

## **INITIO LEARNING TRUST MERLEY**

### **FIRST SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

#### **POLICY 2025/26**

The Admission Authority for Merley First School is Initio Learning Trust. The Trust is responsible for the policy and decisions made in regard to it.

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan issued by a local authority naming Merley First School will be admitted to the school before preferences are considered for admission in September.

Merley First School has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60. Where there are more applications than places available the following criteria will be used, in numerical order, to decide the priority list for the offering of places up to the school's Published Admission Number:

1. Looked After Children or previously Looked After Children, including 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.
2. Children who live in the school's catchment area who have a sibling who is already on the roll of the school and will continue to attend the school at the time of admission.
3. Children who live in the school's catchment area who have a significant medical or psychological condition.
4. All other children who live in the school's catchment area.
5. Children who live outside the school's catchment area who have a sibling who is already on the roll of the school and will continue to attend the school at the time of admission.
6. Children who live outside the school's catchment area who have a significant medical or psychological condition.
7. All other children who live outside the school's catchment area.

If a school is oversubscribed in any of the categories above, children in the oversubscribed category who live closest to the school will be given priority. If the distance measurement is equal for two or more applicants the place will be allocated by the drawing of lots.

Please ensure you read Notes 1 to 6 and the remainder of this policy for further information.

## **Admissions arrangements**

Admission will be in accordance with the agreed scheme for co-ordinated admission arrangements 2025/26.

## **Statutory school age**

Children reach compulsory school age at the start of the school term following their fifth birthday. The start of term is defined as 1 September/January/April (this may not be the first day of term for the school being considered).

## **Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school**

An application must be submitted for every child to their Local Authority's school admissions team. Children are able to attend full-time in the September following their fourth birthday.

At parental request, a child may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

Parents can also defer a child's entry until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year. The place is held and is not available to be offered to another child unless it is not taken up by the agreed date, when it will be considered vacant.

Parents of summer-born children (born 1 April – 31 August) may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday, when they would normally join their own age group in year 1, but parents may request that the child is admitted outside their normal year group into reception.

## **Admission of children outside their normal age group**

It is Trust policy that children attending Initio Learning Trust schools including summer-born children will normally be placed with their own age group, and be educated for the majority of the time with their age peer group as evidence suggests that this is usually in the best interests of the child.

However, parents are entitled to request admission for their child outside their normal age group and decisions will be taken on the basis of the circumstances of each case.

The procedure for application is set out in Appendix 1. This applies to all children with the exception of those holding or undergoing assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan who should contact their local authority Special Educational Needs Team for advice.

## **Excepted pupils for infant classes (Years R, 1 and 2)**

Infant classes must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single school teacher. Additional children may be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances. These children will remain an 'excepted pupil' for the time they are in an infant class or until the class numbers fall back to the current infant class size limit. The excepted children are:

- Children admitted outside the normal admissions round with Education, Health and Care Plans;
- Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children admitted outside the normal admissions round;
- Children admitted, after initial allocation of places, because of a procedural error made by the admission authority or local authority in the original application process;
- Children admitted after an independent appeals panel upholds an appeal;
- Children who move into the area outside the normal admissions round for whom there is no other available school within reasonable distance;
- Children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round;
- Children whose twin or sibling from a multiple birth is admitted otherwise than as an excepted pupil;
- Children with Special Educational Needs who are normally taught in a special educational needs unit attached to the school, or registered at a special school, who attend some infant classes within the mainstream school.

## **In Year Fair Access**

All the admission authorities in BCP have established an In Year Fair Access Protocol. The purpose of the In Year Fair Access Protocol is to ensure that – outside the normal admissions round – unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible. Cases are considered by a Panel comprising Headteachers and/or their representatives. When seeking to place a child, the Panel will consider all schools in a fair, equitable and consistent manner. Decisions of the Panel may mean that individual schools admit children above the Published Admission Number. Admission authorities will not normally be asked to admit a child to an infant class where there are already 30 children in the class.

## **In Year Admissions – Looked After Children**

A Looked After Child (see Notes 1 and 2) may be admitted to a school above the Published Admission number if it is felt by the local authority that a particular school is the most appropriate placement to meet the needs of the individual child. The local authority has adopted a Protocol for dealing with in year admissions of Looked After Children.

## **Home Address**

The home address where a child lives is considered to be a residential property that is the child's main or only address during term time. Applicants can be asked to provide additional evidence in order to verify addresses and/or other details provided. It is at the discretion of the admission authority what evidence is required (evidence may include, but is not limited to, Child Benefit, GP registration, evidence of home ownership/tenancy etc.). The final decision on the home address of a child will be made by the admission authority. If any information supplied by an applicant is judged by the admission authority to be fraudulent or intentionally misleading, the admission authority may refuse to offer a place, or if already offered, may withdraw the offer.

## **Applications from separated Parents/Carers**

Only one application can be considered for each child. Where parents/carers are separated it is essential that agreement is reached by both parties concerning the nominated preferred schools. Where a child spends part of their week with one parent and part with the other, only one address can be used. This must be the address at which the child spends most of their time during term time. Applicants can be asked to provide additional evidence in order to verify addresses and/or other details provided. It is at the discretion of the admission authority what evidence is required (evidence may include, but is not limited to, Child Benefit, GP registration, evidence of home ownership/tenancy etc.). The final decision on the home address of a child will be made by the admission authority. If any information supplied by an applicant is judged by the admission authority to be fraudulent or intentionally misleading, the admission authority may refuse to offer a place, or if already offered, may withdraw the offer.

## **Applications for children of multiple births**

If there are insufficient places to accommodate all the children of a multiple birth (i.e. twins, triplets etc) in any year group and one child can be admitted, the other siblings of the multiple birth will be admitted over the school's Published Admission Number. If it is in an infant class (Years R, 1 and 2) the additional children over the PAN will be considered as excepted pupils for the entire time they are in an infant class at the school or until the class numbers fall back to the infant class size limit in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

## **Notes**

1. A "Looked After Child" means any child who is in the care of a local authority in accordance with Section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989. A child who was "previously a Looked After Child" means a child who after being Looked After became subject to an Adoption Order under the Adoption Act 1976 or under Section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, a Residence Order or Child Arrangement Order under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 or Special Guardianship Order under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989. This category also includes Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children (IAPLAC). These are also children outside of England, who were deemed to

have been in the care of the State (or by the 3rd sector where no state provision is available) prior to their adoption. Applicants can be asked to provide additional evidence in order to verify the previously looked after status of a child. It is at the discretion of the admission authority what evidence is required. The final decision will be made by the admission authority. If any information supplied by an applicant is judged by the admission authority to be fraudulent or intentionally misleading, the admission authority may refuse to offer a place, or if already offered, may withdraw the offer.

2. A child is regarded as having been in state care in a place outside of England if they were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. Applicants can be asked to provide additional evidence in order to verify the previously looked after status of a child. It is at the discretion of the admission authority what evidence is required. The final decision will be made by the admission authority. If any information supplied by an applicant is judged by the admission authority to be fraudulent or intentionally misleading, the admission authority may refuse to offer a place, or if already offered, may withdraw the offer.
3. “Sibling” means:
  - a full brother or sister who lives with one or both parents or carers in the same property during the school week.
  - a half-brother or half-sister who lives with one or both parents or carers in the same property during the school week.
  - an adoptive brother or sister who lives with one or both parents or carers in the same property during the school week.
  - a foster brother or sister who lives with one or both parents or carers in the same property during the school week.
  - non-blood related children who, together, all live with one or both parents or carers in the same property during the school week.
- 4(a) The distance from home to school is measured using the shortest, safe and practicable walking route using the centre line of roads and footpaths (excluding paths identified for the sole use of bicycles i.e. cycleways). Roads and footpaths measured are normally public. If your property is only accessible via a private road or footpath, this road or footpath may be included in the measurement.

The starting point for the measurement is taken from your home address. This has been geolocated using the geocoded address point obtained from the local authority’s Local Land and Property Gazetteer. The total distance measured is a combination of 2 measurements using 3 points:

- i) Geocoded home address point  
-to-
- ii) Centre of nearest road/footpath  
-to-
- iii) Nearest approved school access point that is for use by pupils

All measurements are obtained from the local authority's Admissions System. The GIS maps used are provided by Ordnance Survey and represent the position as at the beginning of the annual admission cycle i.e. September in the year prior to admission. Any alterations to Ordnance Survey map references, footpaths or roads added after this time will not be taken into consideration. No measurements obtained through other sources (e.g. search engines, mapping systems) will be accepted.

- 4(b) For applicants living on islands or residing permanently on a boat within Poole harbour, the distance measurement will be a straight line from the geocoded home address point to either:

- 1. the nearest public landing steps at Poole Quay, or
- 2. a point on the mainland that the applicant proves to the satisfaction of the admission authority that he/she can access

The total distance measured is a combination of 3 measurements using 4 points:

- i) Geocoded home address point  
-to-
- ii) Public landing steps or other approved access point on the mainland  
-to-
- iii) Centre of nearest road/footpath  
-to-
- iv) Nearest approved school access point that is for use by pupils

- 4(c) If an applicant advises the admission authority that the child would or could use the Sandbanks/Studland Chain Ferry in the journey to school, then the distance will be measured on that basis from the geocoded home address point and will include the distance travelled by the ferry.

- 5. If there are insufficient places to accommodate all applicants and the distance criterion is used, the admission authority will use random allocation for applicants living an equal distance from the school (up to three decimal points) or at the same address or in the same block of flats who are eligible for the remaining places. Applicants will have their names drawn as lots to see who should be offered the place(s). The person drawing the names will have no involvement in the school admissions process.
- 6. If applying under medical or psychological grounds, written advice from an NHS Consultant (for medical grounds), or an NHS Consultant Psychiatrist (for psychological grounds) that documents the child or young person's medical or psychological needs must be included with the application. Children will only meet this criterion if the

school(s) named on the application form is assessed by the admission authority to be the only school(s) that can meet any specific medical or psychological needs identified.

## **Appendix 1 - Admission of children outside their normal age group**

### **Introduction**

This document sets out the process and criteria for considering requests for Initio Learning Trust schools. It applies to all children with the exception of those holding or undergoing assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan who should contact their local authority Special Educational Needs Team for advice.

It is Trust policy that children attending Initio Learning Trust schools will normally be placed with their own age group, and be educated for the majority of the time with their age peer group as evidence suggests that this is usually in the best interests of the child.

Parents do however from time to time seek places for children in a lower or higher age group. Such requests may be made for a variety of reasons, for example where a child has moved to the area from abroad, or has missed schooling due to illness, or has a marked talent or ability.

Also, parents of summer-born children (born 1 April – 31 August) may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday, when the child would normally join their own age group in year 1, but parents may request that the child is admitted outside their normal year group into reception.

### **The decision-making process**

When requests for admission to a year group different to that determined by a child's date of birth are received, a panel will be convened at the school to consider the written application and supporting information provided by the parent/carer.

This panel will consist of:

- The head teacher of the preferred school
- A member of the Initio Learning Trust senior leadership team
- The Initio Learning Trust Inclusion lead and/or their delegate

Additional professional advisors may be included on the panel at the discretion of the head teacher.

On occasion there may be insufficient evidence for the panel to reach a decision. In this instance the panel may request additional information or a meeting with the parent/carer which may include requesting to meet/observe the child.

## Process for consideration of requests

1. On initial contact from a parent/carer with either the local authority's admissions team or with the school directly, an appointment to meet with the school's head teacher will be arranged within 20 school days.
2. If, after discussion with the head teacher, the parent/carer still wishes to pursue an 'out of year' admission, they will be asked to complete an application form together with supporting evidence.
3. The application form will ask for basic information about the child as well as:
  - The nature of the request
  - Reasons for the request
  - The child's educational history
  - Indication of the child's wishes (with opportunity for the child to record their views directly where practical/age appropriate)
4. In addition they will be asked to provide supporting information/documentation which may include but is not limited to reports from health care professionals that are working with the child such as the child's Paediatrician, Health Care Visitor, Area SENCO, Speech and Language Therapist, along with statements from the child's parent/carers school and/or Preschool):
5. The parent/carer will be informed of the date that the Panel will meet within 20 school days of receipt of their written request (application form and supporting evidence).
6. The parent/carer will be informed of the decision of the panel in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.
7. In the meantime, if the child is already attending a school, they should continue to attend their current school.

## **Criteria for agreement to 'out of year' admissions**

The panel will consider evidence relating to all aspects of the child's development and needs in coming to a decision. Issues to be considered will include:

For requests for change of year group where a child is already in school

- Whether there is evidence that the child has previously been educated in a year group above or below that determined by their date of birth and that this has had positive benefits.
- Whether there is documented evidence that to place the child in their normal age group would be detrimental to their educational progress or likely exam performance.
- Whether there is evidence that it is in the interests of the child's social and emotional development to be educated in a year group above or below that determined by their date of birth.

For requests for delayed admission for summer born children the Panel will consider the following:

- the needs of the child and the possible impact on them of entering year 1 without having first attended the reception class;
- in the case of children born prematurely, the fact that they may have naturally fallen into the lower age group if they had been born on their expected date of birth;
- whether delayed social, emotional or physical development is adversely affecting their readiness for school;
- relevant research into the outcomes of summer born and premature children; and
- relevant advice, guidance and legislation from the Department for Education.

## **Right of appeal following the decision**

There is no right of appeal if a parent/carer is offered a place in their preferred school and it is not in the year group they would like. However, parents/carers can make a complaint through the Trust's complaints procedure.