



Admissions Policy 2026/27

Deaf Hill Primary School

WORKING TOGETHER
FOR CHILDREN

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Deaf Hill Primary School is an academy school and is part of Ad Astra Academy Trust. The Board of Trustees of Ad Astra Academy Trust is the admissions authority for the school, however the Trust commissions Durham County Council to undertake the administration of the admissions process on its behalf. The Academy Trust intends to admit up to 26 pupils to the Reception year group in September 2026.

1. INTERPRETATION

“The LA” means Durham County Council acting in its capacity as local education authority.

“The LA area” means the area in respect of which the LA is the local education authority.

“School” means a Community, Voluntary Controlled, Foundation, or Voluntary Aided school or an Academy.

“Admission Authority” means the LA in respect of any of the schools which is a Community or Voluntary Controlled school, the Governing Body of the school in respect of a Voluntary Aided school or a Foundation school and the relevant Trust for an Academy.

“Parent” means any person who holds parental responsibility for a child and with whom the child normally lives.

“Suitable school” means the nearest available school which offers an efficient full-time programme of education appropriate to the individual child’s age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs, in the view of the Authority.

1. ADMISSIONS SCHEME

There will be a common application form supplied by the LA for the purpose of enabling parents living in County Durham to express up to three preferences for their child to be admitted to a primary, infant and, where appropriate junior school in County Durham or to a school or schools in another LA area for the academic year 2026/27.

The common application form must be used as a means of expressing one or more preferences for the purposes of Section 86 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 by parents who are resident in the LA area wishing to express a preference for their child:

- to be admitted to a maintained primary school (including Voluntary Aided Schools) or Academy within the LA area.
- to be admitted to a maintained primary school (including Voluntary Aided Schools) or Academy located in another LA’s area.

The common application form will invite the parent to express up to three preferences including where relevant any schools outside the LA’s area, in the rank order in which they wish their child to receive an offer of a place and invite parents to give their reasons for each preference.

The common application form will explain that the parent will receive no more than one offer of a school place. Furthermore, that places at any oversubscribed school will be offered on the basis of equal preference rank order and that where an offer is made it would be for the highest ranked school at which the LA as the admission authority or on behalf of the admission authority of a Voluntary Aided School or an Academy, was able to offer a place.

The common application form will explain that where the LA could not offer a place at any of the preferred schools, the offer of a place will be made at the nearest school to the child's home address that has a place available.

The common application form will specify a closing date and where it must be returned. Governing Bodies of Aided Schools or the relevant Trust for Academies, as the Admission Authority, must notify the relevant LA of any application made direct to them in error whether or not the parent lives in County Durham.

The LA will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that a common application form is available on request from the LA and from its website. The facility to apply on-line will also be made available via the LA's website.

The common application form will include a supplementary section to be completed by parents who express a preference for a Voluntary Aided School to enable them to provide any relevant additional information.

Processing of Applications

Completed applications should be made to the LA by 15 January 2026.

Applications received by the closing date take priority over late applications, however, applications which are received for very good reason after the closing date because of very exceptional circumstances will be accepted and treated as on time applications as long as they are received on or before 5 March 2026, the date the allocation procedures begin. Examples of good reason include: when a single parent has been ill for some time or has been dealing with the death of a relative; a family has just moved into the area or is returning from abroad (proof of ownership or tenancy of a County Durham property as the main property will be required in these cases). Other circumstances will be considered, and each case decided on its own merits. Parents must, however, provide clear evidence for the LA to consider as to why they could not apply during the preference period. The determination of the LA will be final.

Determining offers in response to the application

The LA will make the offer of a school place to the parent of every child living in County Durham commencing primary education in September 2026 who applies for a place at a maintained school/academy.

The LA will determine the offer of a potential place for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in County Durham in its capacity as the Admission Authority **having no regard to order of preferences**. For Voluntary Aided Schools, Academies or schools in another Local Authority area, the relevant Admission Authority will inform the LA of the potential offer of a

place. Durham LA will then be responsible for making the offer of a place in accordance with paragraphs 4 and 15 of this Scheme.

By 6 February 2026, the LA will share the applications with the Admission Authority for each of the schools indicated on the applications.

By 6 March 2026, the Admission Authority for each school will provide the LA with the ranking of applications, in accordance with their admission criteria, of all pupils who applied for a place at the school, indicating those who can be offered a place and those (if any) who cannot. The LA will then match this ranked list against the ranked list of the other schools nominated.

By 13 March 2026, the LA will match the provisional offers of places against each parent's ranking and proceed as follows:

- Where the child is eligible for a place at only one of the preferred schools, a place at that school will be offered to the child.
- Where the child is eligible for a place at two or more of the preferred schools, they will be offered a place at whichever school is the highest ranked.
- Where none of the preferences can be met, the child will be offered a place at the nearest suitable school with a place available.

No later than 13 March 2026, the LA will inform other LAs of places in County Durham schools/Academies to be offered to their residents and on 16 April 2026 the LA will inform its schools/Academies of the pupils to be offered places at their schools/Academies.

On 16 April 2026, the LA will write to all parents in County Durham to whom the offer of a place can be made, notifying them of the offer of a place at:

- one of the preferences on the application; or
- the nearest suitable school with places available.

The LA's communication will advise parents that they need only to contact the LA if they are not satisfied with the offer of a place, whereupon they will be informed that they have the right of appeal if they so wish. The communication will include contact details for the LA and those nominated Voluntary Aided schools or Academies where they could not be offered a place, so that they can if they wish lodge an appeal with the Governing Body or Academy Trust. The communication will also explain that their child's name will be placed on the waiting list for a place at the preferred school(s). The communication will also state, where relevant, why a place could not be offered at a higher ranked school.

On 7 May 2026, the LA will reallocate any places that may have become available since 16 April 2026, strictly in accordance with the relevant published oversubscription criteria.

From 8 May 2026, children's names will be placed on a waiting for an oversubscribed school to be offered places if they become available. The waiting lists for all schools/Academies will be maintained by the relevant admission authority and any places which become available will be offered strictly in accordance with the published admission criteria of the appropriate admission authority. Waiting lists will be maintained for the school year. If parents want their

children to remain on a waiting list for subsequent years, they must inform the LA in writing or via email.

2. LATE APPLICATIONS

Applications received after the closing date of 15 January 2026 and on or before 5 March 2026 will be considered and, as far as possible, offered a school place on 16 April 2026. Applications received by the closing date take priority over late applications, however, applications which are received for very good reason after the closing date because of very exceptional circumstances will be accepted and treated as on time applications, provided they are received on or before 5 March 2026, the date the allocation procedures begin (see paragraph 10).

For applications received between 6 March 2026 and 4 May 2026 inclusive, the LA will, on 7 May 2026 the re-allocation day, offer a place in accordance with parental preference, where possible, and if not possible, at the nearest school with places available. These will be considered equally along with all other applicants that are on the waiting lists.

For applications received between 7 May 2026 and 31 August 2026 inclusive, offer/refusal communications will be sent out within 14 days of the LA receiving the application form. Any parent approaching a school direct must be referred to the LA. The LA will offer a place at the school highest in the parent's order of rank that has a place available, or if this is not possible, at the nearest suitable school that has a place available. For those who do not receive a higher preferred school the waiting lists will continue to operate.

IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS

Applications received on or after 1 September 2026 will be treated as in-year admissions.

The LA will, upon request, send a suitable form for parents to complete when applying for a place for their child at any school. All relevant admission authorities will consider any application that is made (making reference to any waiting lists that are in operation) whether via an application form or through a parent's direct approach to any school, and then notify the LA, if appropriate, of the outcome. Parents whose applications are refused will be offered a right of appeal.

The LA will monitor in-year applications and intervene as appropriate to ensure that applicants are placed in a school without undue delay.

Parents may ask for their child's name to be kept on a waiting list, to be offered places if they become available at any school to which they have expressed a preference. The waiting lists - unless Aided Schools or Academies chose to maintain the waiting lists themselves - will be maintained by the LA and any places which become available will be offered strictly in accordance with published admission criteria of the appropriate admissions authority. Waiting lists will be maintained for the school year. Any offer of a school place will always be made by the LA.

3. ADMISSION OF CHILDREN BELOW COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE AND ADMISSION OF CHILDREN OUTSIDE THEIR NORMAL AGE GROUP

A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March, and 31 August. A child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday.

There is flexibility for parents who do not feel their child is ready to start school before compulsory school age. They may defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the school year following their child's fourth birthday, providing they do not defer beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age, or beyond the start of the final term of that school year. Alternatively, their child may attend school part-time until they reach compulsory school age.

Children born in the summer term, 1 April to 31 August, are not required to start school until a full school year after the point at which they could first have been admitted – the point at which other children in their age range are beginning year 1. While most parents are happy for their child to start school in the September following their fourth birthday, some parents will have concerns about whether their child will be ready for school at this point and will consider delaying their entry to Reception until compulsory school age.

Admission authorities will expect parents to provide them with information in support of their request – since without it they are unlikely to be able to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case. This should demonstrate why it would be in the child's interests to be admitted to reception rather than year one. In some cases, parents may have professional evidence that it would be appropriate for them to submit, for example, when a child receives support from a speech and language therapist. However, there is no expectation that parents will obtain professional evidence that they do not already have. Admission authorities must still consider requests that are not accompanied by professional evidence. In such cases the supporting information might simply be the parent's statement as to why they have made their request.

Where a parent wants their child to be admitted out of their normal age group, the admission authority has two separate decisions to make:

- it must first decide on the age group the child should be admitted to
- only once that decision has been made can it apply its oversubscription criteria to decide whether a place can be offered in that age group.

Although it is not always easy for admission authorities to make a decision about a child more than a year before the point at which they may be admitted, particularly as it is difficult to know what progress they may make in the intervening period, parents should know the outcome of their request for admission out of the normal age group in time to make an informed decision about whether their child will start school before compulsory school age.

The process in place:

- requires the parent to make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time, but enables them to submit a request for admission out of the normal age group at the same time;
- ensures that the parent receives the response to their request before primary national offer day.

If the request is agreed, the application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If the request is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

Where a parent's request is agreed, they must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the usual year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools.

Once a child has been admitted to a school it is for the headteacher to decide how best to educate them. In some cases, it may be appropriate for a child who has been admitted out of their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group, but in others it will not. Any decision to move a child to a different age group will be based on sound educational reasons and made by the headteacher in consultation with the parents.

Where a child has been educated out of their normal age group, the parent may again request admission out of the normal age group when they transfer to junior or secondary school. It will be for the admission authority of that school to decide whether to admit the child out of their normal age group. The admission authority will make a decision based on the circumstances of each case and in the child's best interests and will bear in mind the age group the child has been educated in up to that point.

Where an application for September 2026 has been received by 15 January 2026 for a child's admission to Reception instead of Year 1 (which is the child's normal age group cohort) and this has been agreed, the application will be considered alongside all other applications that are received by this date. The application will not have lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted outside their normal age group.

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

If more children want a place than there are places available, the Admissions Authority will offer places according to the following criteria, strictly in order of priority.

- 1. Children who are 'looked after' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence/child arrangement, or special guardianship order* including those**

children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is, at the time of making an application to a school, (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) 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).

2. Medical Reasons

Children with very exceptional medical factors directly related to school placement.

3. Sibling Links

Children who have a sibling** already attending the school and who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission.

4. Distance

Children who live nearest the preferred school measured by the shortest walking route***. This will be based on the child's address. Where the last place to be allocated would mean that a multiple birth sibling group i.e. twins, triplets, or other multiple birth sibling groups, would be split, the sibling group will be given priority over other children. Otherwise, if only one final place can be offered and two applicants live equidistant from the school, the LA's system of random allocation will apply.

* An adoption order is an order under section 12 of the Adoption Act 1976 or section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A 'residence order' is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under section

8 of the Children Act 1989. A child arrangement order is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under section 14 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

** Sibling is defined as children who live as brother or sister in the same house, including natural brothers or sisters, half - brothers or sisters, adopted brothers or sisters, stepbrothers or sisters and children of the parent/carer's partner. Some schools give priority to siblings of pupils attending another community and voluntary controlled school with which they have close links (for example, schools on the same site). Where this is the case, details will be published in the Local Authority's Admissions Brochure.

*** In assessing home to school distance, the LA uses a Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and measure the shortest route utilising only the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network (ITN) and Urban Paths Network (UPN) which are national recognised datasets. The LA will not include any other routes or any other method of measurement. Routes are measured from the centre point**** of the child's house, or in the case of a flat from the centre point**** of the building, to the nearest school site entrance. In all cases the GIS identifies the route to be measured by connecting in a straight line the centre point**** of the child's house to the closest point on the nearest route on the ITN/UPN.

**** In accordance with the co-ordinates of the Basic Land and Property Unit on the National Land and Property Gazetteer.