



Consultation on proposed Admission Arrangements at Willow Bank Infant School for entry into Reception from September 2027



Introduction

Willow Bank Infant School is an academy school, within the Orchard Learning Alliance, who act as their own admissions authority. When an admission authority wishes to make changes to their admission arrangements, they must consult to ensure all relevant views are heard. The Orchard Learning Alliance is consulting on the following changes to the admission arrangements:

Proposed changes:

The changes to oversubscribed criteria are:

1. Replace designated/catchment area with a direct distance to school (D2S) model
2. Remove the medical/social needs criterion
3. Add 'Children of staff at Willow Bank Infant School' as Criterion B

The other change is:

4. Wording and processes have been included to align with other OLA schools

Why are we proposing these changes?

These changes will bring us into line with Wokingham Borough Council's maintained schools.

1. The current system relies on historic catchment boundaries that can be confusing and inconsistent. The D2S model replaces this with a clear and measurable rule – priority is based on how close you live to the school (measured in a straight line). This makes the process easier to understand and more transparent for everyone. Children who live nearest to a school will be prioritised for a place there. This helps ensure that families have a fair chance of securing a place at their local school, especially in areas with high demand. Many parents assume that living in a catchment area guarantees a place, but that's not always the case. The D2S model removes this uncertainty by focusing on distance, which is objective and consistent. Most admissions authorities, academies and schools in England already use distance as a key tiebreaker in their oversubscription. A growing number are removing catchment areas entirely in favour of a pure distance-based model.
2. Removing this criterion helps to simplify the admissions process and improve consistency; ensuring that all applications are assessed using the same criteria, reducing the risk of inconsistent or subjective decisions. Children with significant needs, including those with an EHCP, will still be supported through other established routes.
3. As Willow Bank Infant continues to be a popular school, we wish to retain and recruit an excellent calibre of staff for our students. This includes the very best teachers to deliver high quality lessons and support. However, the recruitment and retention of staff is increasingly difficult against a backdrop of a national shortage of teachers and the high cost of living in this area. To help attract skilled and knowledgeable professionals to key positions and to retain staff for the medium to long term, we wish to add children of Willow Bank Infant School staff to our oversubscribed criteria.

These changes need to reflect The OLA as its own admissions authority and the applications being processed by Willow Bank.

4. To include: the timeline of the application timetable and administration of waiting lists.

A copy of the proposed arrangement can be seen on the Willow Bank Infant website:

<https://www.willowbankinfant.com/web/admissions/260173>.

How can you respond?

We would appreciate your views on this proposal. Please send any comments by e-mail to:

admissions@willowbank-inf.wokingham.sch.uk marking your e-mail ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION 27/28.

The consultation takes place between 27th November 2025 and 14th January 2026.

What happens next?

After the consultation closing date, the responses will be collated and presented to the Orchard Learning Alliance and the local Governing Board who will reach a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed change and determine the admission arrangements. The outcome will be published on the Willow Bank website by 15th March 2026.