

STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO VARY THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR TURNHAM ACADEMY FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2020 INTAKE

from 20 December 2018 to 30 January 2019

The School Admissions Code 2014 (“the Code”) requires all admission authorities to publicly consult on the proposed admission arrangements for their schools/academies where they propose to make changes to them.

STEP Academy Trust (“STEP”), a multi academy trust, is the admission authority for all of its academies located within Lewisham, Southwark, Croydon, Bromley and East Sussex.

We would like your views on a number of proposed changes to our admission arrangements.

This document sets out:

- What we are consulting on and why;
- Who we are consulting with;
- The consultation timetable;
- How to submit your views.

We have included:

- Proposed new Admissions Policy for admission to Reception Year in September 2020 for Turnham Academy.
- All other associated admission documents (for example, supplementary information forms and academy-specific application forms).
- Questionnaire for responses.

What are we consulting on?

We are consulting on the proposed new admission arrangements for admission to Reception in September 2020 for Turnham Academy. The term “admission arrangements” includes not only the admission policy for the academy, but all other associated documents (for example, supplementary information forms).

The admission arrangements set out how places will be allocated to children at that academy, and the procedure that must be followed by parents.

What are we proposing to change and why?

The main criteria in any set of admission arrangements which determines how children will be allocated places are:

- The oversubscription categories (for example, looked after and previously looked after children, or children with a sibling at the academy);
- The definitions used within the oversubscription categories (for example, the definition of a “sibling”);
- The definition of children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium;
- The definition of the child’s home address for the purpose of the policy;
- The way in which the distance from the child’s home address to the academy is calculated;
- The tie breaker (for example, random lottery).

Consultees are invited to consider the admission policies and associated documents published with this consultation before responding, however the following paragraphs summarises the main changes made.

1. The Oversubscription Categories

The changes made from the admission arrangements for the 2020 intake can be summarised as follows:

Turnham Academy	
2019 Intake	2020 Intake
1) Looked after and previously looked after children	1) Looked after and previously looked after children
2) Children with a sibling at the academy	2) Children with a medical need to attend the academy
3) Children with a medical or social need	3) Children with a sibling at the academy
4) Distance	4) Children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium who attend the academy's nursery
	5) All other children
<p>Turnham Primary Foundation School was a foundation school until 1 August 2018 when it converted to academy status and became part of STEP. The statutory timetable within the Code provides for admission arrangements to be determined some eighteen months before children are admitted, which means that Lewisham Local Authority had already determined the admission arrangements for the September 2019 intake before Turnham became a STEP Academy on 1 August 2018.</p> <p>Now that STEP is the admission authority for Turnham Academy, we propose to change the admission arrangements to bring them in line with all other STEP academies which have been tried and tested over recent years, using much simpler criteria which is entirely fair and easier for parents to understand.</p> <p>Within each of the oversubscription categories, places are allocated by reference to the distance between the child's home address and the academy, ensuring that those living closer to the academy receive higher priority. STEP believes that no child should lose out on a place to a child living further away in the same oversubscription category.</p>	

2. Children with a Medical Need

The criteria within this category has been tightened up to make it clearer that only children with a compelling reason for attending that particular academy, and no other school or academy, because of their own or their parent's medical need, will meet the criteria. This is because these children are given the highest priority (after looked after and previously looked after children) over and above all other children and, accordingly, this category is regularly abused by parents who simply prefer their children to be admitted to that academy, rather than there being a compelling reason why this is absolutely necessary. It has been made clear that the compelling reason cannot be based on social need or inconvenience.

It has been made clear that the necessary supporting medical evidence must be provided on or before the application deadline for the child to fall within the category – failure to do so will result in the child being placed in the next category that applies. This is to ensure that the admission process runs smoothly and to prevent abuse by parents who attempt to get their child into this category after they have failed to achieve a place under a different category. There must be a clearly stated cut-off point to ensure that the admissions process is fair to all children, not just those whose parents choose to play the system.

3. Definition of “Sibling”

The definition has been amended to include a full, half, adopted, foster and step-sibling and the children of cohabiting partners of parents, as long as in all cases the sibling lives at the child's home address with the applicant child.

In the case of the children of cohabiting partners, it is a condition that the parents must have been cohabiting for at least one year at the application deadline. The purpose behind including the children of cohabiting partners within the definition of a “sibling” is to ensure that committed couples who have simply chosen not to get married are not disadvantaged as a result of making that choice, however this unfortunately does leave the door open for some prospective parents to abuse this criterion by temporarily moving in with another parent with a child at the academy for a very short period while the application is processed and then moving out again once a place is achieved. Each time this happens, a child who should have received the place fails to do so. The purpose of the one year cohabitation condition is aimed at removing or substantially reducing such instances of abuse.

4. The reason for Category 4 is to encourage, in particular, the parents of disadvantaged children who are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium to take advantage of nursery education for their children at the academy's nursery, which will improve their education, provide continuity for them throughout their early years and help them to settle into Reception Year faster, where they do not already have a sibling at the academy. As the number of children attending the academy's nursery is less than the number of places in Reception Year, this will not mean that parents will feel obliged to send their child to the academy's nursery in order to achieve a place in Reception Year at the academy.

5. Definition of “Child's Home Address”

The definition has been amended simply to make it clearer and to make parents aware that, where an issue arises, they will be required to provide documentary evidence and/or the times that the child has spent at the home address in the three month period immediately preceding the application deadline.

Again, the reason for this is to try to prevent abuse by parents who fraudulently claim that their child lives at an address which is clearly not their home address simply because it is nearer to the academy and therefore receives higher priority.

5. Distance Measuring

The way in which distance will be measured has been simplified and made clearer. Distance will be measured in a straight line measurement from a point at their home address which is pre-defined by the local authority's distance measuring software to the same point at the academy, and that all children living within a multi-dwelling block will be regarded as living an equal distance from the academy, with the tie breaker being applied.

STEP has noted that some local authorities give priority to children based on how near they live in a building to the ground floor or, in some cases, based on their name in alphabetical order, and does not agree that this is a fair way to determine which children will achieve places. Random lottery is, in STEP's view, the only fair way to determine this where children live at different addresses within the same building, as is the case with children who do not live in the same building but just happen to live exactly the same distance from the academy.

When are we consulting?

STEP is required to publicly consult on proposed changes to its academies' admission arrangements for a minimum of six weeks between 1 October (at the earliest) and 31 January at the latest, in the determination year.

Accordingly, this consultation will begin on 20 December 2018 and run until 30 January 2019.

Timetable for Consultation:

Date	Action
20 December 2018	Start of consultation
30 January 2019	End of consultation period and deadline for submitting responses
31 January 2019	Consideration of all responses received during the consultation period
28 February 2019	Deadline for formally determining admission arrangements
15 March 2019	Deadline for sending determined admission arrangements to the relevant local authorities
15 May 2019	Deadline for objections to be submitted to the Schools Adjudicator

Who are we consulting with?

- Parents and carers of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
- The respective local authority, namely the London Borough of Lewisham.
- Early years providers, childminders and local residents within the relevant areas;
- All other admission authorities (local authorities, Governing Bodies and multi academy trusts) within or adjoining the relevant areas (except those only responsible for secondary schools/academies);
- Headteachers, members of staff and Governors within the relevant areas;
- Any other interested parties.

How should a response be provided?

If you would like to comment or raise a concern about the proposed new admission arrangements for the September 2020 intake, please complete the questionnaire by downloading/printing the questionnaire and returning the completed form by post or email to:

Mrs C Gilbert, STEP Executive Secretary
 STEP Academy Trust
 Gonville Road
 THORNTON HEATH
 Surrey CR7 6DL

Email: admissions@stepacademytrust.org

All completed questionnaires must be received on or before 30 January 2019.