

# Vine Tree Primary

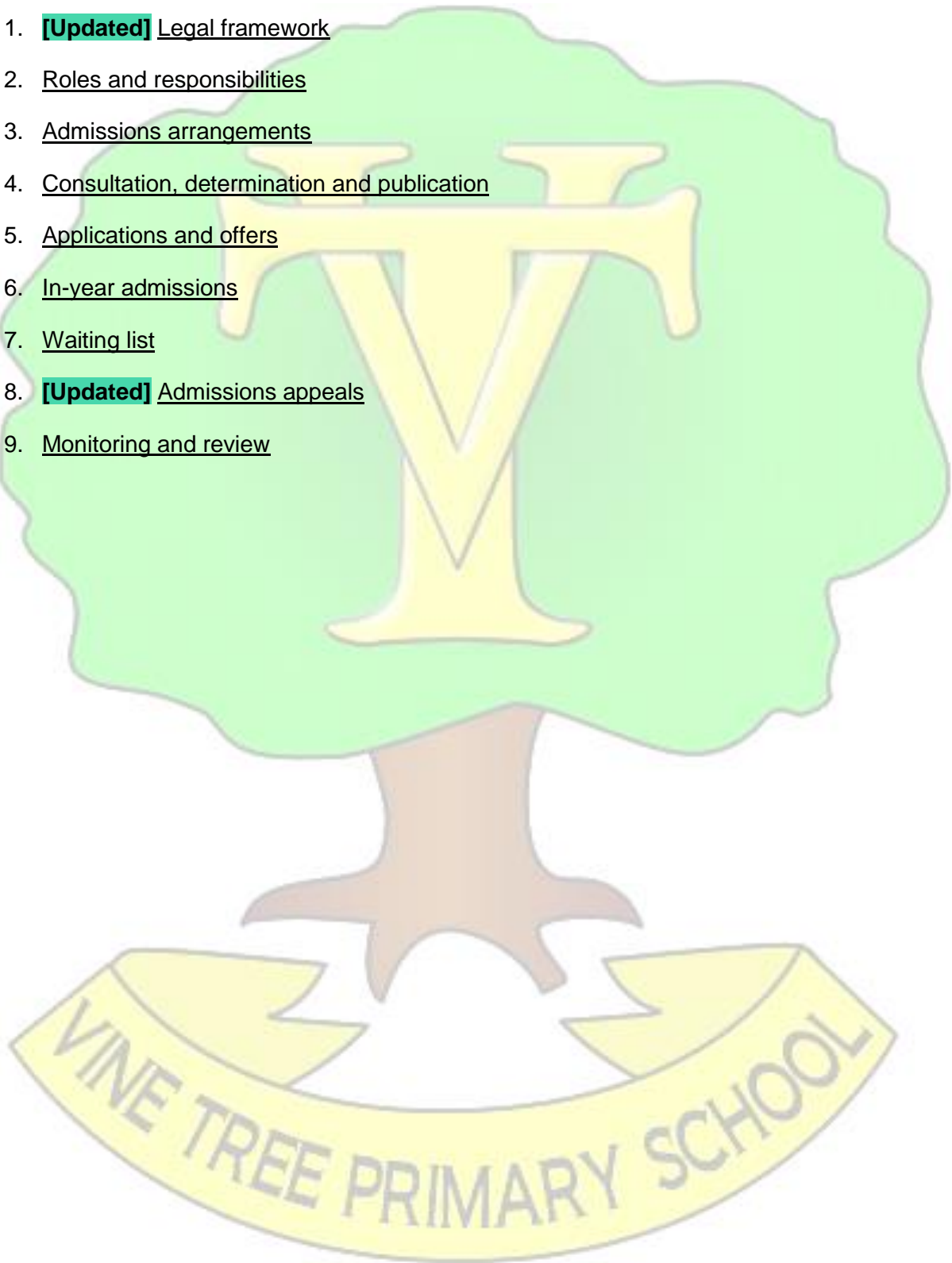
## Admissions Policy



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## Statement of intent

At **Vine Tree Primary**, we welcome all pupils, and places at the school are offered in an open, fair, clear and objective manner. We work to the principle that any parent accessing our admissions arrangements will be able to understand easily how places for that school will be allocated, and will not be alienated or discouraged from applying based on admissions criteria.

The table below sets out who the LA is and other responsible bodies in our school.

| Type of school   | Who is the LA? | Who deals with complaints about arrangements? | Who is responsible for arranging/providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at the school? |
|------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Community School | <u>LA</u>      | Schools Adjudicator                           | LA   |



## 1. **[Updated]** Legal framework

**[Updated]** This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'
- **[Updated]** DfE (2022) 'School Admission Appeals Code'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- SEN Information Report

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The LA is responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance when carrying out the overall admission of pupils into the school.
- Clearly communicating any reasons for rejecting the admission of a pupil, as well as the parent's right to appeal and the appeal process.
- Implementing any advice or recommendations given by the Schools Adjudicator without undue delay.
- Determining the admission arrangements on an annual basis and publicly consulting stakeholders on any proposed changes to the admission arrangements.
- Setting clear, fair and effective oversubscription criteria which do not discriminate against any pupil.
- Communicating oversubscription criteria clearly to parents.
- Notifying the LA of any in-year admissions and their outcomes.
- Linking to the admission arrangements published on the LA's website [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/admissions/admission\\_arrangements/admissions-policies.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/admissions/admission_arrangements/admissions-policies.aspx)

The governing board is responsible for:

- Liaising with the LA where relevant regarding admitting pupils to the school.
- Working with the LA when determining the school's capacity.
- Ensuring that the LA has all the information it needs to set admissions arrangements.
- Making arrangements for pupils admitted through in-year admissions to start as soon as possible.
- Publishing a link to the full, determined admissions arrangements on the school's website.



The Schools Adjudicator is responsible for:

- Acting in line with the relevant legislation and guidance pertaining to admissions.
- Receiving concerns and objections regarding the admission of pupils and making recommendations to the admission authority as a result of these concerns and objections.
- Approving variations to determined admissions arrangements where there has been a major change in circumstances or law.

The appeals clerk is responsible for:

- Having an in-depth knowledge of the relevant appeals codes and other relevant law.
- Providing an independent and impartial service for admission appeals.
- Making the necessary administrative arrangements for hearings.
- Notifying all parties of the order of proceedings in advance of an appeals hearing.
- Responding to queries from appellants in advance of an appeals hearing or identifying who will be appropriate to respond.
- Being an independent source of advice on procedure and admissions law.
- Keeping accurate records of proceedings and providing written notification of the appeals panel's decisions.

### **3. Admissions arrangements**

#### **The published admissions number (PAN)**

The number of places available is determined by the capacity of the school. The PAN for new **year group** pupils is **30**.

The LA will consult with the governing board where it proposes to increase, decrease or keep the same PAN. Where the LA has set a PAN lower than the school's wishes, the school will submit an objection to the Schools Adjudicator, where appropriate.

The governing board will communicate with the LA where the admission of additional children would prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources.

#### **Oversubscription criteria**

The LA is responsible for determining admissions arrangements for the school. The oversubscription criteria is reasonable, clear, objective, procedurally fair, and compliant with all relevant legislation, including equalities legislation. This means that the oversubscription criteria will not unfairly disadvantage, whether directly or indirectly, any child based on a protected characteristic or economic disadvantage.

##### **1.1. Admission Criteria (as specified by Cheshire East)**

- Looked After Children (a child who is in care of the Local Authority)
- Children of compulsory school age whose home address is in the area served by the school.
- Children of compulsory school age who have brothers and sisters attending the school. \*

- Children of compulsory school age who have strong medical or social grounds for admission. \*\*
- Children of compulsory school age whose parents have any other reason for their choice.

\* Brothers or sisters: this includes a half, step, adopted or foster child permanently living in the same family unit

\*\* The following descriptor relates to the strong medical or social grounds' criteria: e.g. serious social problems in the family, or any chronic medical condition affecting the pupil that only your preferred school can deal with. These reasons must be fully supported at the time of the application by written confirmation from the professional person involved in the case

Please note: If a school does not have places for all the children in the designated area, places will be offered first to those designated area children who already have an older sibling attending, on condition that the older sibling will still be on roll when the younger child starts school. If there are still insufficient places and no distinction can be made between applicants in this and all other categories, a final decision will be made on the straight-line distance between the home and the school, with those living closest considered first.

### **Catchment areas**

The point within the school grounds from which the school will measure any distance or radii is **the door of the school reception**. This point will be used to determine the school's catchment area. This will be measured using the child's primary address. The catchment area is a **five-mile** radius from the school as the crow flies.

The school will accept pupils from outside the catchment area – oversubscription criteria will apply where applicable.

### **Siblings of pupils and children of staff**

For the purpose of this policy, "sibling" is defined as any sibling related by **blood or marriage and any fostered or adopted siblings**.

Where oversubscribed, priority will be given to children whose siblings are currently at the school or who attended the school within the last **six** years.

Where oversubscribed, priority will be given to children for whom staff members have parental responsibility, where the staff member has been employed by the school for two or more years at the time at which the application was made, and/or where the member of staff has been recruited to fill a vacant post where there is a demonstrable skill shortage. Trustees of the school are included in the staff criteria with regard to admissions for children.

### **Equal opportunities**

The LA will not establish admissions criteria that excludes individuals with a particular protected characteristic. The admissions criteria will not exclude a greater proportion of pupils

with particular protected characteristics, unless the school can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The admissions criteria will not discriminate against disabled applicants, unless the school can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### **Admissions procedures**

The school will offer open events and school visits to all potential applicants, irrespective of any protected characteristics. Where necessary, the school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants or disabled parents.

The school may assess its ability to cater to the applicant's needs by:

- Inviting the applicant to attend the school for half a day.
- Visiting the applicant's home.
- Visiting the applicant's current education provision.

## **4. Consultation, determination and publication**

### **Consultation**

The LA will consult with the governing board on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements. Consultation will last for a minimum of six weeks and will take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year. The LA will consult with the governing board on admissions arrangements at least once every seven years, even if no changes have been made in that time.

### **Determination and publication of admissions arrangements**

The school will publish a link to the LA's full proposed admission arrangements and the contact details of the individual responsible for admissions liaison on its website. The governing board will address any complaints about the proposed admissions arrangements to the School's Adjudicator.

Admission arrangements will be determined by 28 February in the determination year on an annual basis, even when no changes to the arrangements have been made.

A link to the finalised admission arrangements will also be published on the school website by 15 March in the determination year, and will continue to display them for the whole offer year.

Any objections to the admission arrangements will be directed to the Schools Adjudicator by 15 May in the determination year.

## **5. Applications and offers**

### **Applications**

Parents will be provided with a common application form (CAF) where they will note their three preferred schools, along with a brief explanation, in rank order – the schools do not have to be located in the LA area where the parents live. Parents will provide LAs with the following information within the CAF:



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

The CAF will be submitted to the parents' LA. Parents are not guaranteed to have their preferences met. The LA will request supplementary information for the purpose of processing applications where necessary.

## Offers

**[Primary schools only]** All offers will be made on National Offer Day, i.e. 16 April or the next working day, where this date falls on a weekend or bank holiday.

Where the school is oversubscribed, the LA will rank applications in accordance with its determined arrangements, and the qualifying scheme will ensure that only one offer will be made per child by the LA.

An offer will only be withdrawn if it has been made in error, a parent has not responded within **20 working days**, or if the offer was made via a fraudulent or misleading application. Where an offer has not been responded to within the designated time frame, the LA will give the parent a further opportunity to respond and will explain that the offer will be withdrawn if they do not. If any application is found to be fraudulent after a child has started at the school **in the first term of the new academic year**, the school may withdraw the place. If the fraudulent application is found after this time, the pupil will not be removed.

The headteacher will assist the LA with deciding on which year group a child will enter. Once a decision has been reached, the child's parents will be informed in writing along with an explanation of how the decision was reached and any reasons why.

The school must admit all children who have an EHC plan where the school is named. Children with SEND who do not have an EHC plan will be treated equally to all other applicants in the admissions process. This includes children who may need extra support or reasonable adjustments to be made. The details of the school's SEND provision can be found in our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy and SEN Information Report.

## 6. In-year admissions

The school will follow the same process for in-year admissions as for admissions at the start of the academic year.

The school will publish a link to the LA's in-year admissions arrangements on the school website by 31 August each year.

Where the school has places available in-year, it will offer a place to every child who has applied for one without condition or use of oversubscription criteria, unless to do so would be to prejudice the efficient provision of education or use of resources.

The school will consider all such applications and if the year group applied for has space available, then a place will be offered. If a place is not available, then the child's parent can ask for their child's name to be added to the appropriate waiting list. As with admissions at the start of the academic year, parents whose applications are turned down are entitled to appeal through the process outlined below.

The school will ensure that parents can access a hard copy of the information from the LA about in-year applications upon request.

The school will provide the LA with details of the number of places available, or any supporting evidence, no later than two school days following the request of such information from the LA.

## 7. **[Updated]** Admissions appeals

**[New]** In circumstances where a school place is refused, parents, and in some circumstances their children, will have the right to appeal against an LA's decision to refuse admission.

**[New]** Where this is the case, the LA will establish an independent appeals panel to hear the appeal. The appeal panel will perform its judicial function in a transparent, accessible, independent and impartial manner, and operate according to principles of natural justice.

**[New]** The LA and appeal panel will ensure that it acts in accordance with this Code, the School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the School Admissions Code, other law relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation, for example, the Equality Act 2010.

**[Updated]** The procedures outlined within this section will apply to all appeals lodged on or after 1 October 2022. Appeals lodged on or before 30 September 2022 will be heard in accordance with the 'School Admissions Appeals Code' 2012 and the School Admissions (Appeals Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

The governing board will be aware of and, where relevant, assist the LA with the admissions appeals procedure.

### **[Updated]** Timetable

**[New]** The LA will set a timetable for organising and hearing appeals that:

- Includes a deadline for lodging appeals which allows appellants at least **20 school days** from the date of notification that their application was unsuccessful to prepare and lodge their written appeal.
- Ensures that appellants receive at least **10 school days'** notice of their appeal hearing.
- Includes reasonable deadlines for appellants to submit additional evidence, for admission authorities to submit their evidence, and for the clerk to send appeal papers to the panel and parties.
- Ensures that decision letters are sent within **5 school days** of the hearing wherever possible.

The LA will publish the appeals timetable on their website by **28 February each year**.

**[New]** The LA will ensure that appeals lodged by the appropriate deadlines are heard within the following timescales:

- For applications made in the normal admissions round, appeals will be heard within **40 school days** of the deadline for lodging appeals

- For late applications, appeals will be heard within **40 school days** from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within **30 school days** of the appeal being lodged.
- for applications for in-year admissions, appeals will be heard within **30 school days** of the appeal being lodged.

**[New]** Any appeals submitted after the appropriate deadline will still be heard, in accordance with the timescales set out in the table published by the LA.

#### **[Updated] Notifying appellants of the right to appeal and the appeal hearing**

**[Updated]** When informing a parent of their unsuccessful admissions application, the LA will send written notification of their decision. This will include:

- The reason why admission was refused.
- Information about the right to appeal.
- The deadline for lodging an appeal.
- Contact details for making an appeal.

**[Updated]** Parents will be informed in the letter that, if they wish to appeal, they must make the appeal in writing. The LA will not limit the grounds on which an appeal can be made.

**[Updated]** The LA will provide appellants with written notification of the date and all final arrangements of the appeal hearing no later than **10 school days** before the hearing. This notification will include the deadline for the submission of any further evidence that was not sent in the original appeal.

**[Updated]** The LA will comply with any reasonable request for information from parents to help them prepare their case for the appeals hearing.

**[Updated]** The LA will ask appellants whether they intend to call any witnesses or be represented at the hearing and inform them that they may waive their right to **10 school days'** notice of the hearing if they so wish.

#### **[Updated] Constitution of appeals panels**

**[Updated]** The LA will appoint a clerk to the appeal panel who is independent of the school and the education functions of the LA. The clerk will have sufficient knowledge of the 'School Admission Appeals Code', the 'School Admissions Code', other law relating to admissions and other relevant law, as well as being able to offer advice to enable the panel to undertake its judicial function.

The appeals panel will comprise of a chair and at least **two** other panel members.

The panel will also include at least one lay person **and** one or more people with experience in education.

**[Updated]** In accordance with 'The School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the clerk to the panel will ensure that no disqualified person is allowed membership of the panel. A person will be disqualified if they are:



- A member of the LA which is the admission authority or LA in whose area the school is located.
- A member or former member of the governing board of the school.
- An employee at the LA or governing board of the school, other than a teacher or TA.
- Any person who has, or at any time has had, any connection with the LA, school or LA who may not act impartially.
- Any person who has not attended training required by the LA arranging the appeals panel.

**[Updated]** The LA will ensure that panel members and clerks will not take part in hearings until they have received appropriate training as outlined within the School Admissions Appeals Code’.

**[New]** The LA will ensure that panel members are independent from the school and will remain independent for the duration of their service.

The chair of the appeals panel is responsible for the conduct of the hearing, including introducing parties, explaining the roles of the clerk and the panel and how the hearing will be conducted, and ensuring that parties have sufficient opportunity to state their case and ask questions.

The LA will indemnify the members of the appeals panel against any legal costs and expenses they incur in connection with any decision taken in good faith whilst acting as a member of the appeals panel.

**[Updated]** Members of the appeals panel will be eligible to receive travel and subsistence allowances where applicable, and will, where appropriate, be compensated for any loss of earnings or expenses.

### **Evidence**

All evidence relating to the appeal hearing will be passed on to the clerk. This evidence will include details of:

- How the admission arrangements and the co-ordinated admissions scheme apply to the appellant’s application.
- Reasons for the decision to refuse admission.
- How the admission would cause prejudice to the education provision of the school.

The clerk will send all the papers required for the hearing to both parties and the members of the panel **seven** days before the hearing.

### **[Updated] Attendance and representation**

**[Updated]** It will be the LA’s responsibility to make arrangements for appeal hearings. Appeal hearings may be held in person, remotely by video conference or a mixture of the two (a hybrid hearing).

Appeal hearings held entirely by telephone will only be permitted where video conferencing cannot be used relating to connectivity or accessibility and if the appellant and presenting officer both agree.



Regardless of the forum chosen, appeal panels will allow appellants the opportunity to make oral representations.

**[New]** The LA will provide a presenting officer to attend the hearing and present the LA's case to the panel, ensuring that this person is a member of staff who is well acquainted with the school.

The presenting officer will be responsible for relaying to the attendees the decision not to admit the child, and answer questions where necessary, either in person or remotely

Appellants may attend in person or be represented by another individual. Where appellants cannot attend, a decision will be made based on the written evidence.

### **[Updated]** Appeals hearings

**[Updated]** Where appeal hearings are held in person, the LA will take all reasonable steps to ensure the venue is appropriate, accessible to appellants, and has a suitable area for appellants and presenting officers to wait separately from the panel before and between appeals.

Appeal hearings that are held remotely will be held in such a way that means the appeal is capable of being heard fairly and transparently. Attending parties will be able to present their cases fully and the LA will be satisfied that each participant has access to facilities that allow them to engage in the hearing at all times.

Where a hybrid hearing is to take place, the arrangements above will be complied with as appropriate.

**[Updated]** Hearings, whether conducted in-person or remotely, will be held in private.

The order of appeal hearings will be as below:

- Case for the LA.
- Questioning by the appellant(s) and panel.
- Case for the appellant(s).
- Questioning by the LA and panel.
- Summing up by the LA.
- Summing up by the appellant(s).

### **[Updated]** Reaching a decision

**[Updated]** When reaching a decision, the LA will follow the specific two stage process outlined in section three of the 'School Admission Appeals Code'.

**[Updated]** In cases where the LA has refused to admit a child on the grounds that admitting an additional child would breach the infant class size limit and there are no measures that can be taken to avoid this without prejudicing the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources, the two-stage process outlined in Section four of the 'School Admission Appeals Code' will be followed.

**[Updated]** Decisions will be decided by a simple majority of votes cast. If votes are split equally, the chair will make the casting vote. The panel will either uphold or dismiss an appeal and will not uphold an appeal subject to any specified conditions.

**[Updated]** To communicate the decision made, the panel will send a letter to the appellant, signed by the clerk or chair of the appeals panel, no later than **five school days** after the decision has been made.

**[Updated]** The decision letter will contain clear reasons for the panel's decision and a summary of the relevant factors raised by the parties and considered during the hearing. In the case of applications outside the normal admissions round, the LA will ensure that the pupil is admitted to the school without unnecessary delay.

Appeals by the parent of a child with an EHC plan against the choice of school named in the EHC plan will be considered by the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) and not the appeals panel.

**[Updated]** In cases where there are multiple appeals, the LA will ensure that, where possible, all appeals are heard by the same appeals panel with the same members, and that no decisions are made until all the appeals have been heard.

**[Updated]** In all hearings the clerk to the panel will ensure that an accurate record is taken of the points raised at the hearing, including the proceedings, attendance, voting and reasons for decisions. These notes will be kept securely by the LA for a minimum of two years and are, in most cases, exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

#### **[Updated] Further appeals and complaints**

**[Updated]** Appellants will not have the right to more than one appeal in respect of the same school for the same academic year unless, in exceptional circumstances, the LA has accepted a second application from the appellant due to a material change in the circumstances of the parent, child or school but still refused admission. Appellants can apply for a place at the school for a different academic year.

**[Updated]** Appellants may complain about maladministration on the part of an appeal panel to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsmen. The LA will inform parents about the arrangements for making a complaint.

## **8. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed by the governing board on an **annual** basis. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff and other interested parties.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is February 2024