

Fair Access Protocol for Schools in Worcestershire

February 2026

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Introduction

The school admissions code places a statutory responsibility on all Local Authorities (LA) to have a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) which all schools in their area comply with, to ensure that all unplaced students, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a suitable school place without unnecessary delay.

Aims of the Fair Access Protocol

The protocol is designed to:

- a. Acknowledge the need for vulnerable young people who are seeking a school place to be dealt with quickly and sympathetically.
- b. Reduce the time that these students spend out of school.
- c. Ensure that schools admit students, including those with challenging educational needs, on a fair and equitable basis.
- d. Be fair and transparent.
- e. Ensure that all schools accept a fair and equitable share of students.

The Fair Access Protocol does not apply to:

- a. Children Looked After, as these students **must** be admitted.
- b. Students with Education, Health and Care Plans **must** not be referred to Fair Access Panels, as their admission will be in accordance with the appropriate legislation managed by the SEND Service.

In most instances parents can secure a mainstream school place; however, there are occasions where parents are not successful. This is a situation which is only acceptable where:

- Admitting the student would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources e.g., the school is full.
- The Governing Body do not wish to admit a student with challenging behaviour in year, even though there are places available. This is **only** appropriate where the school already has a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour or previously excluded students.

Challenging Behaviour

The Code on Admissions sets out that “behaviour can be described as challenging where it would be unlikely to be responsive to the usual range of interventions to help prevent and address student misbehaviour or it is of such severity, frequency, or duration that is beyond the normal range that schools can tolerate. We would expect this behaviour to significantly interfere with the student’s/other student’s education or jeopardise the right of staff and students to a safe and orderly environment.”

However, the Code on Admissions also states, “a child with challenging behaviour may also be disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010. When considering refusing admission on these grounds, admission authorities must consider their duties under that Act. Admission authorities should also consider the effect of the decision of the [C & C v The Governing](#)

[Body of a School, The Secretary of State for Education \(First Interested Party\) and The National Autistic Society \(Second Interested Party\) \(SEN\): \[2018\] UKUT 269 \(AAC\) ; \[2019\] AACR 10 - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#) about the implications of the Equality Act 2010 when a student exhibits a tendency to physical abuse of other persons as a consequence of a disability.”

For the purpose of this document students with challenging behaviour should meet the definition provided by the Code and in Worcestershire, are defined as follows:

- Those who have engaged in serious criminal behaviour resulting in a conviction or a police caution within the two years preceding the request for a school place.
- Students admitted to the school who have received a permanent exclusion within the last 2 years.
- Students whose behaviour has resulted in a number of fixed term exclusions within the previous 12 months (or other evidenced in-house alternative intervention in line with the [SEND Graduated Response | Worcestershire County Council](#) from which it is clear that the child is at serious risk of permanent exclusion.
- For a student to be classed as challenging in Worcestershire there must be evidence that the advice of a range of professionals has been sought to support the student. The advice from professionals must have been put in place and despite this, challenging behaviour has continued.

Schools are more likely to have a significantly higher proportion of “students with challenging behaviour or previously permanently excluded students” if the school’s socio-economic data in the English Indices of Deprivation indicates a higher level of deprivation than most other schools in the FAAP. The Weighting Grid circulated by the LA, to all FAAPs will identify the schools in that FAAP that have a significant level of students with challenging behaviour, considering the definition of challenging behaviour specified above and the English Indices of Deprivation. If this is not the case for a school, a refusal on this basis will not be accepted and the school will be required to admit the child.

Key Principles

1. The FAP will be triggered when a parent of an eligible student is having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, and it can be demonstrated that reasonable measures have been taken to secure a place through the usual in-year admission procedures. [School admissions policies | Worcestershire County Council](#)
2. Worcestershire LA has a co-ordinated approach for all in-year admissions via the School Admissions Team.
3. The Protocol may require schools to admit students over their PAN and ahead of students on their waiting list, unless to do so would breach the class size legislation in KS1.
4. Referrals under this Protocol will usually not be accepted unless parents are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, and it can be demonstrated that reasonable measures have been taken to secure a place through the usual in-year admission procedures. The FAP must not be used to circumvent the in-year admissions process; parents are also entitled to appeal against any refusal to admit during this process.

Students who are included within the Fair Access Protocol are:

- a. students either subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan or having had a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan within 12 months at the point of being referred to the Protocol.
 - b. students living in a refuge or in other Relevant Accommodation at the point of being referred to the Protocol.
 - c. students from the criminal justice system.
 - d. students in alternative provision who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education or who have been permanently excluded but are deemed suitable for mainstream education.
 - e. students with special educational needs, disabilities, or medical conditions, including those returning from MET (but without an Education, Health, and Care Plan).
 - f. students who are carers.
 - g. students who are homeless
 - h. students in formal kinship care arrangements.
 - i. students of those who are Gypsy, Roma, Travellers, refugees, and asylum seekers, including those that are new to the country.
 - j. students who have been refused a school place on the grounds of their challenging behaviour and the school already has a significant number of students with challenging behaviour and the Governors have refused to admit, even though the school has vacancies.
 - k. students for whom a place has not been sought due to exceptional circumstances.
 - l. students who have been out of education for four or more weeks where it can be demonstrated that there are no places available at any school within a reasonable distance of their home. This does not include circumstances where a suitable place has been offered to a student, and this has not been accepted by the parent.
 - m. previously looked after students for whom the local authority has been unable to promptly secure a school place. In most cases the use of the Fair Access Protocol should be unnecessary for a previously looked after child. DfE expects the local authority to aim to secure a school place particularly promptly for a previously looked after child and for admission authorities to cooperate with this.
5. Students previously removed from school to be Electively Home Educated who wish to return to school should be admitted to their previous school and if in order to improve future behaviour, an off-site direction could be instigated.
 6. This Protocol will not apply to students on roll of a Worcestershire school, despite any attendance issues they may have, unless the student has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which they are registered.
 7. There is an expectation that consideration should be given to parental preference; however, there is no duty placed upon LAs/Fair Access Area Panels (FAAP) to comply with such preference(s) when allocating places under the Fair Access Protocol, but parents' views should be considered.
 8. Where it has been agreed that a student will be considered under the Fair Access Protocol, a school place **must** be allocated for that student within twenty school days. Once they have been allocated a school place via the Fair Access Protocol, arrangements should be made for the student to start at the school as soon as possible.

9. Parents remain responsible for ensuring that their child receives a suitable education. Therefore, should they choose to refuse the school place offered under this Protocol, they will need to secure alternative arrangements for their child's education either by securing another school place through the usual admissions and appeal process or otherwise.
10. If a parent does not make suitable arrangements even though the LA has identified a place through the Fair Access Protocol, the LA may consider an application for a School Attendance Order.
11. Off-site Directions and Managed Moves are separate arrangements to those made under the Fair Access Protocol; however, consideration will be given to the number of completed Off-site Directions and Managed Moves when identifying appropriate schools to admit students through the Protocol. (See Appendix D Off-site Direction Protocol)
12. All schools **MUST** provide a representative at the meeting. Participation includes making available a representative who is authorised to participate in discussions, making decisions on placing students via the Protocol, and admitting students when asked to do so in accordance with the Protocol, even when the school is full. Schools must have this set out in their scheme of delegation. Non- attendance at Fair Access Area Panel (FAAP) meetings will **not** mean that those schools are exempt from participating in the allocation of places either in placement panels or being identified for direction.

Operation of the Fair Access Protocol in Worcestershire

13. In-year admissions are co-ordinated by the School Admissions Team. Where they identify that an application meets the criteria for FAP and schools have refused places under the normal in-year admissions process, the case will be referred to FAAP of the student's preferred school/s and also the FAAP where the student resides, if this is different.
14. Placement of secondary aged students is arranged through FAAP which, for geographical reasons, are divided into the following areas:

Area/Panels	Schools Represented	Local Alternative Provider/PRU
North East Worcestershire (Redditch, Bromsgrove, Rubery, and Wythall) Secondary School Panel	Arrow Vale High North Bromsgrove High School Ridgeway Academy Saint Augustine's Catholic High School South Bromsgrove High School Trinity High School Tudor Grange Academy, Redditch Waseley Hills High School Woodrush High School	The Forge Secondary Short Stay School (PRU)

North West Worcestershire (Wyre Forest) Secondary School Panel	Baxter College Bewdley High School Hagley Catholic High School Haybridge High School Holy Trinity School King Charles I School Stourport High School Tenbury Ormiston Academy Wolverley CE Secondary School	Continu Plus (Academy) (AP Free School)
Redditch and Bromsgrove Middle & Primary School Panel	Alvechurch CE Middle School Aston Fields Middle School Astwood Bank Primary Birchensale Middle School Catshill Middle School Church Hill Middle School Feckenham CE Primary Ipsley CE RSA Academy Parkside Middle School Ridgeway Academy St Bede's Catholic Middle School St John's CE Academy Middle Walkwood Church of England Middle School Webheath Primary Woodfield Academy	The Forge Secondary Short Stay School (PRU) The Beacon Primary Short Stay School (PRU)
South West Panel	Abbey Park Primary Blackminster Middle Bredon Hill Academy Dyson Perrins CE Academy Hanley Castle High School Pershore High School Prince Henry's High School St Barnabas CE Primary St Egwin's CE Middle Pinvin CE Academy The Chase School The De Montfort School	Aspire Academy (AP Free School)
Worcester, Droitwich, and Martley Secondary School Panel	Bishop Perowne CE College Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College Christopher Whitehead Language College Droitwich Spa High School Nunnery Wood High School The Chantry School Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester Westacre Middle School Witton Middle School	Newbridge Short Stay School (Academy) Perryfields Primary (PRU)

15. There may be instances where a student resides geographically closer to a school outside of their geographical FAAP. The student will be considered for placement at both their geographical FAAP and the FAAP covered by their nearest schools, where these are different.

16. Where it has been agreed that a student will be considered under the Fair Access Protocol, **a school place must be allocated for that student within twenty school days**. Each FAAP will meet every half term, outside of those meetings placement of a student will be considered by the panels virtually, either by electronic means or telephone conversation. Once a student has been allocated a school place via the Fair Access Protocol, arrangements should be made for the student to start at the school as soon as possible.
17. It is a legal requirement that every student considered under the Fair Access Protocol must be allocated a school place.
18. It is acknowledged that in some instances it may not be viable to have specific panels in the Primary Phase. In such cases, where a placement is required, the nearest schools with and without places will be brought together in a meeting, either virtually or in person, within seven days of the request, and will act as a Panel. A LA representative will attend this meeting. Every student brought to one of these meetings **must** be placed.
19. Each Panel must have a Chair, a Vice Chair and, as a minimum, include representatives from:
 - a) Schools, with the authority to allocate places for their school as set out in their scheme of delegation.
 - b) Local Commissioned Alternative Provider(s)
 - c) Local Authority
 - d) Other professionals where appropriate
20. All Panels, including those convened in the Primary Phase, must keep accurate minutes of each meeting and these must be sent within 3 days of each panel meeting, to all invitees.

Procedure

21. A request to the representatives of the relevant FAAP will be made including the relevant information to enable a decision to be reached.
22. Consideration should be given to the location of each school; however, any placement made through the FAAP will be regarded as the student's designated school. School Admissions will complete the transport re-designation form to ensure transport is available.
23. All schools **must** work together collaboratively. When placing a student through Fair Access the Panel **must** have evidence of and regard to the following, when identifying a school to ensure all schools are treated in a fair, equitable and consistent manner.
 - The number of students in the relevant year group
 - Published Admission Numbers
 - Distance from home to school
 - Number and percentage of permanently excluded students admitted to the school.
 - Number and percentage of permanently excluded students from the school
 - Number and percentage of Off-Site Directions admitted to the school.

- Number and percentage of Off-Site Directions leaving the school
 - Number and percentage of Managed Moves admitted to the school.
 - Number and percentage of Managed Moves leaving the school
 - Number and percentage of Fair Access admissions
 - Number and percentage of In-Year admissions admitted to the school.
 - Number and percentage of In-Year leavers leaving school
24. The LA will oversee the maintenance of a weighted list to identify the schools with the lowest weighting scores, whose turn it may be to admit next. (See Appendix A, The Schools Weightings'). Students admitted through a 'Managed Move,' or 'Off-Site Direction' will also be included on this grid.
25. The Panel **must** identify a school within twenty school days of a referral, to ensure no student is without a school place for a prolonged period.
26. The School Admissions Team will notify all parties of the outcome and provide or receive the relevant minutes of the meeting to evidence the decision-making process. If placement is made prior to the FAAP meeting, this must be reflected in the minutes of the next FAAP meeting.
27. In line with the current DfE advice, once a school has been identified and agreed by the school and panel, it is expected that the student will be admitted to the identified placement as soon as possible; the expectation is that this is within **seven** calendar days after the agreement to place has been made.
28. Written confirmation of the decision of FAAP, including placements made prior to the FAAP meeting, will be sent to the parents by School Admissions. To secure transport, the School Admissions Team will also complete the transport re-designation form. The CME officer allocated to the family will support the student's admission into school. **All students presented to FAP must be allocated a place under the Protocol.** Using the weighting system all placements will be made objectively.
29. If the identified school objects to the decision, the LA will then follow the direction process.

Alternative Provision

30. Where a student is eligible for placement under Fair Access, the LA will consider whether interim Alternative Provision would be suitable to minimise the days lost to education whilst a placement is sought. This may also include students permanently excluded or those students for whom mainstream education is not yet possible.
31. Schools must not refuse to consider a student for placement under Fair Access on the grounds that a child attends Alternative Provision prior to being placed.

Complaints

32. Where a parent has concerns about the LA's policies/procedures or an individual officer they will be advised to follow the LA's complaints procedure.
33. Where a parent has concerns about a school they will be advised to follow the

school's complaints procedure.

Monitoring and Review

34. The monitoring and review of this Protocol, and the effectiveness of each Fair Access Area Panel in exercising their responsibilities within the Protocol, will be undertaken termly by the Chairs of FAAP Meeting representatives. This meeting will be attended by:
 - a. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of each Fair Access Area Panel
 - b. Local Authority Representatives
35. The Protocol will be consulted on with all schools as part of the statutory consultation process on admission arrangements and approved by the Cabinet of the County Council/Cabinet Member with Responsibility as part of the determination on admission arrangements.
36. The Protocol will be published on the Worcestershire County Council Website, and all school admission policies will refer to participation in the protocol.

Appendix A – Weightings Grid

Principles

To ensure that all schools accept a fair and equitable share of students. All placements will be made fairly and objectively. The list will be open and transparent in its operation so that comparisons between schools are easily made and the admission, permanent exclusion and transfer of students can easily be tracked. The weightings will enhance the priority of very vulnerable groups of students.

How the Weightings will work

1. The Grid will be a spreadsheet identifying all the schools in the FAAP area.
2. There will be rows to track students coming 'IN – Permanent Exclusions' and students 'IN - FAP' i.e., these will be permanently excluded and other students admitted under FAP by the school.
3. Permanently excluded students will attract triple weighting (3 points). Other FAP students will attract either a double or single weighting as set out below.
4. Rows will also track 'Permanent Exclusions - OUT' which will attract a weighting factor (-3 points) to the school score unless, they have previously attempted an off-site direction for the child, the child was admitted to the school through the FAP Process in which case (-2 point) will be attracted. Transfers OUT of FAP students will attract a weighting of (-2 point).
5. The spreadsheet will also maintain rows that record the number of 'Off-site Directions' involving each school in the FAAP area. These students will attract a single weighting (+1 point for the receiving school and +1 point for the transfer out school), which will be added to the weighted score for each school to give a total weighting.
6. The spreadsheet will also maintain rows that record the number of 'Managed Moves' involving each school in the FAAP area. These students will attract a double weighting (+2 points for the receiving school and +2 points for the transfer out school), which will be added to the weighted score for each school to give a total weighting.
7. The spreadsheet will also maintain rows that record the number of 'Fair Access Admissions' involving each school in the FAAP area. These students will attract a double weighting (+2 points for the receiving school and -2s points if there is a subsequent transfer), which will be added to the weighted score for each school to give a total weighting.
8. The difference between the 'IN' and the 'OUT' columns will give a weighted score for the school. The schools with the lowest or most negative weighted score will be deemed the next most likely schools to admit a student.
9. The spreadsheet will show the number of students in each year group and the percentage of students taken in that year through FAP.
10. The spreadsheet will also give an overall score for each FAAP area, so that

comparison can be made across Worcestershire. This will be presented to Chairs of FAAP at the termly meetings to be able to assess the overall impact of the protocol.

Upkeep and use of the Weightings Grid

1. The Local Authority will maintain copies of the weightings and will ensure they are updated before each FAAP meeting.
2. The weightings will be used by each FAAP to inform their decision making about the school indicated to admit a student.
3. Students will remain on the weighting grid until they leave the roll of the school, e.g., permanently excluded, complete their Year 11 studies or move to a new school etc.

Appendix B – Useful Contacts

NB Please do not send emails containing sensitive information through the email addresses below. All documents which detail personal, confidential, or restricted information should be uploaded to the relevant Fair Access Teams site or sent securely via the Children's Services Portal marked for the attention of the recipient.

Panel	Name and Title	Contact Information
All	Tracey Wilson School Admissions Manager	Email: twilson@worcestershire.gov.uk Tel: 01905 843033
All	Kate Turner Learner Engagement Team Lead	Email: Kturner1@worcestershire.gov.uk Tel: 01905 643592
Alternative Provision and North West Secondary	Sara Devo Headteacher Alternative Provision FAAP Chair and AP Representative for North West FAAP	ContinU plus Academy, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7FB Email: sd263@cpa.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01562 822463
Alternative Provision and Worcester City Secondary	Ian Enwright Head Teacher Alternative Provision FAAP Vice-Chair and AP Representative for Worcester City FAAP	Newbridge School, Midland Road, Worcester WR5 1DS Email: ian.enwright@clpt.co.uk Tel: 01905 763580
North East Secondary	Donna Hodgson Deputy Head Teacher Chair Adam Fortune Student Support Lead Vice-Chair	North Bromsgrove High School School Drive, Stratford Road, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 1BA Email: nbhs@northbromsgrove.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01527 872375 Arrow Vale School Matchborough Way, Redditch, B98 0GF Email: office@arrowvaleacademy.co.uk Tel: 01527 526800
North West Secondary	Stuart Knott Deputy Head Teacher North West FAAP Chair James Hodgson Principal North West FAAP Vice-Chair	Wolverley CE Secondary School Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcs. DY11 5XQ Email: office@wolverley.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01562 859800 Hagley Catholic High School Brake Lane, Hagley, West Midlands. DY8 2XL Email: enquiry_hchs@emmausmac.com Tel: 01562 883193

Redditch and Bromsgrove Middle & Primary	Michael Williams Vice Principal Redditch Middle & Primary FAAP Chair Gemma McKenna Pastoral Co-ordinator Redditch Middle & Primary FAAP Vice Chair	Ipsley CE Middle Winyates Way, Winyates, Redditch, B98 0UB Email: office@ipsleyacademy.co.uk Tel: 01527 525725 Walkwood Church of England Middle School, Feckenham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch, Worcs. B97 5AQ Email: office@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01527 543361
South West	Mike Gunston Headteacher South West FAAP Chair Ben Jones Deputy Headteacher South West FAAP Vice Chair	Dyson Perrins Church of England Academy Yates Hay Road, Malvern, Worcs. WR14 1WD Email: office@dysonperrins.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01684 564751 The De Montfort School Four Pools Road, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 1DQ Email: office@tdms.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01386 442060
Worcester, Droitwich, and Martley Secondary	Jane Price Headteacher Chair Gemma Lloyd-Davies Deputy Head Teacher Vice-Chair	Bishop Perowne Church of England College Merriman's Hill Road, Worcester WR3 8LE Email: info@bishopperowne.co.uk Tel: 01905 746800 Droitwich Spa High School Briar Mill, Droitwich, Worcs. WR9 0AA Email: office@droitwichspahigh.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01905 774421
North East Secondary and Redditch and Bromsgrove Middle & Primary	Daniel Smith Headteacher AP Representative for North East FAAP and Redditch and Bromsgrove Middle and Primary FAAP	The Forge, 215 Easemore Rd, Redditch B98 8HF Email: dsmith@theforge.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01527 597936
South West Secondary and Middle	Simon Stevenson Headteacher AP Representative for South West FAAP	The Aspire Academy, Bridgwater Road, Worcester, WR4 9FQ Email: sstevenson@TheAspireAcademy.onmicrosoft Tel: 01905 455422
Redditch and Bromsgrove Middle & Primary	Lesley Hatton Headteacher AP Representative for Bromsgrove Middle FAAP and Redditch Middle & Primary FAAP	The Beacon Student Referral Unit, Longdon Close, Woodrow, Redditch, B98 7UZ Email: office@thebeacon.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01527 514068
Worcester Primary	Peter Hines Headteacher AP Representative for Worcester Primary Schools	Perryfields Primary PRU, Glebe Cl, Worcester WR2 5AX Email: office@perryfields.worcs.sch.uk Tel: 01905 427011

North West Primary	Kuldip Berdesha Head Teacher AP Representative for North West Primary Schools	Unity Academy, Hurcott Road, Kidderminster DY10 2QJ Email: Office-uny@riverscofe.co.uk Tel: 01562 215194
NA	CAMHS	WHCNHS.CAMHS-SPA@nhs.net 01905 681087 (Internal Extension: 51087)
NA	Education Finance Rob Phillips	RPhillips2@worcestershire.gov.uk 01905 846252
NA	Education Transport Team	KRoberts2@worcestershire.gov.uk 01905 728891
NA	Here2Help Worcestershire	https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/community-services-directory 01905 822666
NA	SEND helpline	Email: SEN-RGS@worcestershire.gov.uk Tel: 01905 845579

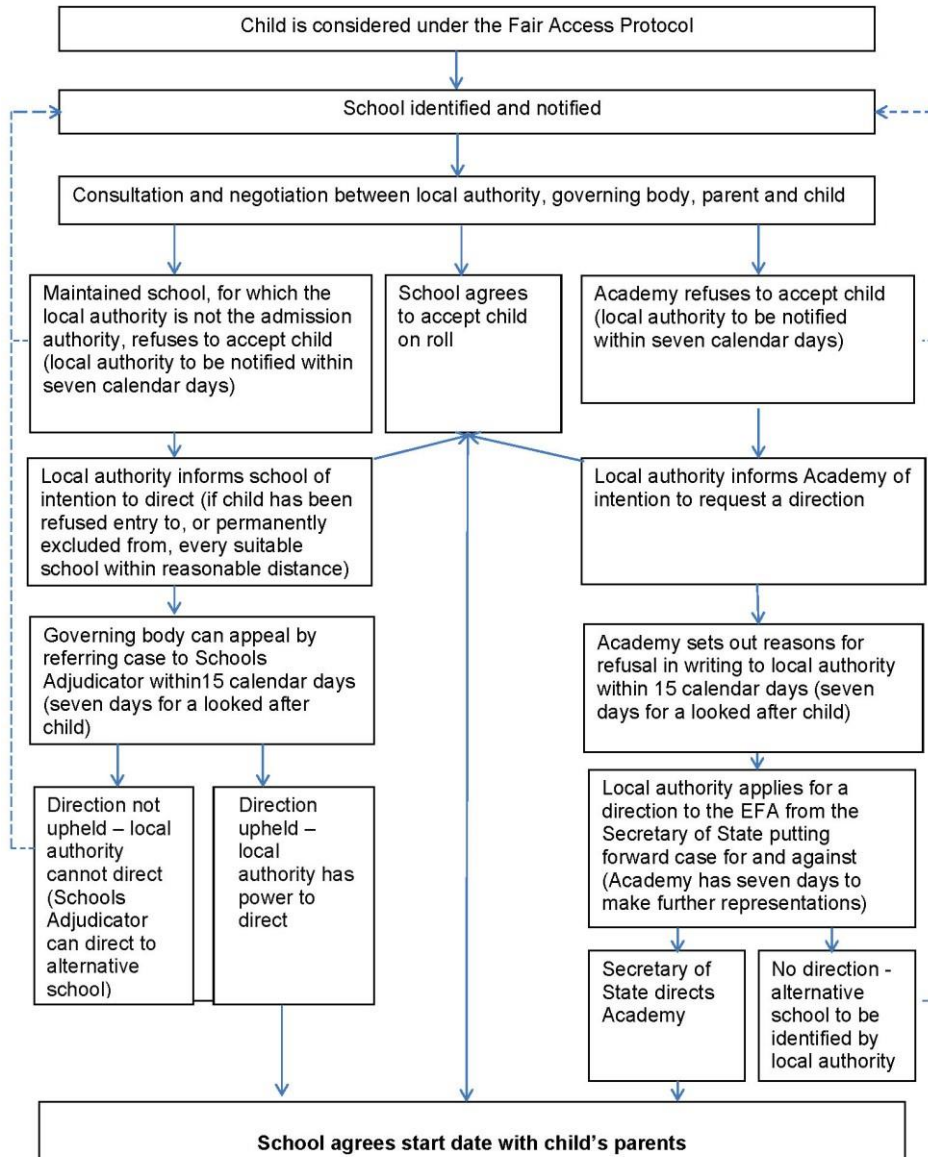
Appendix C – Direction Process

Direction Process for LA and non-LA Maintained Schools Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

In the case of Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, the Local Authority is the admission authority for those schools, there is therefore **no** Direction Process. The Local Authority issues the Governing Body with an “**Instruction to admit**” in relation to a specific student. The Governing Body must then take steps to admit the student; there is no appeal against this decision for a CO or VC Governing Body.

Direction Process for Academy, Foundation, Free and Voluntary Aided Schools

Directions flow chart (overview of process)



* Note: A community or voluntary controlled school cannot refuse to admit a pupil if requested by its own admissions authority.

Other useful resources

[Advice, guidance and support to help inclusion in education | SEND](#)

[Local Offer | Worcestershire County Council](#)

[Apply for a school place | Worcestershire County Council](#)

[School admissions policies | Worcestershire County Council](#)

[School Admissions Code](#)