Grace Academy Darlaston

Admissions Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain **how to apply** for a place at Grace Academy Darlaston
- Set out the trust's **arrangements for allocating places to the pupils** who apply to these academies
- Explain **how to appeal** against a decision not to offer your child a place

2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following statutory policies from the Department for Education (DfE):

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2
- School Admission Appeals Code

As an academy, the school is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definitions

The **normal admissions round** is the period during which parents can apply for state-funded school places at the school's normal point of entry, using the common application form provided by their home local authority.

Looked after children are children who, at the time of making an application to a school, are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Being provided with accommodation by a local authority in exercise of its social services functions

Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they:

- Were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or
- Became subject to a child arrangements order, or
- Became subject to a special guardianship order

Looked after children and previously looked after children who are now adopted or subject to a residence order or special guardianship order. This includes children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in care as a result of being adopted (or subject to child arrangement orders or special guardianship orders) immediately following having been looked after in England.

A child reaches **compulsory school age** on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

4. How to apply

For applications in the normal admissions round you should use the application form provided by your home local authority (regardless of which local authority the schools are in). You can use this form to express your preference for a minimum of 3 state-funded schools, in rank order. You will receive an offer for a school place directly from your local authority. For residents of Walsall Council area the online application will need to be completed.

Closing date for applications for admission in September 2028 is October 31st 2027.

5. Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group.

Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, this will include taking account of:

- Parents' views
- Information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional
- Whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The principal's views.

Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria listed in the appendix. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group.
Parents will always be informed of the reasons for any decision on the year group a child should be admitted to. Parents do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

6. Allocation of places

6.1 Admission number

The school has the following agreed admission numbers for pupils for entry in Year 7: 180.

For September 2028 our published admission number will be 180.

Arrangements for admission to Year 12 are set out in the appendix.

6.2 Oversubscription criteria

All students with an EHCP can consider naming Grace Academy Darlaston in their plan. Grace Academy Darlaston will then respond to this as a priority, identifying whether the named student's education would be compatible with the education of others.

If the school is not oversubscribed, all applicants will be offered a place.

In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out in the appendix in order until all places are filled.

6.3 Tie break

In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the school will use random allocation as a tie breaker to decide between applicants. This process will be independently verified.

6.4 Challenging Behaviour

We will not refuse to admit a child on behavioural grounds in the normal admissions round or at any point in the normal year of entry. We may refuse admission in certain cases where the specific criteria listed in the School Admissions Code (paragraph 3.8) apply, i.e. where section 87 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is engaged.

We may refuse admission for an in-year applicant for a year group that isn't the normal point of entry, only in such a case that we have good reason to believe that the child may display challenging behaviour that may adversely affect the provision we can offer. In this case, we will refer these pupils to the Fair Access Protocol. We will not refuse admission on these grounds to looked after children, previously looked after children and children with EHC plans listing the school.

6.5 Fair Access Protocol

We participate in the Walsall Council Fair Access Protocol. This helps ensure that all children, including those who are unplaced and vulnerable, or having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, get access to a school place as quickly as possible.

7. In-year admissions

You can apply for a place for your child at any time outside the normal admissions round.

All students with an EHCP can consider naming Grace Academy Darlaston in their plan. Grace Academy Darlaston will then respond to this as a priority, identifying whether the named student's education would be compatible with the education of others.

Likewise, if there are spaces available in the year group you are applying for (as agreed by the local authority), your child will be offered a place.
If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. When a space becomes available it will be filled by one of the pupils on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in the appendix. Priority will not be given to children on the basis that they have been on the waiting list the longest.

Applications for in-year admissions should be submitted to The Admissions Department, Grace Academy Darlaston, Herberts Park Road, Wednesbury, WS10 8QJ.

8. Appeals

Parents will have the right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if they are dissatisfied with an admission decision in relation to the offering of a place for a student to Grace Academy. The Appeal Panel will be independent of the Academy and will be composed of three members who will include:

- At least one person who has no personal experience of Grace Academy defined as a 'lay member'.
- At least one person with experience in education.

The arrangements for appeals will be in line with the Code of Practice on Academy Admission Appeals published by the Department of Education as it applies to academies.

Parents will normally have 14 days (10 working days) after notification of a place not being offered at Grace Academy to lodge an appeal. The notification will indicate the reasons for refusal of a place and of the right of appeal.

Parents wishing to appeal against an admission decision by Grace Academy should send a completed appeal form to the Clerk to the Appeal Panel at the address given on the appeal form. Other documents may be submitted in support of an appeal and should be lodged with the Clerk to the Appeal Panel not less than 7 days before the appeal hearing.

Parents will be given 14 days (10 working days) notice of the appeal hearing, unless they agree to a shorter period of notice. At least 7 days before the hearing Grace Academy will provide the parent with a written statement detailing the reasons why it has not been possible to allow the student to attend Grace Academy. The Appeal panel will have the discretion to refuse to admit late evidence.

The Clerk to the Appeal Panel will, if possible, inform parents of the Appeal Panel's decision on the day of the hearing. In the case of the appeal hearings taking in excess of one day the Clerk to the Appeal Panel will contact parents with the decision on the final day of the hearings. The parents will also be informed of the outcome in writing within 14 days (10 working days) of the date of the hearing. In the case of unsuccessful appeals the Appeal Panel will give the parents their reasons for not upholding the appeal.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the board of trustees every year.

Whenever changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the agreed admission number), the trust will publicly consult on these changes.

Appendix

Oversubscription Criteria:

If there are more applications than there are places available, places will be allocated using the Oversubscription Criteria in the following order of priority:

1. Children in Public Care (looked after children). (see note 1)

2. Pupils who have a sibling already in attendance at the Academy when the application is made and who will be still attending the Academy at the proposed admission date. (see note 2)

3. Pupils for whom a place at the Academy is essential on medical or social grounds as supported in writing by a medical practitioner or a social worker. (Applications will be subject to verification by Children's Services). (see note 3).

4. Distance between the home address and the Academy as measured in a straight line with those living closer to the Academy receiving the higher priority. (see note 6)

If there is oversubscription in criteria 2 to 4, priority will be given to those living closest to the Academy as measured in a straight line.

Explanatory notes for Oversubscription Criteria

1. Children in Public Care (looked after children)

Children who are in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by a local authority and previously looked after children who ceased to be because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order.

2. Sibling

Where a child has an older sibling currently attending the school when the application is made and who will be still attending the school in Years 8 – 11 in September of the relevant year. Siblings of Sixth Form students DO NOT qualify for a sibling claim.
A sibling is a child who resides at the same address as the child for whom a place is being requested and is one of the following:

A brother or sister sharing the same parents;
A half-brother or sister sharing one common parent;
A step-brother or sister (i.e. related by their parent's marriage);
Any other child for whom it can be demonstrated that he or she is residing permanently at the same address (e.g. under the terms of a residence order)

The Authority will try to ensure that as far as possible siblings (including twins, triplets or children

from other multiple births) can attend the same school. However, in the event that there is an insufficient number of places to allocate to twins, triplets etc. a decision will be made as to which

child(ren) the place(s) are to be offered. In this situation a place or places will be offered to the first born (older child(ren)) and in cases where this is not known, the offer will be decided by lot.

3. Social or medical factors

If parents believe there are specific medical or social reasons for claiming priority for a child to attend the Academy, the relevant part of the preference form must be completed and evidence to support the claim must be submitted with the form. This must relate to the child.

Requests for such consideration will be subject to verification by Children's Services. This is necessary because parents will be asking the Authority to assess the child as having a stronger case than many other children, some of whom may live closer to the Academy.

Medical
Medical evidence must be submitted in writing from a medical practitioner and should state why the Academy can meet the child's needs.

Social
Social evidence must be submitted in writing from an appropriate professional and should state why the Academy is the only Academy that can meet the child's needs.

Please note that only in exceptional cases are places prioritised in respect of a child's medical or social grounds.

Distance
Distance will be measured in a straight line from the centre point of the home address to the centre point of the Academy address using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system with those living closer to the Academy receiving the higher priority.

Definition of a home address
The home address of a child is considered to be the permanent residence of a child in a residential property when the place is offered. The address must be the child's only or main residence and is either:

- owned by the child's parent, parents or guardian; or
- leased to or rented by the child's parent, parents or guardian under lease or written rental agreement of not less than six months duration.

Documentary evidence of ownership or rental agreement may be required together with proof of actual permanent residence at the property concerned. In certain circumstances the child's current school will be asked to verify the address given.

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child lives with both parents for part of the week, the main residence will be determined as the address where the child lives for the majority of the week. Parents may be requested to supply documentary evidence to support the address used for the application.

The offer of a place is based upon the address of the child when the offer is made. If a child is offered a place at the Academy the place may be withdrawn if it is found that the child moved (before the place was offered) to a new address which was further away from the Academy and the child would not have qualified for a place on the distance criterion.

In the event that a family moves between the application and the date of offer, the Academy Admissions Team must be informed as soon as possible of these circumstances.

If the home address is a flat (or apartment) and there is more than one flat at the same address, priority will be given to applications living at the lowest numbered flat and/or the flat on the lower floor.

4. Minimum Entry Requirements for Year 12

Students will be considered for entry into Year 12 based upon their academic attainment and/or individual subject grade criteria and the availability and suitability of courses at the Academy.

Applications for Sixth Form

The Sixth form admission number is 100 per year group. The criteria for admission is as follows:

Level 3 qualifications

For both Academic (A Level) and Vocational (e.g. BTEC):

- At least a grade 4 in English and maths (minimum of 5 in some subject areas)
- The individual student's Attainment 8 figure is used as an indicator for suitability of study
- Any other specific grade needed for individual courses