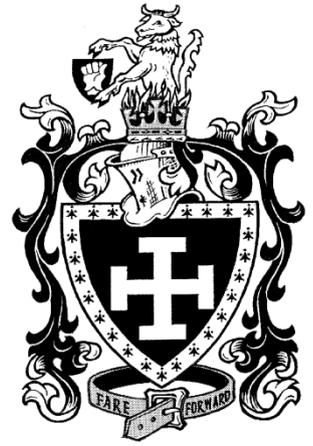


# **Buckler's Mead Academy**



## **Policy Document**

# **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

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<p><b><i>Please note: The version of this document contained within the 'Policy Documents' Folder on BMStaff (T:\Admin\Policies and Procedures) is the only version that is maintained.</i></b></p>	

## **BUCKLER'S MEAD ACADEMY ADMISSIONS POLICY**

*Somerset Local Authority is the Admission Authority for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools within the county. Buckler's Mead Academy has adopted the County Admissions Policy for use in determining admission arrangements to the academy.*

### **1. Admission of Pupils to Somerset Schools**

This policy document should be read in conjunction with the 'Somerset Starting School' and/or 'Transferring School' and 'Admission to Sixth Form' schemes for the appropriate admissions year.

The key principles that underpin the authority and Buckler's Mead Academy's Admissions Policy are:

- To co-ordinate all transferring school place applications at all maintained schools for children resident in Somerset
- To provide the maximum predictability and reassurance for parents
- To support the Local Authority's policy of local schools for local children
- To provide parents with clear and easy to understand information relating to admissions and transport
- To have a consistent way of allocating school places which does not vary from school to school (except in the case of admissions to Sixth Form, which currently varies from school to school).

The following are key features of the Admissions Policy:

- Parents/carers can express up to **three** preferences
- Each community and voluntary controlled school across the authority has a specific catchment area. Parents can determine from the catchment area their local school at which their child has priority for admission
- Priority will be given to local children over siblings who live outside the catchment area
- A place will be allocated on the basis of a student's home address. For a Somerset address to be taken into consideration, children concerned must be registered in Somerset on or before the published closing date. Where a school is over-subscribed, evidence of house move will be required where the move is into the school's catchment area. This must include exchange of contract or fixed term (minimum six months) letting/tenancy agreement. Where this can't be provided, other evidence to substantiate a firm residency for the child(ren) concerned, may be acceptable. This must be received by the Local Authority before the published exemption period deadline at the latest.
- The over-subscription criteria for all community and voluntary controlled schools support the inclusion of children in the care of the Local Authority, children with Special Educational Needs, family church links (in the case of a church school) and use a straight line method for measuring distance between the preferred school and home address.

For the purpose of measuring home to school distance, statutory walking routes, and the first 2 miles of transport routes, all distance calculations will be measured using a straight line measurement from the address point of the home to the address point of the school, using the Local Authority GIS mapping system. In the case of multi-level dwellings such as flats, the staircase will be included in the distance measurement.

## **2. The Authority's Admissions Policy**

The School Standards and Framework Act 2002 and the School Admissions Code, places a duty on all Local Authorities to share admission application information. Locally, all Local Authorities have agreed to co-ordinate their **admission** application arrangements to Secondary phase schools across LA boundaries. Co-ordinated Primary and Secondary Admissions Schemes, including relevant over-subscription criteria are consulted on and deposited with the Department for Children, Schools and Families on an annual basis. These schemes detail the timescale on which the Admissions process, for the particular school year, will be operated.

This Admissions Policy document, applicable to all maintained schools in the County, underpins the primary and secondary Admissions Schemes.

Where a school is not oversubscribed, all preferences received by the published closing deadline will be agreed. In the event of a Community or Voluntary Controlled school being oversubscribed, the relevant oversubscription criteria will be applied and places will normally be allocated up to the published admission number (AN) applicable for the school and year concerned.

All preferences for school places will be allocated using the 'Equal Preference and Ranking' allocation procedure. This approach will rank all applications against the published oversubscription criteria for the school concerned and where schools are oversubscribed, places will be allocated up to the published admission number in strict priority order. Where more than one school can be offered, the highest ranked preference will be allocated.

Any application received after the published closing date will be deemed late, and will only be considered after completion of the formal on-time appeals round. Allocations will continue on a monthly basis until early August in line with published dates. All subsequent applications will be dealt with in line with the published in-year allocation procedure.

If places subsequently become available within the published Admission Number, they will be allocated to the highest ranked application received to date, to include the original refusal list, any new applications already under consideration and parents refused a place at appeal for the school in question.

## **3. Admission Numbers**

A legal published Admission Number (AN) is set annually for the year of entry for all schools (including Year 12 'new intake' to Sixth Form). This is calculated to ensure that there are sufficient places available to meet the student forecast and to ensure that surplus accommodation is not excessive. All other year groups have an

admissions limit, normally set at the Indicated Admission Number, which shall serve as the maximum number of places available in any year group other than the year of entry.

#### 4. Definition of Middle School

The Education (Middle School, England) Regulations 2002, provides a definition for Middle Schools. Somerset local Admission Arrangements adopts this definition for the purpose of School Admissions co-ordinated arrangements. A Middle School will be classified as primary where there is an entry age before 11 and secondary where the entry age is after 11.

#### 5. Exceptional Circumstances

Late applications will be accepted, **only in very exceptional circumstances**, up to the published exemption period deadline. Thereafter, all applications will be deemed late and will be considered commencing completion of the formal on-time appeals round, on a monthly basis until the start of the school year.

These circumstances are:

- Where a statement of Special Educational Needs has been issued for a child, or a multi-agency professional team has identified specific needs requiring a particular school.
- Where there is **clear evidence** that there has been an unavoidable delay in the form reaching the School Admissions Team.
- An administrative error by a member of staff from the school, Children and Young People's Directorate or other Local Authority department.
- Individual family circumstances, such as the death of a relative or serious illness.
- Families of UK Service Personnel and other Crown servants who have been subject to movement within the UK and from abroad, at relatively short notice.

It is at the discretion of the Admissions Authority to request evidence to support a claim under exceptional grounds.

#### 6. Appeals Procedure

If the Local Authority is unable to offer a place at the preferred school (or schools), parents have a legal right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel.

The Authority ensures appeals are dealt with fairly and impartially and that it meets the requirements of the statutory Admission Appeals Code. Appeals will be heard within 30 school days of submission of an appeal application form. In all cases where a parent is unsuccessful at gaining a place for their child at their preferred school, they will be sent an appeal information pack including an application form.

Buckler's Mead Academy has adopted the Somerset County Council appeals process and timetable. For full information on the process, please go to:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-learning-and-schools/choosing-a-school-admissions-decision/>

## 7. Waiting Lists

Somerset Local Admissions Authority does not operate waiting lists for admission to any phase of school. There are no statutory requirements for admission authorities to operate and maintain waiting lists. However, the Local Authority does maintain a 'refusal list' specific to the cyclical admissions process, in order to allocate places in priority order where they may subsequently become available at schools previously oversubscribed.

## 8. First Admissions to School

**Statutory School Age** – children may start school in the September following their fourth birthday. However, legally, a child must be receiving full time education at the start of the school term following their fifth birthday.

Admission to Somerset schools takes place once per year, in September, unless parents have entered into a deferred entry arrangement with the Authority.

## 9. Deferred Entry

Where the Admissions Authority for a primary school offers places in reception classes before the children are of compulsory school age, the Secretary of State expects the Admissions Authority to offer parents/carers the option of deferring their child's entry until later in the school year.

Somerset operates a Deferred Entry Scheme that enables parents/carers of children born between 1 April and 31 August to defer entry for the autumn term only. Their child may then start school in the following January. Where a parent chooses to defer entry, their child will always join their chronological year group.

### Phased/Staggered Entry

To help children settle smoothly into school, some schools operate different start dates for children entering reception classes. This is known as 'Phased or Staggered Entry'. All children should start school within the first ten days of term, but may attend on a part-time basis until the autumn half term. After the fourth week of term, the school will provide a minimum average of 2.5 hours per day. In exceptional circumstances – for children not of statutory school age – this minimum level of attendance may continue and the Local Authority will consult with parents/carers, health visitors and other professionals to accommodate children for whom continued part time school attendance may be beneficial.

## 10. Transferring to the Next Phase of Education

### Normal age of transfer:

Due to the different age ranges of schools in Somerset, depending on where they live, children may transfer to their next school at ages:

- 7+ Junior
- 9+ Middle
- 11+ Secondary
- 13+ Upper

Children will transfer to the next school if the appropriate age is reached between 1 September and 31 August (both dates inclusive)

## 11. Retentions and Accelerations (children taught outside of their chronological year group)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families anticipates that children will be taught in their chronological year group. However, there is provision within the School Admissions Code for individual cases to be considered, where parents wish for their child to be accelerated or retained to the year group above or below their chronological year.

Somerset Admissions Authority will consider applications from parents who wish their child to be accelerated or retained. Requests will however only be supported in **very exceptional** circumstances where a multi-professional team considers the evidence provided with the parent's application to justify retention.

In all cases the final decision rests with the Headteacher and/or Governing Body of the school concerned.

## 12. General Terms of Reference

### Siblings:

There is no guarantee that siblings can remain together. However, Somerset Admissions Authority's oversubscription for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools has been developed to ensure priority for a school place is given as far as possible to siblings. For the purposes of Admissions, a sibling is defined as a child living at the same address as a half or full brother or sister, an adoptive brother or sister or children of the same household.

### Parent or Parent/Carer:

Natural parents, whether they are married or not, any person who, although not a natural parent, has a parental responsibility for a child or young person. Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child is considered to be a parent in education law).

**Home Address:**

The home address is important as school places are allocated on the basis of the home address of each child. A child's home address is considered to be where the child spends the majority of their time with the person(s) who have care of the child.

Documentary evidence of ownership or rental agreement may be required, together with proof of actual permanent residence at the property concerned.

Places cannot be allocated on the basis of intended future changes of address unless house moves have been confirmed through the exchange of contracts or the signing of a formal lease agreement. The Local Authority reserves the right to seek further documentary evidence to support your claim to residence.

Please note that the Local Authority is unable to allocate a place to anyone moving into the country from abroad prior to their arrival in the country. Proof of residency would then be required as stated above. The only exceptions are children of UK Service Personnel and other Crown servants (including Diplomats).

It should also be noted that an address used for childcare arrangements cannot be used as a home address for the purpose of applying for a school place. A fraudulent claim to an address may lead to the withdrawal of an offer of a place.

You **must** notify the School Admissions Team, County Hall, Taunton, of any change of address during the admissions procedure.

**Issues relating to shared residency arrangements:**

Difficulties in the application process can occur where shared residency arrangements are in place and parents/carers of the child submit 2 separate applications for different schools. In this situation the Local Authority would ask parents to try to resolve matters between themselves, and then inform the Local Authority which application should be processed. Where possible, the Local Authority should not be involved in private disputes.

The Local Authority does recognise, however, that there may be situations where parents cannot reach an agreement between themselves and it is necessary for the Local Authority to reach a decision. Where this is the case, the Local Authority will try to establish the child's permanent address, as set out above.

Each parent will be required to write to the Local Authority and inform them of the number of days each week the child spends with them. Where the child spends equal time with both parents, additional information may be requested, including who is in receipt of child benefit. Once the Local Authority has received all the necessary information from both parents, a decision will be reached based on the evidence provided.

**Distance Measurements:**

For the purpose of measuring home to school distance, all calculations will be measured using a straight line measurement from the address point of the home to the address point of the school using the Local Authority's GIS mapping system. In the

case of multi-level dwellings such as flats, the staircase will be included in the distance measurement.

#### **Equal Preference with Ranking Allocation method:**

This approach requires the Local Authority to rank all applications against the published oversubscription criteria for the school concerned and where schools are oversubscribed, places will be allocated up to the published admission number in strict priority order. Where more than one school can be offered, the highest ranked preference will be allocated.

#### **Practising:**

'Practising' is defined as at least once a month or a consecutive period for no less than six months attendance at church by at least one parent and/or child (where necessary this may be confirmed with a member of the clergy).

### **13. Multiple Birth Applications (e.g. twins)**

In the case of multiple birth applications, the published admission number for the school concerned will be increased at the point of allocation to ensure multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the same school (sibling definition applies).

Infant class size legislation prevents the Authority from applying this approach where admitting these children would breach the statutory limit of 30 Key Stage 1 children per qualified teacher. Where it is clear that the school concerned cannot restructure its classes to avoid this situation, multiple birth siblings will be refused a place.

### **14. School Transport**

School transport provision will be organised by Transporting Somerset. Subsidised school transport may be awarded to the following groups of students providing that a school place has first been secured at the school for which transport is required:

- Any student attending or allocated a place at their catchment or nearest school and living more than three miles away (two miles if under eight years of age). The first two miles will follow the shortest available walking route that is safe to walk for a child, accompanied as necessary. The remaining distance will follow the shortest available driven route to the school. The method of measurement will be by use of GIS mapping software.
- Students from low income families (defined as families eligible for Free School Meals entitlement and/or maximum working family tax credit) will be entitled to subsidised school transport to one of three secondary schools, or the nearest primary sector school within two to six miles of the home address, providing a school place has first been secured.
- Children from low income families who attend/have secured a place at a designated faith school will be entitled to subsidised school transport to schools within **two to fifteen miles** of the home address.

For the purposes of measuring distances from home to school, the following procedure will apply:

- The first two miles will follow the shortest available walking route that is safe to walk for a child, accompanied as necessary
- The remaining distance will follow the shortest available driven route to the school
- The method of measurement will be by the use of GIS mapping software
- Routes that are considered potentially unsafe (by parents or the Authority) will be assessed on a case by case basis by officers from Transporting Somerset for any school at which a child is already attending

Parents will need to apply for school transport by completing an application form (available from Somerset Direct and at schools) or by completing the on-line form at [www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport/apply](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport/apply)

### **15. In Year Admissions**

In order to reflect changes in the latest edition of the School Admissions Code for the next academic year, the in-year admission arrangements will be consulted on starting in the previous December (e.g. December 2016 for 2017/18).

### **16. Admissions to children of UK Service Personnel and other Crown Servants outside the normal admissions round**

Families of UK Service Personnel and other Crown servants are subject to frequent movement within the UK and from abroad, often at relatively short notice. Somerset Local Authority will allocate places to children of Service Personnel families in advance of the approaching school year if accompanied by an official MOD, FCO or GCHQ letter declaring a relocation date.