Admissions Policy 2026-2027

"I am the vine; you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit"

(John 15:5)

This is a model policy for all Vine schools that has been reviewed and adapted for St. Leonard's C of E Academy.

Policy Reference:	
Approved by Vine Schools Trust on:	
Adopted by this school on:	
Next review:	

This model policy applies to the Academy Trust. Each Local Schools Board is responsible for proposing sections to meet its local context where this is permitted, subject to approval by the Trust Board. Any such changes must comply with the Trust's overall Policy and with the requirements of the Admissions Code 2021, the Admissions Appeal Code and their associated regulations.

Introduction

Our vision for the Trust is that our schools are places where pupils grow and thrive, where we share our Christian values with them and the communities we serve. We endeavour to ensure our children are receiving an education that helps them to realise their true potential and encourages them to approach life with Christian character. As the Church of England Vision for Education puts it, our schools are deeply Christian, serving the common good.

As a church school, we believe that to love God is to love our neighbour. If God is within us, we shall be good neighbours and show God's love to the world. Our school seeks to reflect the Christian understanding that all people are precious to God. Emphasis is placed on an education for life, developing each child's particular talents within a happy, caring, and disciplined environment, where co-operation, mutual respect and responsibility are encouraged.

Recognising its historic foundation, St. Leonard's C of E Academy will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the churches at parish and diocesan level. The School aims to support children and their families by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

Consequently, our admissions policy reflects these core values: we were founded to bring education to our local communities and so our admissions arrangements give priority to those communities and in particular to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. We also recognise that our schools rightly offer an opportunity for parents who value our approach to education and to faith and that we have strong and lasting links with the Church of England. We also want our schools to be welcoming and inclusive, open to people of all faiths and beliefs and backgrounds. Our admissions policies will therefore give priority to the local community and will, where appropriate, enable those who particularly value our Christian ethos to have opportunities to be part of our school community, insofar as this makes the school more inclusive and welcoming.

Since our School is a Church of England school, it and the Trust must consult with the Diocese of Chelmsford about certain things, including our admissions arrangements. That is because the Diocese is what is known as our Representative Religious Body and we must have regard to its advice on these matters.

Responsibilities

a. The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust (the Trust') of which St. Leonard's C of E Academy ("the School") is a part, is the Admissions Authority and is responsible for the admission arrangements of the School. This document sets out the admission arrangements of the School for the academic year 2026-27.

Each School will participate in the co-ordinated admissions process for normal admissions in the local authority in which it resides. For this school, that is normally Essex Council and details of the admissions procedure for 2026-27 can be found at https://www.stleonardscofe.co.uk/key-information/admissions/

c. The Trust Board has delegated the implementation of some admissions duties to its Local School Boards. Those responsibilities include:
    (i) Proposing to the Trust Board suitable criteria for offering places when the school has more applications than it has available places.

(ii) Administering the application of places, including liaising with the Local Authority which operates the Essex Common Application Process to ensure the process works effectively and efficiently
(iii) Providing information, advice and support to families considering or applying for a place at the school
(iv) Applying the admissions criteria to applications in a fair, objective and lawful manner when making admissions decisions, and efficiently communicating those decisions to the Local Authority in a timely and accurate way, so that parents can be informed of the outcome of their application by the required deadline
(v) Proposing potential amendments or variations to the admissions arrangements to the Trust Board and to the Diocese of Chelmsford (the representative religious authority for the Trust) in advance of their public consultation.
(vi) Conducting the annual cycle for consultation on any proposed changes to the admissions arrangements in accordance with Trust policy and the requirements of the Admissions Code 2021.
(vii) Determining the admissions arrangements for each admissions year according to the required timetable and procedures applicable under the Admissions Code 2021.
(viii) Arranging any Independent Education Admissions Appeals Panels and communicating with parents and the Panel to ensure their fair and effective conduct.

The number of places available

a. The published admission number (PAN) for entry into the School is 45 children per year group. The School will admit up to the PAN in the normal year of entry, which is the Reception year. Where there are more applications for admission than places available at the School, then places will be offered in accordance with the oversubscription criteria set out at Section 3 of this policy.

b. Infant Class Size Regulations apply to the normal year of entry (and Year 1 and Year 2). These Regulations require classes to be no bigger than 30 children, although the PAN may be much lower than 30.

Applying for a Place

To apply for a place at our school, you need to do so through the Local Authority where you live – for most of our parents this is Essex Council. They operate what is known as the Local Authority Co-Ordinated Admission arrangements. All the details of this are found here Primary school places | Essex County Council Primary school places

All applications for first admission must be received by your home LA by the closing date of 15 January. The home LA will make a single offer of a place on 16 April (or the next working day).

Children with an Education and Health Plan which names our school: please note that If the EHCP for your child names this school, then the child must be admitted, regardless of whether it is potentially oversubscribed. Admission of children with an EHCP is dealt with by your home Local Authority (LA), that is to say the LA for the area where you live.

Oversubscription Criteria

If the School has **more applicants than it has places** available, it is said to be **Oversubscribed.** When that happens, places are offered in a set order, against the following criteria, until no more places are

left. If there are very many applicants, this can mean that all places are allocated to the first few categories. You can find more detail about what this means in the sections below

Category 1: Looked After Children, Previously Looked After Children or Children Internationally Adopted After Public Care

After children with an EHCP Plan naming our school, our first oversubscription criterion **must** always be Looked After, Previously Looked After and Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children, as this is a legal requirement.

i. A "**Looked After Child**" (LAC) s a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school.
ii. A "**Previously Looked After Child" (PLAC)** is a child who was looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order immediately following having been looked after.
iii. An "**Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Child (IAPLAC)** is a child who appears (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.

Category 2: Children living in the priority admissions area with a sibling at the School

A child whose home address is inside the priority admissions area (sometimes also called the catchment area) is eligible for this category where they have a sibling attending the School on the date of application **and** the sibling will still be attending the School at the time of admission.

- **Sibling** means brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, foster brother or sister, or the child of the parent/carer's partner where the child for whom admission is sought is living in the same family unit as that sibling and at the same address.

- **Home address** means the place where the child resides for the majority of the school week (Sunday to Thursday) with the person/s who legally has care of the child (child care arrangements are excluded). The School may require documentary evidence of house ownership or tenancy together with evidence of the child's residency at the property.

- **Priority Admissions Area** means the geographical area from which children will be afforded priority for admission to the School. **A map showing the priority admissions area** is annexed to this Admission Policy and is available to view on the School website. A hard copy is available at the School office.

Category 3: Other children living in the priority admissions area without a sibling at the school

A child living inside the priority admissions area (sometimes also called the catchment area) is eligible for this category.

- **Priority Admissions Area** means the geographical area from which children will be afforded priority for admission to the School. **A map showing the priority admissions area**

Category 4: Children living outside the priority admissions area with a sibling at the School

A child living outside the priority admissions area is eligible for this category where (i) they have a sibling attending the School on the date of application **and** (ii) the sibling will still be attending the School at the time of admission.

Category 5: Children with Exceptional Medical or Social Needs

(i) Medical need means where written evidence has been provided from a senior clinical medical officer or the child's general practitioner / specialist showing that the child's condition would make it detrimental to the child's health not to admit him/her to the School. This may include written evidence where the parent has a medical need and/or disability which would make it detrimental for the child to attend a different school; this may be supported by evidence of the child as a young carer. Evidence to be relied upon must be submitted with the Supplementary Information Form and sent to the School on or before 15th January

(ii) Social Need means where the child is of confirmed refugee status. Written evidence of this from the home LA must be submitted with the Supplemental Information Form and sent to the School on or before 15th January

Category 6: All other children

Tie Breaker

For admissions purposes, the school uses a distance tie-breaker, based upon the Local Authority's scheme, which uses data provided by the Ordnance Survey (OS) to measure straight line distances. The OS data plots the co-ordinates of each individual property (the home address) which are referred to as address points. The definition of the home address is as described above. Straight line distance is measured from the address point of the home address to address point of the school. Distances are reported in miles to three decimal places.

If a child's time is split equally between two residences, the address of the residence at which the child resides for the majority of the school week would be used to measure the distance between the child's school and home. In the unlikely event of two applicants with an identical distance competing for a single place at a school – for example because both families live in a block of flats with a common entrance - the place will be offered to one applicant on the basis of lots drawn by an officer of the County Council not involved in admissions.

Appeals

a. Where an application is unsuccessful parents/carers have the statutory right to bring an appeal against that decision to an Independent Appeal Panel. Details of how to appeal will be included in the letter advising that the application has been unsuccessful.

b. The admission appeal timetable is published on the School's website by 28th February each year.

Other Important Information

a. Waiting Lists

If the School is oversubscribed for September 2026 entry a waiting list will be maintained across the entire academic year. The position of the child on the waiting list will correspond

with the oversubscription criteria; it will not be based on length of time on the waiting list. The right of appeal remains. You may request your child's name be removed from the waiting list at any time. If a place is offered but refused then the child's name will be removed from the waiting list.

b. Summer Born Children

Summer born children (which refers to children born from 1 April to 31 August) are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could first have been admitted – the point at which other children in their age range are beginning Year 1. Should the parent wish their child to be admitted to Reception, rather than Year 1, they may request that the child is admitted out of their normal age group. Please note the following:

(i) **You must make an application for admission to the School for September 2026 entry but make it clear on the application form that you wish your child to enter the Reception class in September 2027.**

(ii) Discussions with the School are strongly recommended prior to making a decision to decline entry for an entire year **and** to be admitted to Reception in September 2027. Any decision will be on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned.

(iii) If the request is agreed, the September 2026 application may be withdrawn before a place is offered **but a fresh application will need to be made** for September 2026 +1 entry **which will be processed as a fresh application along with all other applications and in accordance with the School's admission arrangements**. PLEASE NOTE that it is possible even if the request is agreed that the child may not be admitted in September 2026 as there is no guarantee of a school place.

(iv) If the request is refused the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to Year 1 for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

c. Deferred entry and part time attendance below statutory school age

A child may start at the School in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 5. Where the child has not yet reached statutory school age (5 years old), the child is entitled to a full-time place and parents may choose for their child to attend full time. Alternatively, parents may choose for their child to attend part time until their child attains compulsory school age. If parents do not consider their child is ready to start school then they may defer entry altogether to later in the school year but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age or not beyond the beginning of the final term in the school year (whichever is the sooner).

d. Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may seek a place for their child outside their normal age group, for example if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Such requests should be discussed with the Headteacher as early as possible in the admissions round associated with that child's date of birth. This will allow the School sufficient time to make a decision regarding the request before the closing date for applications and national offer day. Decisions to admit a pupil outside their normal age group will be based on the circumstances of each case and based on what is in the best interests of the child concerned. We may request supporting professional evidence to assist in the decision-making. There is no legal requirement for this medical or educational evidence to be secured from an appropriate

professional. However, failure to provide this may impede our ability to make an informed decision.

e. Multiple Birth Applications

Where there are multiple birth applications the PAN will, provided it is practicable, be exceeded or increased at the point of allocation in order to ensure that multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the School.

1. Withdrawal of an Offer

The School may withdraw an offer where it has been offered in error, has been made on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application, or a parent has not responded to an offer of a place within a reasonable period of time.

2. In Year Admissions

a. Applications for in year admission may be submitted at any time during the school year. The application form is on the School website or a paper copy may be requested from the School office.

b. Where the School has no spaces available, because the admission of another child would prejudice the efficient education of others at the School or would prejudice the efficient use of resources, or would breach Infant Class Size Regulations, the application will be refused and a right of appeal will arise.

c. The oversubscription criteria will be only used where the School is considering more than one in year application at the same time and there are not enough spaces to accept all applicants.

3. Further Information

a. Important information published by the LA applies to some aspects of school admissions. If you are considering applying for a place at the School you are advised to refer to your home LA's website. https://www.essex.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/admissions

b. If you have any questions in relation to these admission arrangements please contact the School office.

c. The School will handle all personal data in accordance with the requirements of the Data protection Act 2018.

Appendix 1 – Catchment Area