

Meppershall Church of England Academy

PRE-SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY 2027/2028

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Responsible member	Caren Earp

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DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall have the following meanings for the purposes of this document:

- **the Academy:** means Meppershall Church of England Academy
- **'Looked after' children:** means a child who is in the care of a Local Authority or being provided with accommodation by a Local Authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989).
- **Previously 'looked after' Children:** means a previously 'looked after' child is one who immediately after being 'looked after' became subject to an adoption, residence or special guardianship order. An 'adoption order' is an order under section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A 'residence order' is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under section 8 of the Children Act 1989. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardianship (or special guardians). The definition also includes children who appear to the Trustees to have been in state case outside England and ceased to be in state case as a result of being adopted.
- **Sibling:** means a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, stepbrother or sister or foster brother or sister where foster care has been arranged by a local authority or the child of the parent / carer's partner, and in every case, the child should be living at the same address. The sibling must be in the Academy or the Pre-school at the time of the application and be likely to remain in the Academy or Pre-school at the proposed date of admission.
- **'Very Exceptional' Medical Grounds:** refer to cases where there are exceptional medical reasons which make it essential that a child should attend Meppershall Church of England Academy's pre-school and where Meppershall Church of England Academy's pre-school is the only pre-school locally that could meet the child's needs. A medical report from the child's doctor or consultant must be submitted with the application form, setting out valid medical reasons why it is essential for the child to be admitted to Meppershall Church of England Academy's Pre-School and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another pre-school. The Trustees reserve the right to seek further information in order to determine whether it is essential for a child to be admitted to Meppershall Church of England Academy's pre-school on medical grounds.

- Admission on medical grounds cannot be considered where the medical condition relates to that of a parent, brother or sister or other relative/childminder.
- The address given on the application form must be the child's permanent home address at the closing date for applications. If a child lives at more than one address because childcare arrangements are shared, the Governors will consider the address for admission purposes to be the one where the child lives for the majority of the time, unless the application is supported by a copy of a Court Order stating that a different address must be used for Academy admission applications. If a child lives at two different addresses equally, the application must include a copy of any Court Order which states the address to be used for Academy admission purposes.
- Where there is no such Court Order in place, parents should make a single joint application naming one address. Please note that applications submitted by separated parents will be subject to the same address verification checks as all other applications.
- **Catchment Area:** The school's catchment area is the ecclesiastical (church) parish of Meppershall. A map of the parish is available on the website www.achurchnearyou.com and is also attached to this policy.

ADMISSION NUMBERS

The Academy will admit children into the pre-school up to the admission number of 32 per session each academic year (this may be reviewed annually). The Academy will admit children from the term after they turn 2 years old. The places offered will be full time, mornings or afternoons according to demand on the basis of a 38-week school year. Sessions will be 3 hours in duration starting at 9.00am in the morning or from 12noon in the afternoon. A minimum of two sessions over two separate days must be selected for admission into the pre-school.

Pre-school children are non-statutory pupils and must re-apply for a place in the main Academy in the year they turn 5 via the Local Authority Coordinated Admission Process (see separate main Academy Admissions Policy). A place in pre-school does NOT guarantee a place in the Reception class or give any higher priority for a place in the Reception class. The Local Authority follows the equal opportunities offer for working parents.

ADMISSION CRITERIA

Admissions are subject to the availability of pre-school spaces. Children can be admitted to the pre-school class from the term after they turn 2 years old.

Should there be more applications than places, the following criteria will be used to determine how places are allocated:

- Category 1** Looked after children or children who were previously 'looked after but immediately after being 'looked after' became subject to an adoption, child arrangements or special guardianship order; this includes children who have been adopted from state care outside England
- Category 2** Children whose home address is in the school's catchment area and who have a sibling who will be attending the school at the time of entry.
- Category 3** Other children whose home address is in the school's catchment area.
- Category 4** Children of permanent staff employed at the school or pre-school.
- Category 5** Any other children who have a sibling who will be attending the school and/or pre-school at the time of entry.
- Category 6** Children living outside the school's catchment area, one or more of whose parents/carers have, at the time of application, shown commitment to the Church of England or another Christian Church by attending a service of worship at the relevant church at least once a month for the year immediately prior to an application being made. Applicants in this category need to ask their priest or minister to complete the relevant section of the application form. A Church of England church is one which is a member of the Anglican communion. The governors define a 'Christian' Church to be one which is a member of Churches Together in England or the Evangelical Alliance.
- Category 7** Children who have very exceptional medical reasons to attend the school.
- Category 8** Any other children.

Notes:

1. If applying these criteria results in there being more children with an equal right to admission to the Pre-school than the number of available places, the tie break will be the distance the pupil lives from the Pre-school, measured in a straight line, [using the Local Authority's computerised mapping system], with those living closer to the Pre-school

2. receiving the higher priority. The distance will be measured from the address point of the pupil's home to the main entrance of the Pre-school. In the event of (a) two or more children living at the same address point (e.g. children resident in a block of flats) or (b) two addresses measuring the same distance from the Academy, the ultimate tie-breaker will be random selection.
3. Pupils who have an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the Academy will be admitted even if the pre-school is full.
4. Where a twin or multiple birth child is offered the last available place, the Trustees will make every effort to accommodate the other twin or multiple birth child.

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Parents wishing their child to attend the Academy's pre-school need to register with the Academy's office who will send a link to its application form. An application form needs to be completed and a birth certificate and proof of address is required to register your child. This will then be acknowledged that you have registered an interest, it is not an acceptance of a place in the pre-school. Parents can request a preference for sessions but the Academy cannot guarantee that this preference can be met.

Applications will be prioritised according to the admission criteria set out above. Offers of places will only be made to those children who will have reached the minimum age for admission by the start of the following term.

The waiting list operates on a date of birth admission basis not on a registration date, the closing dates for admissions are as follows:

- **September Intake:** 31st March
- **January Intake:** 30th September
- **April Intake:** 31st January

Places for each intake will only be allocated after the closing date has passed and letters will go out prior to May half term for the September intake; October half term for the January intake and February half term for April intake - if spaces are available.

The Academy operates a termly admissions process. The availability of places at any entry point will vary each year depending on numbers of children in the pre-school class at that date (if the pre-school is full in the September intake then there will be no further entry that year unless a space becomes available).

Two-Year-Old Funding

Children of Eligible Working Parents:

- 15 hours per week of free childcare or early education has been available since April 2024.
- This entitlement increases to 30 hours per week for eligible working parents from September 2025.

Children Receiving Additional Government Support:

- Parents or carers who are receiving specific forms of government support (e.g., certain benefits) or whose child has additional needs (e.g., an EHC plan or Disability Living Allowance) remain eligible for 15 hours per week of free early education from the term after their child turns two.

Three and Four-Year-Old Funding

Universal Entitlement:

- All three- and four-year-old children are eligible for 15 hours per week of free childcare or early education (from the term after the child turns three), regardless of parental working status or income.

Working Parent Entitlement (Extended Hours):

- Three- and four-year-old children of eligible working parents are eligible for an additional 15 hours per week, making it a total of 30 hours per week.

APPEALS PROCESS

There is no statutory right of appeal against a decision with regard to admission to a pre-school class. If your child is not offered a place, the Academy will keep a waiting list and will advise you should a place become available.

Parents wishing to object to a decision concerning their application should follow the Academy's complaints process.