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# OWLS Academy Trust

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## Admissions Policy

First Time Admissions for Autumn Term 2024

Mid-Term Transfers (In-Year Admissions) from  
Autumn Term 2024 Onwards

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Adopted by The OWLS Academy Trust on	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Next Review Due	Autumn 2023

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## CONTENTS

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<b>PART A: GENERAL .....</b>	<b>2</b>
• Introduction and Key Principles.....	2
• Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations .....	2
• Legal Position and Other Requirements: Summary.....	3
• Catchment Areas .....	3
• Parental Proof of Residence .....	4
• Parental Preferences & Criteria for Prioritising Admissions .....	5
• Acceptance or Refusal of Offers .....	6
• Right of Appeal .....	6
• Admission of Children Outside their Normal Age Group.....	6
• Miscellaneous.....	7
 <b>PART B: FIRST TIME ADMISSIONS .....</b>	 <b>9</b>
• Admission Process .....	9
• Admission of Children Below Compulsory School Age and Deferred Entry.....	10
• Significant Change of Circumstances .....	10
• Waiting List / Over-Subscription List.....	10
• Withdrawal of Places or Offers of Places (first time admissions).....	11
 <b>PART C: MID-TERM TRANSFERS (IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS).....</b>	 <b>12</b>
• Admissions Process for Mid-Term Transfers.....	12
• Withdrawal of Places or Offers of Places (mid-term transfers) .....	12
• Hollycroft Primary School – Phased Opening Arrangements.....	13

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## PART A: GENERAL

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### Introduction and Key Principles

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- 1.1 The OWLS Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust, made up of the following schools:
- Fernvale Primary School
  - Glenmere Primary School
  - Hinckley Parks Primary School
  - Hollycroft Primary School (due to open September 2023)
  - Langmoor Primary School
  - Little Hill Primary School
  - New Lubbesthorpe Primary School
  - Ravenhurst Primary School
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that places at schools within the Trust are allocated and offered in an open and fair manner.



### Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

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- 2.1 The following terms are used throughout the policy:

Term / Abbreviation	Meaning
Academic Year	The year from 1 <sup>st</sup> September to 31 <sup>st</sup> August
Catchment	The area set out in a school's Catchment Area Map (see paragraph 4.1) or otherwise clearly prescribed in a Catchment Area Description. "In-catchment" means living within the school's defined catchment area.
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	A legal document describing a child or young person's special educational needs, the support they need, and the outcomes they wish to achieve.
First Time Admission	Admission of children to the school when they first become eligible to attend by reason of their age.
Mid-Term Transfer	Admission of children to a school at any time <u>except</u> when they first become eligible to attend by reason of their age.
National Closing Date	The national date by which applications for first-time admissions to a school phase must be submitted. For Primary schools this is normally 15 <sup>th</sup> January for admission the following September.
National Offer Date	The national date on which offers of school places for first-time admission to primary school are sent to parents. This is 16 <sup>th</sup> April, or the next working day where 16 <sup>th</sup> April falls on a weekend or bank holiday.
Published Admission Number (PAN)	The admission number for the age group at which children are normally admitted to the school (e.g. Reception)
School Year	The period beginning with the first school term to begin after July and ending with the beginning of the first such term to begin after the following July.



## Legal Position and Other Requirements: Summary

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- 3.1 The OWLS Academy Trust is the admissions authority for all schools within the Trust.
- 3.2 The Local Authority is required to co-ordinate admissions for all residents in its area. The OWLS Academy Trust will participate in full with all co-ordinated admissions schemes operated by Leicestershire County Council.
- 3.3 Parents must ensure suitable full-time education for their children by attendance at school or otherwise; they are not obliged to do this before the child has reached compulsory school age. Children reach compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their 5th birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 August, 31 December and 31 March. This means that:
- A child turning 5 in the Autumn term must start school no later than the start of the Spring term
  - A child turning 5 in the Spring term must start school no later than the start of the Summer term
  - A child turning 5 in the Summer term must start school no later than the following Autumn term (but see also paragraphs 9.1 to 9.8 of this policy document)
- 3.4 All children are entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday. However, parents can defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the school year (see paragraph 12).

### Infant Class Size Limits and Permitted Exceptions

- 3.5 Legislation and regulation on infant class sizes requires an upper limit of 30 children per qualified teacher for classes of children up to the end of Key Stage 1 (reception, year 1 and year 2). The National Regulations on infant class sizes allow very few exceptions, which are set out in the School Admissions Code. Permitted class size exceptions will remain exceptions for the duration of Key Stage 1.
- 3.6 From Key Stage 2 (year 3 and up) there are no required staffing ratios in education law.



## Catchment Areas

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- 4.1 The OWLS Academy Trust recognises catchment areas for individual schools; children living within the school's catchment area will be given priority admission over those who live outside of the area.

Details of each school's catchment area are available to download from the school website and the OWLS Academy Trust Website: <http://www.owlsacademytrust.co.uk/information/admissions/>

Parents who are unclear about whether they live within the catchment area for an OWLS school should contact the school in question for clarification. Queries regarding catchment areas for schools that are not part of the OWLS Academy Trust should be directed to Leicestershire County Council School Admissions Customer Service Centre on (0116) 305 6684 in the first instance.

### Children Moving Out of the Catchment Area

- 4.2 A child who has started attending a school and whose place of residence changes to an out of catchment address is entitled to retain his/her place in the school and will not be asked to leave or have their name deleted from the register.



## Parental Proof of Residence

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- 5.1 Generally only one address is recognised for each family and only one family for each address (see paragraph 5.7 – 5.8 regarding children with split residence).
- 5.2 All schools within the OWLS Academy Trust will be vigilant regarding addresses given by parents before transfer to the next phase of education, particularly if there is a late or unexpected change of address close to transfer. Any queries will be referred to the Leicestershire County Council School Admissions Service and if, after reasonable enquiry, a school is unclear about a family address then the parent will be required to provide documentary evidence of residence, such as a Council Tax bill or Child Benefit letter.
- 5.3 If a school is over-subscribed or a family move into the catchment area after a published closing date for submission of application, either the school or Leicestershire School Admissions Service will seek to clarify parent's claims of a change of address. Claims of new residence will be judged on circumstances and the documents provided: completion of both sale and purchase, where relevant, are normally necessary before a place is allocated.
- 5.4 In the event that a school is oversubscribed, the following will **not** be accepted:
- Purchase of a second property by the family while the first property is retained;
  - Renting accommodation while a previous property is retained;
  - Offers or exchange of contracts on intended purchases or sales of properties;
  - Informal accommodation arrangements with friends or relatives.
- However, serious consideration will be given in exceptional situations (e.g. if a family has been forced by circumstance to move into temporary accommodation having lost their previous residence).
- 5.5 Places, or offers of places, may be withdrawn if they were based on incorrect or false information from the parents or their representatives.
- 5.6 Officers may be authorised to visit addresses to clarify whether families are living at the addresses claimed. Such visits will be undertaken in a reasonable fashion, by officers carrying appropriate identification.

### Children with Split Residence

- 5.7 Where a child lives for part of the week with one parent and for part of the week with the other parent, the address recognised for the purpose of school admissions is the one where the child lives for the majority of the school week.
- 5.8 If a child's residence during the school week is split equally between both parents, then parents will be asked to determine which residential address should be used for the purpose of admission to school. If no joint declaration is received by the closing date for applications, the home address will be taken as the address where the child is registered with the doctor.

### Children of UK Services Personnel and Other Crown Servants

- 5.9 Such children must be allocated a school place in advance, dependent on an official government letter declaring a relocation date and intended address, if the criteria would be met on relocation. In order to facilitate this a Unit postal address will be accepted, or if appropriate a "quartering area" address, in the absence of a new home postal address.



## Parental Preferences & Criteria for Prioritising Admissions

- 6.1 Application forms for school admissions allow parents to express up to three preferences for school places. Parents should rank their preferences so that if more than one preference can be agreed then the one which the parent wants most is offered. However, during the allocations process all preferences are considered to have equal value (i.e. one parent's first preference and another parent's second or third preference are considered equally against the admissions criteria) and therefore schools are not informed of preference details at any stage of the process.

### Priority Criteria

- 6.2 If there are more applications than there are places available at the school, priority will be given to children whose parents applied on time, in the following order (see note i below):

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	Looked after children and children who were previously looked after children (see note ii)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	Children who live in the catchment area (see note iii and paragraph 4.1)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	Children who have an older brother or sister living at the same address who will be a pupil at the school at the same time when the child is admitted.
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	Children who have a serious medical condition or exceptional social or domestic needs that make it essential they attend the school requested. (Professional documentation confirming the situation must be submitted with the application) (see note v)
<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	Children living nearest to the school measured in a straight line distance (see note vi)
<b>Tie Break</b>	In instances where there is one place remaining and more than one child has an equal weighting using the above criteria (i.e. live an equal distance from the school) then the place will be allocated by the drawing of lots, supervised by an independent officer.

### Notes

- i) If further prioritisation is required within any of the criteria set out above, then the subsequent criteria will be used as secondary criteria. (e.g. if the number of applications meeting criterion 2 exceeds the number of places available, then these applications will be further prioritised using criteria 3, 4 and 5 in order)
- ii) A "looked after child" is a child who, at the time of making an application to a school, is:
- in the care of a local authority; or
  - being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).
- A "Previously looked after child" is:
- A child who was looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order Section 19 or special guardianship order); or
  - A child who appears (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.
- There is no stipulation regarding a minimum length of time the child is or has been in care.
- iii) The child's place of residence is taken to be the parental home (see also paragraph 5). Living in the catchment area does not guarantee a place at the catchment school.
- iv) The term "brother or sister" includes half brother or sister; a legally adopted child being regarded as a brother or sister; or a step brother or sister living in the same household as part of the same family.

- v) If criterion 4 is used, professional supporting documentation from a relevant professional must be supplied and must be submitted with the application. The following list are the areas that are considered exceptional:

- Children subject to Child Protection Plans;
- Hard to Place children who fall under the Fair Access Protocol for mid-term admissions;
- Parents suffering domestic violence (this is dependent on documentary evidence by a relevant professional);
- Children with a serious medical condition.

Each case will be assessed on its individual merits.

- vi) For criterion 5 above, measurement of distances is in a straight line from the centre point of the property to the school's main designated front gate, using a computerised mapping system.

- 6.3 In the event of over-subscription it may be necessary to ask for proof of the following when applying the criteria for prioritising admissions:

- Address;
- Child's date of birth;
- Copy of an adoption order, residence order or special guardianship order and a letter from the Local Authority/appropriate body that last looked after the child confirming that (s)he was looked after immediately prior to that order being made.



## **Acceptance or Refusal of Offers**

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- 7.1 Once an offer of a place has been made it will be assumed that the offer is accepted unless a written refusal is received.



## **Right of Appeal**

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- 8.1 Parents whose requests for a school place are refused have the right to appeal.
- 8.2 To ensure independence our appeals are managed by Leicestershire County Council. For details of the Appeals process and the timetable for organising and hearing admission appeals please see <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions/appeal-a-school-place-and-check-waiting-lists-online>
- 8.3 Details of how to appeal will be set out in the refusal letter.



## **Admission of Children Outside their Normal Age Group**

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- 9.1 Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group: for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.
- 9.2 Parents of a summer born child (i.e. children born between 1st April to 31st August) may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group (i.e. to reception rather than Year 1). This is considered as a delayed entry for the purposes of this policy.
- 9.3 To request a delayed entry parents are required to make an application for their child's admission to their normal age group at the usual time in accordance with this policy and at the same time to submit a request to the admission authority for admission out of the normal age group. Further information

about the process will be provided to parents upon request to the school.

- 9.4 Decisions will be made by the Admissions Authority on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will take into account:
- parents' views;
  - information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
  - where relevant the child's medical history and any views of a medical professional;
  - whether the child has previously been educated outside of their normal age group;
  - whether the child may have fallen into a lower age group if the child was not born prematurely; and
  - the views of the head teacher of the school concerned.
- 9.5 Decisions made by the Admissions Authority will be clearly set out, and when informing a parent of the decision on which year group the child will be admitted to the reason(s) will be given.
- 9.6 Where the admitting authority agrees to the parent's request for their child to be admitted to a year outside of their normal age group it will be necessary for the parent(s) to apply again for a place at the appropriate time a year later. This application will be processed as part of the main admissions round, and on the basis of determined admission arrangements only including the priority criteria when this applies. If that application is successful, the child will be admitted into Reception, however parents must be aware that any agreement will not guarantee them a place at a particular school
- 9.7 One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another. Upon transfer to another school (mid-term transfer or transfer to secondary school) it will be a matter for the admission authority of that school to determine whether to approve any request for a child to be admitted outside of their chronological age group.
- 9.8 Parents' statutory right of appeal against or refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied does not apply if they are offered a place at the school but it is not their preferred age group.



## **Miscellaneous**

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### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

- 10.1 The OWLS Academy Trust does not allow the refusal of admission because it is believed that the school cannot cater for a child's special educational needs.
- 10.2 Children with special educational needs but no Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) are dealt with through normal admissions policy, and schools cannot refuse to admit a child because he/she does not have or is not being assessed, for an EHCP.
- 10.3 As required by section 324 of the Education Act 1996, the OWLS Trust will admit to a school a child with an Education Health & Care Plan that names the school. This is not an oversubscription criterion, and will apply whether or not the school has a place available.

### **Excluded or Potentially Disruptive Pupils**

- 10.4 The OWLS Academy Trust does not allow the refusal of admissions because the child may disrupt the education of other pupils, but will consider exceptions according to the provisions School Admissions Code. In such circumstances the governors of the school must refer the case to the Fair Access Protocol.



- 10.5 There is no obligation to comply with a parental preference for a child who has been permanently excluded from two or more schools, for a period of two years following the latest exclusion. Parents of such children lose their right of appeal regarding admission. If an OWLS school is directed by Leicestershire County Council School Admissions Service to admit such a child then the school may refer to the Secretary of State.
- 10.6 It is possible that a child may receive a second permanent exclusion just before he or she is due to transfer school. In these circumstances the receiving school will be expected to admit the child if the exclusion is issued after a transfer allocation has been notified to the parent but before the actual transfer to the new school.

### **Children from Overseas**

- 10.7 The wording of the School Admissions Code applies.

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## PART B: FIRST TIME ADMISSIONS

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### Admission Process

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- 11.1 Parents must apply to their home local authority for a school place. For Leicestershire residents the best way to apply is online through the Leicestershire County Council website:  
(<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions>)
- 11.2 Applicants are responsible for the accuracy of all and any information which they submit. The Trust and the Local Authority take no responsibility for incorrect information submitted (i.e. an incorrect date of birth, failure to mention siblings, failure to provide supporting evidence, etc) or the impact that such information (or lack thereof) may have on the determination of the application. Where applicants become aware of such errors they should notify the Local Authority as soon as possible.
- 11.3 All requests received by the National Closing Date (15<sup>th</sup> January) will be considered first and in accordance with the approved priority criteria (see paragraph 6.2).
- 11.4 Late applications received after the National Closing Date (15<sup>th</sup> January) will only be considered after all other applications which were received on time, unless there is a clear and significant reason for the lateness that was beyond the parent's control (supported with documentary evidence). Late applications received after the National Offer Date (16<sup>th</sup> April or the next working day) will be determined as mid-term applications. Any applications that are refused before 31<sup>st</sup> December will automatically be placed on the oversubscription (waiting) list.
- 11.5 Places will be allocated up to the Published Admission Number (PAN). Since these numbers reflect the regulations on infant class sizes, additional children may only be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances as set out in the School Admissions Code.
- 11.6 Schools within the OWLS Academy Trust have the following Published Admission Numbers (PANs):

School	Published Admission Number (PAN)
Fernvale Primary School	60
Glenmere Primary School	30
Hinckley Parks Primary School	90
Hollycroft Primary school	30
Langmoor Primary School	30
Little Hill Primary School	60
New Lubbesthorpe Primary School	60
Ravenhurst Primary School	60

- 11.7 If an individual school is under-subscribed then all applicants will be offered a place. If over-subscribed, then all applications will be ranked in order against the published criteria for prioritising admissions (see paragraph 6.2) and places allocated accordingly.
- 11.8 The Local Authority that you live in will confirm decisions to parents on the national offer date (16<sup>th</sup> April or the next working day). For those children who do not live in Leicestershire, the Leicestershire School Admissions Service will inform the relevant Local Authority who will, in turn, inform the parents.
- 11.9 No child will be admitted without an offer from the Local Authority; this applies regardless of whether the child has attended a nursery or pre-school group at the school.

- 11.10 Upon notification of a school place being offered, a child is entitled to a full-time place from the September immediately following their fourth birthday (i.e. all children who have turned 4 before the end of 31<sup>st</sup> August). The OWLS Academy Trust assumes that children joining as a first time admission at 4+ will take up their place from the start of the academic year; however, parents have the right to defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year (see paragraph 12).
- 11.11 Pre-admission visits will only take place in the term before the child is admitted to the school.



## **Admission of Children Below Compulsory School Age and Deferred Entry**

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- 12.1 The date a child is admitted to the school can be deferred until later in the school year or the child can attend part-time, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the start of the final term of the school year for which the original application was made.
- 12.2 To defer a place at first time admission, parents are asked to speak to the head teacher of the school where the child has been allocated a place.
- 12.3 Failure to attend school from the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the original application was made may result in the parents being required to make a new application.
- 12.4 Parents of summer-born children (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> August) wishing to defer entry until their child reaches compulsory school age should refer also to paragraph 9 of this policy.



## **Significant Change of Circumstances**

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- 13.1 If a parent has submitted an application on time (i.e. before 15<sup>th</sup> January) and subsequently a change of circumstances (e.g. change of address) takes place after the closing date for applications, then parents must notify the Local Authority as soon as possible.
- 13.2 If a change of circumstances is notified to the Local Authority:
- Before all places at the relevant school have been allocated, then the change of circumstances will be taken into account within the allocation process;
  - After all places at the relevant school have been allocated, then the application will be added to the waiting list in a position which reflects the published priority criteria.
- 13.3 Verification (e.g. from professional persons or bodies, or proof of change of address) may be sought from the parent to confirm a change of circumstances. In such situations it remains the parent's duty to gather and provide the evidence.



## **Waiting List / Over-Subscription List**

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- 14.1 Each school will ensure that an over-subscription (waiting) list (OSL) is maintained from the completion of the decision-making process for first-time school admissions (i.e. into reception classes) up to 31<sup>st</sup> December for the year of intake only. All applicants who have not been offered a place will automatically be added to this list.
- 14.2 The OSL will be ranked according to the priority criteria detailed in this policy. The OSL makes no distinction between on-time, late or mid-term applications: when a child is added to the OSL, their position on the list will be determined by the published over-subscription criteria. This means that a child may move up or down the list during the time it is maintained.
- 14.3 Places will be offered to children on this list in priority order in the event of any previously allocated

place becoming available.



## **Withdrawal of Places or Offers of Places (first time admissions)**

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- 15.1 An offer or a place for first-time admission to a school may be withdrawn if:
- It has been offered in error;
  - A place has not been taken up within 20 school days from the start of the academic year (or from the agreed deferment date if applicable) and the parent has not responded within 2 weeks, plus an additional 7 days for a reminder, indicating that they want to accept the offered place;
- 15.2 The OWLS Academy Trust reserves the right to withdraw a school place or an offer of a place where that place has been obtained by false or misleading information (e.g. an incorrect address or date of birth). Schools will be vigilant about such matters and may ask for a sight of the child's short birth certificate before admission.
- 15.3 The OWLS Academy Trust will not withdraw a place once a child has started at a school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained.

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## PART C: MID-TERM TRANSFERS (IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS)

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### Admissions Process for Mid-Term Transfers

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- 16.1 All mid-term transfer requests will be co-ordinated through Leicestershire County Council School Admissions Service for approval before admission takes place. The best way to apply is online through the Leicestershire County Council website:  
(<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions>)
- 16.2 Before applying parents are encouraged to arrange to visit the school they wish to apply for, after which the parent should complete the Local Authority's online Common Application Form (paper forms are available on request).
- 16.3 The aim, wherever possible, is to always process applications for mid-term transfer within 10-15 working days (5 days if the child is indicated as in care or previously in care). Delays may occur where further evidence of proof is required (e.g. proof of house purchase, tenancy agreement, fair access information for complex or out of authority applications, etc).
- 16.4 On receipt of an application for a mid-term transfer the school will allocate a place if one is available within the operational capacity of the school, or refuse a place if the relevant year group is deemed full. A year group is likely to be deemed full where the admission of any additional children would:
- a) Cause the school to breach infant class-size regulations; or
  - b) Prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources, whether in the current school year or for future years until the end of Year 6.
- Leicestershire School Admissions Service will be informed of the decision and the reason for this.
- 16.5 The Local Authority will send a decision letter which will either offer a place or refuse a place because the school / year group is full. A refusal letter will explain to the parent their right to appeal and how they can do this.
- 16.6 The OWLS Academy Trust does not hold waiting lists for mid-term transfers, except where an application for entry into Reception is refused up to 31<sup>st</sup> December in which case the child will be automatically placed on the oversubscription (waiting) list in accordance with the priority criteria for first-time admissions (See paragraph 14).



### Withdrawal of Places or Offers of Places (mid-term transfers)

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- 17.1 An offer or a place for mid-term transfer to a school may be withdrawn if:
- It has been offered in error;
  - The place has not been taken up within 20 school days from the offer date and the parent has not responded within 2 weeks, plus an additional 7 days for a reminder, indicating that they want to accept the offered place;
- 17.2 The OWLS Academy Trust reserves the right to withdraw a school place or an offer of a place where that place has been obtained by false or misleading information (e.g. an incorrect address or date of birth). Schools will be vigilant about such matters and may ask for a sight of the child's short birth certificate before admission.

- 17.3 The OWLS Academy Trust will not withdraw a place once a child has started at a school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained.



### **Hollycroft Primary School – Phased Opening Arrangements**

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- 18.1 Hollycroft Primary School is due to admit its first pupils in September 2023. The school is opening on a phased basis in order to reflect the extent of residential development within the catchment area, with only Reception and Year 1 children being admitted in the first year. Older year groups will open as these children progress through the school and/or in response to levels of in-catchment demand for places. From September 2024 parents seeking a school place for a child in Key Stage 2 (Year 3, 4, 5 or 6) should check whether the school is open to these year groups before submitting a formal application.