WILLOWS PRIMARY SCHOOL (AND NURSERY)

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Admissions Policy 2026/2027

Aims

This Policy aims to:
Explain **how to apply** for a place at the School
Set out the School's **arrangements for allocating places to the pupils** who apply
Explain **how to appeal** against a decision not to offer your child a place

Legislation and Statutory Requirements

This Policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):
School Admissions Code
School Admission Appeals Code

As an Academy, the School is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes,and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

How to Apply

The Willows Primary School is a single site primary school; children stay in the same school throughout the infant and junior stages.

Published Admission Number: 90

To apply for a school place for your child, you need to follow the procedures set out below:

Applying for a place in Reception starting in September

If you are an Essex resident you must apply for your child's school place via Essex County Council's website: www.essex.gov.uk/admissions. (If you live in Essex, your council tax will be payable to one of the following District Councils: Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring or Uttlesford.) Parents who are resident in another council area

may make an application for a place at our School via their Home Authority.

The application process is in accordance with the co-ordinated scheme for primary admissions and involves completion of the Common Application Form – either online or in paper format via www.essex.gov.uk/admissions.

The online application system will open on 10th November 2025.

The closing date for applications is 15th January 2026.

Offers of places will be sent on 16th April 2026.

In-Year Applications

An application can be made for a place for a child at any time outside the main admission round. Applications should be made directly to the school using the application form available on the school's website.

A copy of the application form can also be obtained by contacting the school office.

Where there are places available but more applications than places, the published oversubscription criteria, as set out above, will be applied. If there are no places available, the child will be added to the waiting list.

The school will aim to inform parents / carers with the outcome of their in-year application in writing within 10 school days of receiving the application form.

In any event, the school will inform parents / carers of the outcome of their in-year application in writing within 15 school days.

The school will notify Essex County Council of every application and every outcome within 2 school days of the decision being made.

The school will provide Essex County Council with details of the number of places available whenever this information is requested, no later than 2 school days following receipt of the Local Authority request.

Unless there is a significant and material change in circumstances a second application received in the same academic year does not have to be determined and no second right of appeal will be given.

Oversubscription Criteria

There is no guarantee of a place for children living in the priority admission area.

In the event of oversubscription places will be allocated using the following criteria in the order given:

1. Looked After Children and previously looked after children (as hereinafter defined)

2. Children with a sibling attending the School (as hereinafter defined)

3.Children living in the priority admission area.

4. Children of all staff at the School:

a) where the member of 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
b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage

5.Remaining applications

In the event of oversubscription within any of the above criteria, priority will be determined by straight line distance from home to school, those living closest being given the highest priority.

Applications will normally be processed on the basis of the home address (as hereinafter defined) for the child at the time of application and determination, unless where there is a new home address, proof of an exchange of contracts or a copy of a signed tenancy agreement is provided to the Local Authority by 30th January 2026.

Criteria Explained

Looked after Children

A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements or special guardianship order will be given first priority in oversubscription criteria ahead of all other applicants in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021. This also includes those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (as defined in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and CarePlan

All children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and CarePlan (EHCP) that name the school on the statement / plan are required to be admitted to theschool regardless of their place in the priority order.

Siblings

For applications made in the normal admission round a relevant sibling is a child who has abrother, sister, adopted brother or sister or stepbrother or stepsister living in the same family unit in the same family household and address who attends the preferred school in any year group excluding the final year. Biological and adopted siblings who attend the preferred school in any year group excluding the final year will also be treated as siblings irrespective of place of residence. Children residing in the same household as part of an extended family, such as cousins, will not be treated as siblings.

For mid-year applications a sibling is a child who has a brother, sister, adopted brother or sister or stepbrother or stepsister living in the same family unit in the same family household and address as a child who attends or has been offered a place at the preferred school at the time of application and determination and with a reasonable expectation thatthe sibling will be attending at the time of admission. Biological siblings who attend the preferred school will be treated as siblings irrespective of their place of residence.

Age of Admission

The school's policy is that children born on and between 1st September 2021 and 31st August 2022 would normally commence primary school in Reception in the academic year beginning in September 2026.

As required by law, The Berlesduna Academy Trust provides for the fulltime admission of all children offered a place in the Reception year group from the September following their fourth birthday. Therefore, if a parent wants a full-time place for their child from September (at the school in which a place has been offered) then they are entitled to that full time place.

Parents can request that the date their child is admitted to the school is deferred until laterin the school year or until the child reaches compulsory school age within the school year. The law does not require a child to start school until the start of the term following their fifth birthday. Compulsory school age is reached at that point.

Where entry is deferred, the school will hold the place for that child and will not offer it to another child. The parent would not, however, be able to defer entry beyond the beginningof the term after the child's fifth birthday, nor beyond the academic year for which the original application was accepted. Parents can also request that their child attends part- time until the child reaches compulsory school age. Any parent interested in taking up a part-time place initially should contact the school for further details as to what this would entail.

Summer-born children 2026 Entry

If your child is summer-born i.e. born during the period 1 April 2022 and 31 August 2022 and you want him/her to start in Reception in September 2027 (instead of starting in the 2026 - 2027 academic year), this is what you will need to do:

Contact the Head Teacher of the School in writing explaining why you want your child to start school from then, rather than starting in the 2026 – 2027 academic year. The Head Teacher will make the decision on the basis of the circumstances of each individual case and in the best interests of the child concerned taking into account your parental views and any information you provide such as (for example) a letter from the child's current nursery, medical or health information, whether the child may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. Parents should demonstrate why it would be in their child's interests to be admitted to Reception rather than Year 1. The Head Teacher will inform the parent of the school's decision in writing giving reasons for the decision made. There is no guarantee that any such request will be automatically agreed.

Parents will then need to send an email to admissions@essex.gov.uk stating that they want a Reception place from September 2027 and explaining why they want their child to start school from then, rather than starting in the 2026 - 2027 academic year. Parents must attach the email or letter from the Head Teacher of all of the schools they are applying for. The email or letter from the Head Teacher must give their view on your request. If this is not provided, the Local Authority will be unable to process your request. Parents should also attach with the email any supporting information which they sent to the School.

We would advise parents to make any such request as soon as possible because if the request is not agreed, applications for places for the school year starting September 2026 will need to be made by the national closing date of 15th January 2026.

If the request is not agreed and parents would still prefer that their child starts in September 2027, parents would need to make a mid-year application directly to the school in the Summer term in 2026 for a Year 1 place at the school. The application will not be dealt with as a Reception application.

Parents should also consider that the school may be fully subscribed to their published admission number at this time by children who started at the school in the Reception year and have progressed forward to Year 1.

If the application for a Reception place is not accepted this does not constitute a refusal of the place and there is no right to an independent statutory appeal. Parents whose request for delayed entry is refused have no statutory right to appeal this decision as the purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, not the year group into which they are admitted. Parents who wish to challenge the decision of the Head Teacher may do so via the Berlesduna Academy Trust's complaints procedure (www.berlesduna.co.uk) or in writing to The Berlesduna Academy Trust, School House, Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2EX.

Admission Outside of the 'Normal Age Group'

Parents may seek a place at a school outside of a child's normal age group, for example if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Any such request must be made in writing to the Head Teacher of the School setting out clearly the reasons for the request. The Head Teacher will make the decision on the basis of the circumstances of each individual case and in the best interests of the child concerned taking into account your parental views and any information you provide such as (for example) a letter from the child's current nursery or school, medical or health information. The Head Teacher will inform the parent of the school's decision in writing giving reasons for the decision made. There is no guarantee that any such request will be automatically agreed.

Parents will then need to send an email to admissions@essex.gov.uk attaching the email or letter from the Head Teacher. The email or letter from the Head Teacher must give their view on your request. Parents should also attach with the email any supporting information which they sent to the School.

If the application for an 'out of age' cohort education is not accepted this does not constitute a refusal of the place and there is no right to an independent statutory appeal. Parents whose request for an 'out of age' cohort education is refused have no statutory right to appeal this decision as the purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, not the year group into which they are admitted. Parents who wish to challenge the decision of the Head Teacher may do so via the Berlesduna Academy Trust's complaints procedure (www.berlesduna.co.uk) or in writing to The Berlesduna Academy Trust, School House, Church Road, Basildon, Essex SS14 2EX.

Home address

Applications will normally be processed based on the home address for the child at the time of application and determination, unless, where there is a new home address, proof of an exchange of contracts or a copy of a signed tenancy agreement can be provided by 30th January 2026.

The home address is the address at which the child resides on a permanent basis or is 'ordinarily resident'. This is generally the address of the parent / carer. In some cases, children may be 'ordinarily resident' for much of the school week, including overnight, with another relative or carer, such as a grandparent. This may also be the case where a child resides between two parents at different addresses following the breakdown of the parental relationship. Where this is the case, the application may be processed based on that address (where the child resides for much of the school week) and proof of address and residence arrangement will be required with the application. The child must be living with the parent, relative or carer 24 hours per day, for much of the school week.

Arrangements where parents can leave and collect children from another relative or carer daily will be regarded as childcare arrangements, and the child will not be deemed to be 'ordinarily resident' with that person. Where relevant, it is expected that the adult with whom the child is 'ordinarily resident' receives the child benefit for the child (where eligible).

Distance tie breaker

For admissions purposes, the Local Authority uses data provided by Ordnance Survey (OS) to measure straight line distances. The OS data plots the co-ordinates of each individual property (the home address) which are referred to as address points. The definition of the home address is as described above. Straight line distance is measured from the address point of the home address to address point of the school. Distances are reported in miles to three decimal places. If a child's time is split equally between two residences, the address of the residence at which the child resides for much of the school week would be used to measure the distance between the child's school and home. In the unlikely event of two applicants with an identical distance competing for a single place at a school the place will be offered to one applicant on the basis of lots drawn by an officer of the Trust not involved in admissions, with the exception of twins, triplets etc.

Address Checking

The school will ask applicants to provide proof of their home address. This may include acopy of the following:

- UK driving license
- Council tax notification
- Two utility bills dated within the last 6 months (gas, electricity, water or landline phone)

The school reserves the right to take additional checking measures including further documentation and, in some cases, unannounced home visits.

If a school place is secured through false information regarding a home address, the Schoolwill withdraw the place offered.

Admission of children from overseas

All children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) in the UK have a right of access to education. However, where a child is in the UK for a short period only, for example less than half a term, it may be reasonable to refuse admission to a school.

Children who hold full British Citizen passports (not British Dependent Territories or British Overseas passports), have a passport endorsed to show a right of abode in the UK or are European Economic Area nationals normally have unrestricted entry to the UK. An application for a school place will be accepted for such children even though they may not be resident in the UK at the time of application. The application may however be processedon the basis of the overseas address.

If an applicant meeting the above criteria owns a property in the UK but is not living in it, perhaps because they are working abroad at the time of application, but they intend to takeup residency at the UK home before the start of the autumn term, the application will be processed using the UK address. Any offer of a school place will then be conditional uponreceipt of evidence of taking up residency at that property in the UK.

Other children from overseas do not generally have automatic right of entry to the UK. An application for a school place will not therefore be accepted until they are resident in the UK. Proof of residency such as an endorsed passport or entry visa will be required with theapplication.

Priority Admission Areas

There is no guarantee of a place to children living in the priority admission area of a school.

Parents can check in which school's priority admission area (catchment area) their address is located (if any) using the Essex County Council online 'Catchment Area Finder' tool on the Local Authority website www.essex.gov.uk/find-a-school.

Further information can be obtained directly from the School.

Twins, Triplets etc.

For applications made in the normal admission round, if the last child to be offered a place isa twin and their sibling cannot be offered initially, the admission authority will ensure both twins are offered a place. In the case of triplets or other multiple births, if the majority of childrencan be offered a place initially, the admission authority will offer places to the remaining children. For example, if two triplets can be offered a place, the remaining child will also receive an offer of a place.

For mid-year applications, where a family moves into an area necessitating a change of school for their twins (or triplets etc) and the majority can be offered a place then a place will be offered for the remaining child(ren). However, where the family does not move but wishes to transfer the children to another local school where there are insufficient places for all of them then a place would not normally be offered for all.

Withdrawal of an offer

If a school place has been secured through false information or has been offered in error,the offer of the place may be withdrawn.

Waiting lists

After 16th April 2026 all unsuccessful applications that are ranked higher than the school offered will be held on a waiting list, according to the admissions criteria for the school. Thisapplies to both on time and late applications.

Essex County Council School Admissions will hold waiting lists for all oversubscribed schoolsuntil the end of August 2026 after which they will be handed over to the school who will hold until 31st December 2026 and continue to allocate places from these lists if spaces become available. Applicants will be ranked on these waiting lists in priority order, according to the school's published over subscription criteria. Each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. After 31st December 2026, parents should contact the school directly regarding being on a Continued Interest List for aplace at the school.

Late Applications

Applications received after the national closing date of 15th January 2026 will normally be treated as late. This means your application will be dealt with after all on time applications have been processed, unless there is evidence, or you provide evidence, to show that the application could not reasonably have been made on time. A new on time preference will not be accepted after the closing date unless the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional. All late applications will be considered by Local Authority officers to determine whether there are exceptional circumstances. Where that is deemed to be the case, the application will betreated as 'on time'.

Even if there are reasons why you could not apply on time, it will be not possible to treat any application received after 30th January 2026 as on time. In addition, any applications,preferences or change requests received after 30th January 2026 will be held and not considered until after the first round of offers on 16th April 2026.

Changing primary schools

The opportunity to transfer depends on places being available at the preferred school. If a place can be offered, it is usually made available at the start of the following term. If no places are available, the application will be refused and the right of appeal will be given. Applications for transfer will not ordinarily be determined until the half term prior to the requested admission date.

In cases where a child moves into a district area (proof of address required) and, as a result of the move the child would be without a school place, the application will be dealt with immediately. A child should not be withdrawn from the current school until a place has been secured elsewhere.

Mid-year a school may admit a child over the admission number and outside the admission criteria where they have been excluded from another school or are being placed as a move supported by all agencies.

Nursery Provision

Attendance at a nursery attached to a school or a co-located children's centre, does not guarantee admission to the school. Parents of children who are attending such nursery provision must apply for a place at the school if they want their child to attend the reception class. The application will be considered against the published admission criteria for the school. There is no guarantee that a place will be offered.

Appeals against admission decisions

Parents have the right to appeal against admission decisions to an Independent Appeal Panel. Information about how to appeal against a refusal of a school place will be sent with the determination letter. Notice of appeal should be sent to the Clerk to the Independent Appeal Panel, PO Box 11, Chelmsford, CM1 1LX**.** More information with regard to appeals can be found on www.essex.gov.uk/after-your-school-offer/appeals.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Berlesduna Academy Trust every year. Whenever changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the agreed admission number), the Trust will publicly consult on these changes.