



Tudor Grange Academies Trust
Dingle Lane
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 3PD

29 February 2024

Robert Smyth Academy

Decision Notice

Consultation on proposed new admission arrangements for the 2025-2026 intake

A public consultation on the proposed new admission arrangements for 2025-2026 ran from 18th December 2023 to 31st January 2024, in compliance with the requirements of the [Schools Admissions Code 2021](#) (Code).

The proposed new admission arrangements looked very different from those determined for previous intakes, because the Trust commissioned the preparation of a new set of clear and compliant admission arrangements for all schools in the trust for the 2025-2026 intake. This did not mean that all of the criteria contained within them had been changed, they had simply been made clearer and easier to understand, and they now include all mandatory information.

The following changes needed to be made for compliance reasons (including the requirement to be clear), and therefore did not need to be consulted on. They are mentioned here for transparency:

- The existing oversubscription Category 1 incorrectly included children with an exceptional medical and/or social need with looked after and previously looked after children, which did not comply with the Code which requires looked after and previously looked after children to have highest priority on their own. The category for children with an exceptional medical and/or social need was therefore moved to Category 2, and all other categories moved down one as a result.
- The last oversubscription category previously referred to "children who live nearest the Academy" which conflated the residual category for "all other children" (i.e. those not qualifying for inclusion in any of the categories above) with the tie breaker which determined the order in which places are allocated where there are too many qualifying children in any category than there are places available. This has now been rectified, and a separate clear section relating to the tie breaker included which makes it clear it applies to all categories.
- Other mandatory or explanatory information taken from or based on the Code has now been included, which we will not list here.



The following substantive changes were proposed:

- The adoption of a new Exceptional Medical and/or Social Needs Form which must be completed, signed, dated and stamped by a professional for children to be considered for inclusion in that category. We have formally adopted this form as part of the admission arrangements.
- The previous admission arrangements included children of staff who had been continuously employed at the Academy for two or more years at the time of application, as well as those recruited to fill a vacant post at the Academy for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. We consulted on a proposal to restrict this to the demonstrable skill shortage option only, and remove the two year option. For the reasons outlined in detail below, this change was adopted on determination.
- In the same category, we added mandatory information to confirm what we mean by a 'staff member', and a 'child of a staff member', including specifying where the child must live. We also made it clearer that the staff member must be employed for the majority of their time at The Robert Smyth Academy, and will not have priority at other schools in the trust. While the inclusion of this type of information is mandatory, the criteria itself involves choice, and that is why we consulted on it as a change. This wording was adopted on determination.
- The previous minimum academic entry criteria for Year 12 required internal Year 11 pupils and external candidates to achieve a Total Grade Score (as defined in the policy) of at least 40 from eight GCSEs, and then went on to state that the Head of Sixth Form would assess suitability for those wanting to study 4 A levels after application which is not compliant with the Code. We consulted on a proposal to increase the Total Grade Score to 50 where 4 or more A levels are going to be studied, and remove reference to assessment of suitability on application. This wording was adopted on determination.

A committee of Trustees met on 8 February 2024 to consider the responses received during consultation, and then finalise the admission arrangements for the 2025-2026 intake, before formally determining them.

Fifteen responses were received from consultees. Many responses were supportive, but there were a number of responses outlining concerns about the proposed change to the oversubscription criterion for children of staff to remove the two year option, and restrict this to the demonstrable shortage option only.

The committee carefully considered all of the responses received in this respect. It was mindful of the current challenges faced when recruiting in education, but it was also conscious of the Board's duty to ensure that the Trust's schools focus on serving their local communities. The committee acknowledged that places were highly unlikely to be exhausted in the children of staff category, which means that the tie breaker would not be needed and the distance the child lived from the school would not be a consideration - a place would be achieved. This could result in children of staff living a considerable distance away from the school having priority for places over children living close to the school in lower categories.

The committee decided to proceed with the removal of the two year option, and proceed with the restriction to the demonstrable skill shortage only. For the avoidance of doubt, staff who meet this criteria on recruitment retain priority for their children for as long as they work at the school, including where this is over two years.

The committee noted that they may consider consulting in the future on the reintroduction of the two year option, most likely consistently across all schools in the Trust. However, this may be in a separate and lower category to the skill shortage option, and/or may be included *after* the category for children attending local feeder schools. This information is included to simply demonstrate that these matters will



always be kept under review, but should not be taken as an undertaking to do so, as decisions cannot be taken with regard to future admission arrangements at this time.

We hope that this summarises the decisions reached and their reasoning, where concerns were raised. Any queries should be directed to the school's Admission Officer going forwards.

Dr W P Rock
Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Tudor Grange Academies Trust

