

Exceed Learning Partnership Response to the Consultation undertaken for the Admissions Arrangements for Academic Year 2026/2027

Background

In accordance with the DfE's 2021 statutory 'School Admissions Code' guidance, as the Admissions Authority, the Exceed Learning Partnership Trust must consult on its Academies' admission arrangements when changes are proposed, and at least once every seven years.

For this reason, a consultation was held to meet the Trusts statutory duty and took place from Friday 25th October 2024 until 5pm on Friday 24th January 2025. The consultation was with regards to the Trusts proposed admission arrangements for the academic year 2026/27.

This consultation provided the opportunity for parents, carers, staff, local authorities and the wider community the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed arrangements before they were finalised.

This consultation applied to the following academies within the Exceed Learning Partnership Trust:

- Bentley High Street Primary School
- Carr Lodge Academy
- Edlington Victoria Academy
- Hall Cross Academy
- Hill Top Academy
- Rosedale Primary School
- Sandringham Primary School
- Sheep Dip Lane Academy
- The Mallard Academy
- Willow Primary School

Exceed Learning Partnership as the admission authority (the Trust), is responsible for determining and publishing its admission arrangements. The Trust must act in accordance with various legislation and the relevant points are set out in the [School Admissions Code](#) (the Code).

When proposing changes, the Trust must conduct a consultation and adhere to the process outlined in the Code.

The Trust has followed this process, conducted a consultation, and received two responses during the consultation period, one from a parent and a response Nottinghamshire County Council ('Nottinghamshire').

It is also important to note that whilst the Trust did not receive a response to its formal consultation from the City of Doncaster Council (Doncaster) the Trust did receive pre consultation feedback.

For the purposes of aligning with other local schools and academies, the Trust continues to

use Doncaster Local Authority for the co-ordination of all admissions and making offers of places. Therefore, the Trust gained pre-consultation feedback from Doncaster Local Authority and whilst this was not part of the formal consultation in the interest of transparency, the Trust considered all points raised and has published a response to the consultation feedback accordingly.

The Admission Policy was determined by the Trust Board of Directors on 27th February 2025, whereby the Trust Board of Directors considered all responses to the consultation, the feedback pre consultation and all legislation including all relevant points set out in the School Admissions Code.

In the interest of transparency, the Trust has published its responses to the feedback from the consultation and pre consultation as follows:

Consultation Feedback 1 (Parent)

1) Proximity of Hall Cross due to two sites.

- As Hall Cross Academy is split into two sites, (lower and upper) a concern was raised that pupils attending Sandringham Primary School may live closer to Hall Cross Academy Upper School but might miss out on a place at Hall Cross Academy Lower School due to Outwood Academy Danum being nearer.
- As Hall Cross is split into two sites, the concern raised was that parents may live closer to Hall Cross Academy Upper School which is beneficial as when children become young adults and commute to school on their own from year 10 onwards, however they may lose out on a place at Hall Cross Academy due to Outwood Academy Danum being closer than Hall Cross Academy, Lower School.

Trust Board Considerations and Response

We would like to remind parents that obtaining a place for your child at a school is based on each individual school's criteria. The proximity of another school does not prevent parents from applying to their preferred school.

We have therefore interpreted this feedback as concerns relating to our oversubscription criteria, specifically criterion (f) Trust Schools and criterion (g) Proximity.

Whilst the proposed criterion complies with the 1.13 Admissions Code regarding distance determination. The main issue the Trust Board considered was the fairness of this criterion.

The Trust Board noted that any pupils attending Sandringham, under the proposed new admission arrangements would fall under criterion (f) Trust Schools. Therefore, all pupils from Sandringham would be considered under criterion (f) rather than criterion (g) Proximity, provided they have attended Sandringham continuously for more than a year.

The Trust Board noted however that if a pupil attended Sandringham Primary School for less than a year, this scenario would be considered under criterion (g) Proximity instead of criterion (f) Trust Schools.

The Trust Board undertook a balanced consideration as if the requirement for attending the school for a full year were removed, it could lead to issues with pupils transferring late in the year gaining an advantage for admission to the secondary school. This could potentially result in stronger complaints from other pupils who have been at Sandringham from the start and may affect the efficient provision of education or the optimal use of resources.

Taking the above considerations into account, the Trust Board determined that all pupils from Sandringham would be considered under criterion (f) rather than criterion (g) Proximity, provided they have attended Sandringham continuously for more than a year and this was a fair approach.

Consultation Feedback 2 (Nottinghamshire)

1) Catchment areas need to be clearly defined

- Nottinghamshire have advised that the Trust is responsible for defining the catchment areas within their proposed admission arrangements.

Trust Considerations and Response

The Trust Board of Directors agreed that this is a requirement in paragraph 1.14 of the Code detailed as follows: *“Catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and **clearly defined**. Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.”*

Within the determined admissions arrangements the Trust has included clearly defined maps showing its boundaries for each academy on its website where the admissions policy and arrangements are published and have also included a link within its policy to the City of Doncaster website that provides a definitive list of road names and post codes.

2) Information regarding defer and delay is not consistent with the Code/summer born

- Nottinghamshire have advised that the information regarding defer and delay is not consistent with that outlined in the Code Summer Born Guidance.

Trust Considerations and Response

The Trust Board has reviewed this accordingly and this section of the admissions policy has been amended to ensure that the information aligns with the Code and the Summer Born Guidance.

3) Random Allocation needs to be defined

- Nottinghamshire have advised that the Trust explains how Random Allocation will operate.

Trust Considerations and Response

The Trust Board agreed that the Trust must explain clearly how this will operate as set out within the Code (1.34 and 1.35) and have updated its arrangements under 14.3 of the admissions policies as follows:

14.3 Random Allocation

The Random Allocation process will be conducted independently of the Trust and the school. It will be managed by the Local Authority’s Admissions Team. Pupils will be randomly assigned a rank number, and the draw will be carried out using a third-party service (www.Random.org or equivalent).

Pre-Consultation Feedback (Doncaster)

For the purposes of aligning with other local schools and academies, the Trust continues to use Doncaster Local Authority for the co-ordination of all admissions and making offers of places. Therefore, the Trust gained pre-consultation feedback from Doncaster Local Authority and whilst this was not part of the formal consultation in the interest of transparency, the Trust considered all points raised and has published its response as follows:

1) Identifying the group of staff the criteria will apply to

1. Doncaster raised concerns that the admissions arrangement does not clearly identify children of staff members at the school and is not compliant with sections 1.39 and 1.40 of the Code. *“Where the member of school-based staff has been employed by the Trust for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.”*

Trust Consideration and Response

Whilst the Trust board was satisfied the proposed arrangement aligned with section 1.39 of the Code, as it clearly sets out both qualifying circumstances, the Trust board acknowledged that 1.40 of the Code specifies that the admissions must specify how priority will be applied, for example, which groups of staff will be eligible. Taking this into consideration the admissions policy and *arrangements have been updated as follows: “Where a member of staff (both teaching and support staff, excluding voluntary staff) has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made, and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.”*

In addition to this the definition of child has also been clarified under this category accordingly:

For this category, a ‘child’ of a staff member is:

- Their natural or adopted child, whether they live with the staff member or elsewhere; and/or
- Their stepchild or child of their cohabiting partner, who lives and sleeps at the staff members home address for more than 50% of their time from Sunday to Friday during term time.

2) Doncaster raised concerns that the policy does not specify the number of hours a staff member must be employed per week.

Trust Consideration and Response

The Trust board noted the concerns that Doncaster raised pre consultation regarding the proposed arrangements not specifying the number of hours a staff member must be employed per week. However, following a thorough review, the Trust determined that the Code does not require such a specification. Additionally, the Trust board reflected that in, doing so this could expose the Trust to claims of indirect discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, affecting various protected characteristics, and potentially lead to issues under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Therefore when the Trust went out to formal consultation it did not include a specification regarding the number of hours a staff member must be employed per week.

3) Governors who have served on an Exceed Learning Partnership Board for two or more years included in proposed criterion.

Trust Response and Consideration

This feedback pre consultation was considered by the Trust Board and was removed from the proposed admission arrangements prior to the formal consultation.

4) Children attending Trust Schools

- Doncaster has expressed concerns about the political implications of the proposed oversubscription criteria at Hall Cross Academy and broader issues of giving priority to pupils attending the Trust's schools over those living in closer proximity.

Trust Response and Consideration

The Trust Board considered feedback received from Doncaster pre consultation and updated its proposed arrangements and therefore consulted on arrangements in which pupils from catchment area schools under criterion (d), pupils from link pyramid schools under criterion (e) would receive places first over pupils attending Trust schools in criterion (f).

As Hall Cross Academy is divided into an Upper and a Lower school, each with different central locations, the Trust board acknowledged the complexity in which this brings

The Trust board notes that Doncaster referenced guidance from the [DfE on School Admissions \(2014\)](#) which predates the Code but remains helpful on determining reasonableness. The Code at 1.15 states *"The selection of a feeder school or schools as an oversubscription criterion must be **transparent** and made on **reasonable grounds**."*

The Trust Board therefore considered that the Trust Schools (criterion f) complies with transparency as it is clear which of the schools are feeder schools.

The Trust Board considers that the use of the Trust schools under criterion (f) and is made on reasonable grounds and has shown fairness within its proposed arrangements as follows:

- a) There is no impact on children within the catchment area of Hall Cross Academy.
- b) Priority is given to pupils attending Link Pyramid Schools over Trust Schools to mitigate the impact on these pupils and schools.
- c) Most of the Trust Schools are in proximity to Hall Cross Academy, supporting the broad aim of ensuring children have a priority for a local secondary school.
- d) The introduction of Trust Schools criterion ensures supports the continuation of curriculum, support structure, processes and the same ethos.
- e) There is availability of other secondary schools that children can reasonably access

The Trust board also assessed the fairness and reasonableness in considering the effect of this criteria. Sheep Dip Lane Academy, Hill Top Academy, and Edlington Victoria Academy are the furthest schools from Hall Cross Academy, being over four to five miles away.

The effect is that children considered under the proximity criterion may be impacted, as there could be children admitted through the Trust Schools criterion who are located significantly further away. However, this priority is likely to have minimal effect on other children or create longer or more difficult journeys given the Catchment criterion and Link Pyramid School criterion remain above the Trust School criterion. Additionally, these children will have reasonable access to another secondary school.



Mr J Blount
Chair of Directors
27th February 2025