



Initio Learning Trust



ADMISSIONS POLICY 2026-2027

Initio Learning Trust

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Policy Written by

Initio Learning Trust

**Ratified by
Initio Learning Trust Board**

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Date for Review

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This is Initio Learning Trust's admissions policy for St Mary's CE First School

It relates to children applying to schools starting in September 2026. It should be read in conjunction with Dorset Council's parents' guide. The guide along with admissions policies for other types of schools and further information and clarification are available on Dorset's school admissions [website](#):

1. Admission of Pupils – General Principles

- The School Admissions Code, legislative guidance including coordination, equal preference scheme and infant class size legislation are adhered to,
- The schools serve traditional areas (catchments) to ensure fair access. Each school's catchment area is a geographical area defined by Dorset Council following consultation with the governors and neighbouring schools and is available for parents to view on the Dorset school admissions website, and appended to this document,
- Admission arrangements are consistently and equally applied to all,
- Resources are used efficiently,
- Allocation of school places are made up to the planned admission number, in accordance with the oversubscription criteria,
- The Admissions Arrangements adhere to the principles of the Equalities Act 2010.

2. Published Admission Numbers (PANs)

All admission authorities must set an admission number for each year group.

A school will be asked to exceed the admission number only where:-

- The last place within PAN is allocated to one of multiple birth siblings, then the other birth siblings will be admitted,
- Where an error occurs and the child should have been offered a place,
- A large group of families with children arrive in the area where it has not been possible to accommodate them within the normal allocation of places because of the short notice. If this is the case, the Local Authority will identify an appropriate setting to accommodate the children as quickly as possible,
- An unexpected event/incident occurs necessitating urgent/temporary placement,
- There is a need to comply with other agreed protocols, e.g. Children in Care, Fair Access, SEN Code of Practice and the Military Covenant

St Mary's CE First School's PAN is 30.

3. Admission of Pupils to School for the First Time at Age 4+/5

3.1 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 1st September/January/April (this may not be the first day of term for the school being considered).



3.2 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.

3.3 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.

4. In-Year Admissions

In-year or casual admissions will be processed through Dorset Council's school admissions team. A formal application must be made in all instances with relevant information attached to the application. Should a place not be allocated at a school for which a parent has expressed a preference, parents have a right of appeal. Any alternative placement offered by Dorset Council will take account of the distance to travel consistent with the national guidance on journey times i.e. the alternative placement will not exceed a journey of 45 minutes for primary-aged children and 75 minutes for secondary-aged children.

5. School Transport

Details about school transport are provided in Dorset Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Advice is also provided in the Policy and Parents' Guide to ensure parents, guardians and carers are aware that their preference of school and the admissions criteria will affect their entitlement to school transport. This includes later changes (e.g. change of address) which could have a bearing on continued eligibility for school transport.



6. Withdrawal of School Places

Places will only be withdrawn where:

- A place has been offered in error by the admission authority and the affected child/ren have not yet started at the preferred school;
- A place has been offered on the basis of a false, fraudulent or deliberately misleading application. The place will be withdrawn if the case has been identified by the first October half term following admission;
- The place has not been taken up by the specified date – the parent will be contacted in advance of the withdrawal of a place; or
- The place has been declined by the parent.

7. Waiting Lists

The admissions authority operates a limited waiting list policy. Parents can apply to have their child's name placed on a waiting list for a period of one term following refusal. If parents wish to keep a child on a waiting list beyond this term they will need to request an extension. There is no guarantee of a school place by remaining on the waiting list.

8. Appeals

If the admissions authority is unable to offer a place at a school that has been applied for, the parent has the right to appeal to an independent Appeals Panel. The decision of the Panel is binding on all parties and where parents succeed with their appeal, the place at the school originally offered will be automatically withdrawn.

9. Oversubscription

Where the school is named on a child's Education, Health and Care Plan, the child will be admitted to the school.

Where all parental preferences for places at the school can be satisfied, all children seeking a place will be admitted.

Where there are too few places available to satisfy all preferences, places will be allocated according to the following priority order:-

- i) A "Child in Care" or who was "previously a Child in Care" (see footnote 1)
- ii) Children who the admissions authority accepts have an exceptional medical or social need and where there is a need for a place at one specific school (see footnote 2).
- iii) Children living within the school's catchment area who will have a sibling(s) attending the school at the time of admission. (see footnote 3)
- iv) Children living within the school's catchment area.



- v) Children living outside the school's catchment area who will have a sibling(s) attending the school at the time of admission. (see footnote 3)
- vi) Children living outside the school's catchment area and whose parents wish them to attend a CE school on denominational grounds. (see footnote 4)
- vii) Children of staff with at least two years continuous service at the school or who have been recruited to a vacancy to meet a demonstrable skills shortage as at the date of application (in year) or relevant closing date under Dorset Council co-ordinated scheme (normal year of entry) and who still intend to be employed at the school at the time of the child's admission. (see footnotes 5 & 6)
- viii) All other children living outside the school's catchment area.

If oversubscribed within any of the priority order categories above, places will be allocated on the basis of the shortest straight line measurement using a geographical information based system which identifies an Easting and Northing for the home address and the school and calculates the distance between the two locations. NB. School transport is based on walking and driven distances.

In the event that the admissions authority is unable to distinguish between applications despite applying the priority categories above, lots will be drawn by an independent (of the admissions authority) person to determine the final place(s).

Where applications are received from families with multiple birth siblings and by adhering to PAN these siblings could not be offered the same school, the admission number will be exceeded to accommodate the multiple birth siblings. This is not an indication that schools can exceed the admission number other than under these exceptional circumstances.

National Closing dates for applications

31 st October 2025	National closing date for secondary school applications
15 th January 2026	National closing date for primary school applications
2 nd March 2026	National offer day for secondary schools
16 th April 2026	National offer day for primary schools



Footnotes

1. A “Child in Care” 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 Child in Care” means a child who after being Looked After became subject to an Adoption Order under Section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, a Residence Order under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 or Special Guardianship Order under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989.
2. Applications will only be considered under this category if there is evidence provided such as a Child Protection Order, Children in Need document or a written statement from a doctor, social worker or other relevant independent professional. The information must confirm the exceptional medical or social need and demonstrate how the specified school is the only school that can meet the defined needs of the child. The local authority is all inclusive and will meet all legislative requirements to accommodate children within their educational setting as appropriate to their needs.
3. The term ‘sibling’ means full brother or sister, half or step brother or sister, adoptive brother or sister and other non-blood related children who live with married or cohabiting parents in the same household and relates to all year groups provided by the school.
4. In order to qualify for consideration under this category, parents/guardians will need to show that at least one adult family member and the child to whom the application relates to have been attending their local church at least once a month for a minimum of a year prior to the closing date for applications. The application must also be supported by a written statement from the vicar/priest/minister or leader of the church confirming this. In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the church has been closed for public worship and has not provided alternative premises for that worship, the requirements of these arrangements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the church or alternative premises have been available for public worship.
5. The term ‘children’ includes full, half, step, adopted and those non-blood related but resident through marriage, civil partnerships or single family cohabitation arrangements at the time of application or deadline.
6. Staff are defined as all employed teaching and support staff at the preferred school. ‘Children of staff’ refers to situations where the staff member is the natural parent, the legal guardian or a resident step parent. If applicants wish to be considered under this criterion then a letter from the Headteacher confirming the above applies to the applicant must be provided at the time of application.

Failure to provide sufficient evidence will result in the application being processed against the next highest criteria.



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 headteacher 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 headteacher.

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 headteacher will be arranged within 20 school days.



2. If, after discussion with the headteacher, 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.

For requests for change of year group where a child is already in school, the panel will consider:

- 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 placing the child in their normal age group would be detrimental to their educational progress or likely exam performance; and
- 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.



Appendix 2

Initio Learning Trust

2026/27 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION FORM

Part A - Please ensure that you read before completing

The oversubscription criteria set out in section i) of the school's published Admission Arrangements, will be used to prioritise the offer of school places where there are more applications received than places available.

The oversubscription criteria includes a priority for children who are regularly (monthly) practising Christians, of whatever denomination, at a recognised church or religious group. (A recognised church or religious group is one that is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (see ctbi.org.uk). If you wish your admission application to be prioritised on this basis, you must ensure that this Supplementary Information is completed by the vicar, priest, pastor or churchwarden of the attended Church to confirm that the requirements of the above statement have been met. *

Part B – Submitting your Supplementary Information Form

- For a child to start in Reception for the first time in September 2026 – your admission application form must be submitted to Dorset Council and your completed Supplementary Information Form sent by letter post directly to the school office at the same time.
- For a child to join any year group during the 2026/27 school year – your completed Supplementary Information Form must be submitted by letter post with your admission application form directly to the school office

Part C – Declaration to be made by vicar, priest minister, pastor or church warden

I have consulted with the local church leadership team and can confirm that:

..... (enter child's name)

attends Church and has done so at least once per month for the last twelve months*.

Signed

Print name

Position

Date

Note: The church leadership team includes clergy, church wardens and those responsible for Sunday School.

** In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the place of worship has been closed for public worship and has not provided alternative premises for that worship, the requirements of these [admissions] arrangements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the place of worship or alternative premises have been available for public worship.*



Admission appeals timetable

Action	Deadline
Local Authority to publish appeals timetable to include:	28 February
a. For a parent to submit an Appeal	At least 20 school days from the parent receiving notice of the refusal of a place at a school
b. Notice of the Appeal Hearing	At least 10 school days before the hearing
c. Appellants (usually the parents) to submit evidence	8 school days before the Appeal hearing
d. Admission Authority (the school) to submit their evidence	
e. The Clerk (the person organising the appeal) sends Appeal papers to parents, the panel and the school	5 school days before the Appeal hearing
f. Additional evidence from the Appellants. (Sometimes the Appellants wish to provide additional information after seeing all the papers)	
g. Decision letters sent to the Appellants. (The letter that informs the Appellant if their Appeal has been Upheld or Refused)	Within 5 school days of the hearing (wherever possible)
h. For applications made in the Normal Admissions Round Appeals must be heard	Within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals (see a. above)
i. For In Year and Late Applications (those that came in after the deadline and have not been decided by the offer date) Appeals must be heard	Within 30 school days of the Appeal