



Admissions Policy 2025-2026

Introduction

Thornhill Community Academy is a mixed, comprehensive Academy for students aged 11-16. The Academy has on-site ASD specialist provision for up to a maximum of 15 students across all year groups which is run in partnership with Kirklees Local Authority.

The Governing Body is the Admissions Authority for the Academy.

The Academy is non-selective and includes a mix of ethnicities and abilities in its intake, ensuring that we meet the needs of the local community.

As an Academy, we are our own Admissions Authority. We have, however, resolved to continue to adopt current Kirklees Local Authority admissions protocols to ensure that all arrangements are both transparent and fair. This includes abiding by the principles of fair access. As and when any changes to our admissions arrangements are planned, we will hold statutory consultation with all stakeholders prior to publication. The Academy will retain its previous Priority Admission Area (PAA), which can also be called the 'Catchment Area'. The local authority will coordinate normal round applications for entry at age 11. The Academy will coordinate their own in-year applications and will participate in, in-year fair access protocols.

Entry at age 11

The Governing Body plans to offer up to 180 places at age 11, with an additional 15 fixed and 5 transitional places within the Thorn Centre Specialist Provision. This will be the admission number for the Academy.

Application Process

Kirklees Local Authority manages the co-ordinated admissions process for the Academy and all secondary schools within the authority.

Parents wishing to apply for a place at Thornhill Community Academy for their child must complete the SCAF (Secondary Common Application Form) supplied by their home Local Authority. The completed SCAF should be returned directly to the LA and in accordance with their deadlines. The admission process could be delayed if any SCAF is sent directly to Thornhill Community Academy. It is very important that the form is returned by the closing date because forms received after this date will be treated as 'late'. Late applications are not dealt with until all those received on time have been processed.

In order to be considered for a place at Thornhill Community Academy, parents **MUST** name the Academy as one of their preferences on the SCAF.

If the number of preferences received is less than the admission number then all preferences will be met. If there are more applications than places available at the Academy the oversubscription criteria will be applied.

When the allocation process is complete, the LA sends out offers of places on behalf of the Governing Body.

Admissions Criteria

Where the number of applications for admission to the Academy exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will be applied in order to decide which students to admit in priority order:

1. children in public care (looked after children) or a child who was previously looked after;
2. children who live in the school's Priority Admission Area (PAA) who have a brother or sister attending from the same address at the date of admission (the sibling rule);
3. children who live in the school's PAA;
4. children who live outside the school's PAA who have a brother or sister attending from the same address at the date of admission (the sibling rule);
5. children who live outside the school's PAA.

Special Educational Needs

The Governors will admit children with a statement of special educational needs if it has been decided that Thornhill Community Academy is the best placement for the student with regards to her/his special educational needs statement and Thornhill Community Academy has been named in the statement or Education, Health and Care Plan as the preferred establishment.

Accessibility:

Students are admitted at age 11 without reference to ability or aptitude and we make every effort to accommodate staff, students and visitors with a disability, by making special provision within the limitations allowed by the Academy site and buildings. The Academy is varying levels and does not have lift access to large areas of the building. This makes wheelchair access difficult other than to certain areas on the ground floor. Our policies on Special Needs and Equalities are available to view at the Academy or on the Academy website.

Tie breaks

Where the offer of places to all the applicants in any of the categories listed above would still lead to oversubscription, the available places will be offered to those living nearest the Academy. Straight line distance will be used to measure (see note above).

Waiting Lists and Appeals

As well as their right of appeal, unsuccessful applicants who wish their child to be added onto a waiting list must inform the Academy in writing. Any places that become available will be allocated according to the published oversubscription criteria set out above with no account being taken of the length of time on the waiting list or any priority order expressed as part of the main admission round. Names will be kept on this waiting list for a period of one term.

For in-year admissions, the waiting list would be kept for the remainder of the term for which the application for a place has been made.

In accordance with paragraph 3.27 of The Admissions Code, as soon as school places become vacant **The Governing Body** must fill the vacancies from any waiting list, even if this is before admission appeals have been heard. Placing a child's name on a waiting list does not affect a parent's right of appeal against an unsuccessful application.

It should be noted that children who are the subject of direction by a local authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in accordance with an In-Year Fair Access Protocol (paragraph 3.28 of The Admissions Code), **must** take precedence over those on a waiting list. Where an admission authority holds a waiting list, they **must** make clear in their admission arrangements that these children will take precedence over any child already on that list. Legislation enables this to be done immediately without the need to apply to the Schools Adjudicator for a variation in determined admission arrangements

Parents who are not offered a place for their child at Thornhill Community Academy and who wish to appeal against this decision, should appeal - in writing - to the Clerk to the Governors c/o the school address. Their letter should include the reason(s) for their appeal, and should be accompanied by any supporting evidence. An independent Admissions Appeals Clerk co-ordinates appeal hearings, which are scheduled during the summer term.

Fair Access Protocols

Each local authority must have a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) to ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, are allocated a school place as quickly as possible (for more information, see the non-statutory guidance on Fair Access Protocols). Previously looked after children (including those who have been identified as IAPLAC) can be referred to the FAP. This route can only be used to place a child where the parent has been unable to secure a place for their child at any suitable school within a reasonable distance. There is no duty for local authorities or admission authorities to comply with parental preference when allocating places through the FAP, but parents' views should be taken into account.

Requesting and assessing evidence

Where an admission authority receives an application from a parent who declares that their child is an IAPLAC, the admission authority should consider whether that child meets the definition of IAPLAC set out in paragraph 1.7 of the Code. The child must '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'. This means that:

- the child must have been adopted; and
- the child must have previously been in state care outside of England (in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society) immediately before they were adopted.

Where the admission authority believes a VSH may have already determined that a particular child is an IAPLAC, the admission authority should contact the VSH and request the necessary information. Where a determination has previously been made, we would not expect an admission authority to request or assess documentary evidence from a parent and the child should be treated as an IAPLAC.

In other cases, the admission authority is likely to require evidence from the parent. It is the parent's responsibility to provide the necessary evidence when they are asked for it. When assessing the evidence provided, if the admission authority is in any doubt about whether it is acceptable, we recommend they seek the advice of the VSH. If it is decided that the evidence the parent has provided is not acceptable, the parent should always be given the opportunity to provide more evidence. Admission authorities should be supportive and provide help and advice where possible, for example, by explaining what kind of evidence may be acceptable and where the parent might be able to find it.

Whilst the Code enables admission authorities to request information about a child's looked after or previously looked after status I0, admission authorities should be mindful of the type of information they are prohibited from requesting from parents as part of the admissions process

If the admission authority decides the child is not eligible for IAPLAC priority, they should notify the parent as soon as possible, and explain why. When a parent is refused a place at a school, they must be given information about their right of appeal to an independent appeals panel

Notes

- a) The definition of a 'looked after child' is a person under the age of 18 who is provided with accommodation by a local authority, acting in its social services capacity, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, by agreement with the parents or in accordance with section 22 of the Children Act 1989. Previously Looked After refers to those children who immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption order, (under section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002), residence order (under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989), or specialist guardianship order (under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989). Children looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (respite care) are excluded

- b) Children in priority 1 above may be admitted above the PAN.
- c) If we cannot agree to requests for admission in priorities 2 to 5 above without exceeding the PAN, we will give priority up to the PAN to children living nearest the school.
- d) Distance is measured in a straight line from a child's home address to the school. Measurements are calculated using six-figure National Grid Co-ordinates from the National Land and Property Gazetteer. This grid reference relates to a point that falls within the permanent building structure corresponding to the address. The boundary of the building structure for the address is from Ordnance Survey's MasterMap. For smaller, residential properties the grid reference marks a point near the centre of the building. For larger properties like schools with, for example, multiple buildings and large grounds, the grid reference relates to a point inside the main addressable building structure. The distance calculated is accurate to within 1 metre.
- e) 'Live' means the child's permanent home at the date when applications close or, if a significant house move is involved, the latest reasonable date before the final allocation of places.
- f) Where a child's parents live at different addresses and the child spends time at each address we will consider the following when deciding on the address, which we will use for admissions purposes:
- the amount of time spent at each address
 - which parent has parental responsibility for the child
 - who receives child benefit for the child
 - where the child is registered for medical and dental care
 - any residency or custody orders made by the courts.
- We will ask for documentary evidence to support information given about the above points.
- g) For children transferring from first or middle schools, we will give preference in priorities 2-5 above (up to the PAN) to children attending a first or middle school in the middle or secondary school PAA.
- h) A PAA means a geographical area determined by Kirklees in consultation with the governing body of the school. It is called this because children living there normally have priority for admission over children who live elsewhere. It is also referred to as the catchment area.
- i) Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plans are admitted to mainstream schools, special units and special schools separately from the general admission policies.