admissions number, before determining the admissions arrangements for each Academy.
- 3.3 The Trust will determine each Academy's admission arrangements annually by 28th February of the Determination Year and notify those consulted in accordance with paragraph 3.1 what has been determined within 14 days of that decision being made. This applies even in years when consultation is not required.

Representations about Admission Arrangements

- 3.4 Where the Trust has determined each Academy's admission arrangements and notified all relevant consultees listed in paragraph 3.1 if any of those bodies object to an Academy's admission arrangements, including the proposed admissions number, they can make representations to the Secretary of State. Any representations must be made by 15th May in the Determination Year.

Secretary of State's consent for changes to Admissions Arrangements

- 3.5 Where the admissions arrangements determined in a Determination Year, in accordance with paragraph 3.5 are different from the admissions arrangements currently in existence for each Academy, the Trust shall, by 15th May in the Determination Year, apply to the Secretary of State for them to consent to such amended admissions arrangements.

Secretary of State's power to accept, modify or reject admissions arrangements

- 3.6 Where the Secretary of State has received any representations made in accordance with paragraph 3.6, the Secretary of State must consult the on such representations. Following such

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consultation, by 31 July in the Determination Year the Secretary of State may direct that the Trust amends the proposed admissions arrangements for an Academy within the Trust. The Trust shall comply with any such direction.

3.7 Where the Secretary of State has received an application made in accordance with paragraph 3.7 to consent to any amended admissions arrangements, the Secretary of State must by 31 July in the Determination Year either approve the amended admissions arrangements or direct that the amended admissions arrangements are not implemented or must be modified. The Trust must comply with any such direction.

4. Publication of Admission Arrangements

4.1 The Trust shall each Determination Year publish each Academy's agreed admission arrangements by:

- Copies being sent to the offices of the LA;
- Copies being made available, without charge, on request from each Academy; and
- A copy being uploaded to each Academy's website.

4.2 The published admission arrangements will set out:

- The name and address of each Academy and contact details;
- A summary of the admissions policy, including full over-subscription criteria and any arrangements for post-16 admission;
- A statement of any religious affiliation if relevant;
- Numbers of places and applications for those places in the previous year; and
- Arrangements for hearing appeals.

Proposed changes to admission arrangements by each Academy after arrangements have been published

4.3 Subject to paragraph 4.4, once an Academy's admission arrangements have been determined for a particular year and published, the Trust will not make any change to such arrangements unless there is a major change of circumstances and the following procedures have been followed:

- The Trust has consulted those who are required to be consulted under paragraph 3.1 above on the proposed variation;
- Following such consultation, the Trust has applied to the Secretary of State to approve the change setting out:
 - a) the proposed change;

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- b) reasons for wishing to make such change;
- c) any comments or objections to the proposal from those consulted; and,

- Following such application, the Secretary of State has provided their consent to the proposed variation.

4.4 The Trust shall, following the receipt of written agreement or direction of the Secretary of State, vary each Academy's admissions arrangements where such changes are necessary to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes as they apply to maintained schools. Such changes may be made at any time.

4.5 Any changes to an Academy's admission arrangements brought about through the variation processes in paragraphs 4.3 or 4.4 above must be published within the Academy's prospectus and website and be communicated within 7 days to those persons who must be consulted under paragraph 3.1.

4.6 The Trust must make arrangements for a parent/carer of a child who has attained the age of two but is not above compulsory school age and who has been, is or will be eligible to apply to be admitted to an Academy to make representations to the Secretary of State that any aspect of the Academy's admission arrangements does not comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law or the Codes as they apply to maintained schools.

4.7 Where a representation is made in accordance with paragraph 4.6, the Secretary of State may, after consulting the Trust, direct that the Trust modify its arrangements for the admission of students to the Academy so that they comply with the relevant provisions of admissions law and the Codes as they apply to maintained schools. The Trust must comply with any such direction.

4.8 Records of applications and admissions to an Academy shall be kept by the Trust for a minimum period of ten years and shall be open for inspection by the Secretary of State.

PROCEDURE FOR ADMITTING STUDENTS TO A SECONDARY (11-16) ACADEMY

5. Admissions number

5.1 The Alpha Academies Trust has the following agreed admissions number:

- For The Discovery Academy for the year 2027/2028 the admission number is 300.
- For The Excel Academy for the year 2027/2028 the admission number is 240.

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5.2 For admissions to Year 7 in September 2027/2028 the Academy will admit all students offered a place in Year 7 through the local co-ordination of admissions at the Academy site.

5.3 In any specific year, the Trust may set a higher admission number than each Academy's agreed admission number for an applicable year group.

Process of application

5.4 Arrangements for applications for places at each Academy will be made in accordance with the LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements and will be made on the Secondary Common Application Form provided and administered by the relevant local authority.

5.5 The Trust will use the following timetable for applications to the Academy each year (exact dates within the months may vary from year to year) which, whenever possible, will fit in with the timetable for co-ordination of admissions arrangements within the Stoke-on-Trent LA as agreed by its Admissions Forum, neighbouring LA admissions authorities, and local schools and Academies.

- By 12th September – The Academy will publish, in its prospectus, information about the arrangements for admission, including over-subscription criteria, for the following September (e.g. in September 2026 for admission in September 2027). This will include details of open evenings and other opportunities for prospective students and their parents/carers to visit the Academy. The Trust will also provide information in relation to the Academy to the LA for inclusion in the composite prospectus, as required;
- September/October – The Academy will provide opportunities for parents/carers to visit the Academy;
- By 31st October – Secondary Common Application Form will be completed and returned to the student's home LA to administer;
- 1st March – offers will be made to parents/carers.

5.6 There is a national closing date of 31st October for secondary applications and the Academy will ensure its application processes enable parents/carers to apply before these deadlines.

Consideration of applications

5.7 The Trust will consider all applications for places at Academies within the Trust. Where fewer than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year groups are received, the Trust will offer places at each Academy to all those who have applied.

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Procedures where an Academy is oversubscribed

5.8 Where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admission number, the Trust will first accept all students with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) where the Academy is named on the plan. After the admission of students with an EHCP, the criteria below will be applied for the remaining places for this age group in the order in which they are set out:

- Children in care and children who ceased to be in care because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order), including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
- Children with compelling medical or exceptional social reasons for attending the Academy (robust and documented social, medical or psychological evidence must be provided in support, from an appropriate independent registered professional such as a social worker, hospital consultant or GP at the time of the application, and must set out why the Academy is the only school/academy that can meet the young person's needs).
- Siblings of students attending the Academy at the time of entry.
- Children of members of staff, where the member of staff has been employed at the Academy for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the academy is made, and or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is demonstrable skill shortage. (This is in accordance with paragraph 1.39 of the School Admission Code).
- Children on roll in a Trust primary academy (see list of academies on Trust website).
 - For The Discovery Academy:
In the case of these applications exceeding the published admission number children who live nearest to the Academy by straight-line distance measured from home address point to the main entrance gate to the Academy on Discovery Drive.
 - For The Excel Academy:
In the case of these applications exceeding the published admission number children who live nearest to the Academy by straight-line distance measured from home address point to the main entrance gate to the Academy on Milton Road.
- Children who live nearest to the Academy by straight-line distance measured from home address point to the main entrance gate to the Academy.

5.9 Where a child lives at two different addresses, the 'home' address will be determined as the address at which the child resides for the majority of academy nights. Academy nights are Sunday night to

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Thursday night inclusive. In a case where the child spends an equal number of academy nights at each address, then the address where the child benefit is paid will be used. Where no child benefit is claimed the address used to register the child with a doctor will be used.

5.10 In the case of applications from twins and other multiple births (or two or more siblings in one year group), they will be treated as individual children, within each over-subscription criteria in paragraph 5.8 above. Special arrangements will apply if there is space for only one of a set of twins or triplets or other multiple birth. In this circumstance the Trust will usually admit over the published admission number (PAN) unless it is impossible to accommodate siblings in such a way (e.g. if they were octuplets) when the parents will be asked to make a decision on behalf of the family.

Operation of waiting lists

5.11 Subject to any provisions regarding waiting lists in the LA's co-ordinated admission scheme, each academy within the Trust will operate a waiting list for each year group. Where in any year an academy receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will operate until the end of the academic year which will be maintained by each academy.

5.12 Children's position on the waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the over-subscription criteria set out in paragraph 5.8. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to students on the waiting list, in accordance with the over-subscription criteria.

Arrangements for admitting students to other year groups, including to replace any students who have left an Academy within the Trust.

5.13 Subject to any provisions in the LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements relating to applications submitted for years other than the normal year of entry, the Trust will consider all such applications and if the year group applied for has a place available, admit the student unless one of the fair access criteria apply. If more applications are received than there are places available, the over-subscription criteria in paragraph 5.8 shall apply. Parents/carers whose application is turned down shall be entitled to appeal.

6. DEFINITIONS

6.1 Definition of siblings

A sibling is defined as:

- A brother or sister who share one or both parents, whether or not resident in the same household;
- A half brother or half sister who share one common parent;

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- A step brother or step sister where two children are related by a parent's marriage or Civil Partnership;
- An adopted or fostered child living in the same household under the terms of a residence order;
- Another child normally in residence for the majority of term time in the household for whom the adult in the household has parental responsibility and also has parental responsibility for the child currently attending the Academy.

6.2 Definition of the distance to the Academy from an intending student's home

- The distance used is the straight-line distance from home to the Academy and is measured electronically by Stoke-on-Trent City Council on behalf of the Trust. It will be measured using Ordnance Survey address point data, which takes a straight-line measurement from the child's home address point to the main entrance gate to the Academy.
 - For The Discovery Academy on Discovery Drive
 - For The Excel Academy on Milton Road
- If two distances are identical (for example where more than one child lives in the same block of apartments) and there is no other way of separating the applications according to the admission criteria, and to admit both or all of the children would cause published admission number to be exceeded, the Trust will draw lots to randomly select the child to be offered the final place(s).

7. The Discovery SEN Resource Provision 'Aspen Hollis'

- 7.1 The Discovery SEN Resource Provision 'Aspen Hollis' is a 16 place therapeutic setting for children age 11-16. This provision is for children with an Education, Health, Care Plan for 'Communication and Interaction Needs' or/and with a diagnosis of Autism.
- 7.2 The Local Authority decide on the placements, through consultation with the Trust Executive Lead for SEND and children can come to the provision from any other provision or school if the Local Authority deem it appropriate. Admission requests are not accepted directly from parents/carers or schools/provisions themselves.
- 7.3 Children who come through the Local Authority consultation process and are given a place at 'Aspen Hollis' are placed on roll at Discovery Academy and their EHC plans are amended to name 'The Discovery Academy SEN Resource Provision'.

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7 Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually and any recommendations for improvement will be made as required.

Approval

Approved by the Chief Executive Officer

Signed: *Simon French*

(Chief Executive Officer)

Approved by the Alpha Academies Trust Board

Signed: *Di Thompson*

(Chair)

Date: 18th December 2025

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