14+ Academies
Admissions Process Appendix
September 2027 Intake

Introduction

This document outlines the process involved in applying for a place at the 14+ Academies (Leeds City College). By outlining the application process we aim to maintain a fair and transparent experience for prospective learners and their parents/carers.

This appendix should be read alongside the Luminate Education Group FE Admissions Policy. It sets out the additional and adapted arrangements that apply specifically to learners enrolled at the 14+ Academies.

Aims and Objectives

The 14+ Academies Admissions Process aims to:

- Provide a fair, transparent and accessible understanding of the admissions process.
- Ensure applicants and parents/carers have sufficient information to make an informed decision about whether the 14+ Academies is right for them.
- Identify and remove barriers to participation in the application process, including through reasonable adjustments.
- Ensure decisions are evidence-based, proportionate and consistently applied.
- Allocate the limited number of available places fairly, taking account of the needs of individual applicants and the safe and effective operation of the provision.

Equality and Inclusion

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the development and approval of the FE Admissions Policy. As this appendix sits within and should be read alongside that policy, the 14+ Academies Admissions Process Appendix falls within the scope of that assessment. In applying this appendix, the 14+ Academies will continue to consider individual and group circumstances in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) including additional needs and reasonable adjustments to ensure that the policy is applied fairly and equitably.

Where reasonable adjustments are required to enable an applicant to participate in the admissions process, these will be explored and implemented wherever reasonable and appropriate.

Why Learners join the 14+ Academies

Many young people choose to join the 14+ Academies because they are looking for a fresh start in an environment that prioritises wellbeing, inclusion, and personalised support. Our provision offers a nurturing setting where learners can rebuild confidence, develop resilience and re-engage positively with their education, particularly if they have previously faced challenges that have impacted their mental health or emotional wellbeing. As a result of this, relationship building is at the heart of the 14+ Academies ethos, aiming to create a safe, supportive environment and a fresh start for our young people, where they are able to thrive.

Eligibility and Application Requirements

The 14+ Academies application process has been designed to be fair and inclusive, whilst demonstrating a clear understanding of the demand and need for young people seeking to explore alternative education provisions. We are committed to ensuring our process is inclusive and accessible to all, therefore allowing any young people in Years 9 or 10 to apply for a place at the 14+ Academies. We welcome applications from any young person who feels the 14+ Academies may be the right setting for them, regardless of academic background, personal circumstances, or additional needs. We believe strongly in creating no barrier to application, which is why we are proud to receive applications from young people with a wide range of experiences - including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), those who are Electively Home Educated (EHE), those who are care experienced, and many navigating mental health, wellbeing, and safeguarding challenges.

In line with this inclusive ethos, we also do not operate on a first come, first served basis. We strive for an equitable application and admissions process, regardless of when they heard about us or were able to submit their application. All completed applications are reviewed within a set timeframe and all decisions are communicated simultaneously.

Learners are encouraged to show a genuine interest and enthusiasm for applying for a place, and can demonstrate this throughout the various application stages detailed in subsequent sections. In order for an application to be considered, each young person must complete each stage of the application process. Reasonable adjustments and alternative arrangements will be considered where an applicant's disability, additional need or individual circumstances would otherwise create a barrier to completing a particular stage. Applicants will not be disadvantaged because they require a reasonable adjustment to participate in the process.

Application Process

The 14+ Academies offer approximately 140 places each year for learners entering Year 10 and a much smaller number of places, typically 5–10, for learners entering Year 11. Demand significantly exceeds the number of places available. To illustrate this, typically, only one in six young people applying for Year 10 are offered a place, whilst approximately one in ten who are applying for Year 11 are offered a place.

Due to the high volume of applications received each year, there is a robust application process in place that young people have to complete for their application to be considered. The application process is led by the young person and supported by parents/carers. Outlined below are the stages of the application process which take place, each of which must be completed in order for the application to then be moved onto the next stage.

The application process is followed in the order set out and involves taking part in activities which help young people find out more about life in the 14+ Academies and identify whether this would be a good choice for them. Changing school for Key Stage 4 is a big change and we want to help young people make the right decision for them. The application stages also help Academies staff understand the young person, their motivators, talents and aspirations.

Help is available at any stage of the process so young people and their parents/carers are encouraged to get in touch if they need to.

1) Open Event
   The first stage of the application process is for parents/carers and the young person interested in applying for a place at the 14+ Academies is to attend an open event. In order to book a place at an open event, parents/carers must make contact with the 14+ Academies by email (academies@leedscitycollege.ac.uk), and they will then be sent a booking form and can book onto an open event date and time that is most convenient for them.

   During the open event, the Headteacher will deliver a presentation to parents/carers and young people in relation to the 14+ Academies offering and the application process. Parents/carers and young people also have the opportunity to meet current learners and staff, and visit the 14+ Academies. A number of open event dates will be made available.

   Attending an open event is a required part of the application process as this is an opportunity which allows parents/carers and young people to gain more knowledge around the 14+ Academies and what is offered. Moreover, attending an open event allows learners and parents/carers and young people to have an in-depth understanding of what they are applying for and to address any initial queries they may have. A number of dates are made available throughout the year to maximise opportunities to attend and subsequently have the opportunity to make an application.

2) Application Form
   After attending an open event, parents/carers will receive an email with a link to the online application form (if for any reason an online application cannot be made, please let us know so we arrange an alternative method). It is important that young people share their reasons for wanting to join the 14+ Academies, as this gives the best possible chance of supporting them if they start with us.

   As part of the application, the young person will select their preferences (1st, 2nd and 3rd) for their vocational course choice. Although we endeavour to offer the 1st choice, this is not always possible due to high demand, meaning a 2nd or 3rd choice may be offered if successful. If a young person selects the same course as all three of their choices, this may limit the chance of being offered a place. If that course is full, we may be unable to offer a place without alternative second or third choices.

   Where a young person has an EHCP, parents/carers will be asked to provide the most recent version as part of the application process. The 14+ Academies will be unable to proceed to the second stage of the application process until the EHCP has been received.

   The 14+ Academies will acknowledge receipt of the application form within 10 working days of being received, and will make contact with parents/carers if any clarification of information is needed following the application being submitted. The deadline for application forms to be submitted for the September 2027 intake is Friday 14th May 2027 at 4pm.

3) Learner Supporting Statement and School Reports

When the application form has been submitted, parents/carers will be sent an email with details in relation to this stage of the process. The first section of this stage involves the young person completing the Learner Supporting Statement. The purpose of the Learner Supporting statement is to gather the young person's hopes and aspirations with regards to why they are applying for a place at the 14+ Academies.

The second section of this stage of the application process involves the parent/carer gathering and sending three school reports (attendance, academic and behaviour) to the 14+ Academies either via post or email.

Information contained within school reports, including previous attendance, punctuality or behaviour concerns, will be considered in context and will not, in itself, be a reason for refusing a place. This information helps the 14+ Academies understand the young person's previous educational experience and identify any support that may be required.

If your young person is Electively Home Educated (EHE), depending on the length of time they have been EHE, we may still require school reports:

- Learners applying for Year 10: If your young person was on roll at a high school for any duration in Year 8 or Year 9, the most recent school reports are still required. Please contact their most recent school to request the three school reports.

- Learners applying for Year 11: If your young person was on roll at a high school for any duration in Year 9 or Year 10, the most recent school reports are still required. Please contact their most recent school to request the three school reports.

The 14+ Academies offer personalised support to help learners achieve their goals, particularly where a young person has a disability, learning difficulty, medical condition, or mental health need that may impact their studies. At this stage of the process, we ask parents and carers to share any official documentation confirming a diagnosis or additional need. This helps us gain a fuller understanding of how best to support each learner throughout their journey with us.

When the Learner Supporting Statement has been completed, and the three school reports have been received, parents/carers will then be sent details of the next stage of the application process by email.

4) Video Task

Once the application form has been received, along with the learner supporting statement and school reports, parents/carers will receive an email outlining the video task stage of the process. The young person applying will be asked to create a short video to introduce themself and provide an explanation as to why they want to apply for a place at the 14+ Academies. A deadline will be provided in which the video task needs to be returned by. Parents/carers will be sent full instructions and guidelines for the video task stage, and completed video tasks can be returned either via email or WhatsApp.

We use this opportunity to get to know the young person a little bit more and begin to build an understanding of who they are. We understand that this part of the process may be daunting for some young people, however we are not looking for perfection and just want to see the young person showing genuine enthusiasm to explain who they are and why they want to join the 14+ Academies.

If the 14+ Academies are notified of an applicant's additional needs or individual circumstances creating a barrier to completing the video task in the standard format, an appropriate reasonable adjustment or alternative method may be agreed.

5) Final stage of the application process

Year 10 only - Virtual Interview

If making an application to join Year 10, when the video task has been completed, the young person will be invited to a virtual interview which will take place via either WhatsApp or FaceTime. The 14+ Academies will email parents/carers to provide more details of this stage of the process and will be arranged at a time that is convenient for both the 14+ Academies and the young person. The informal interview will be between the young person and a member of staff from the 14+ Academies. This stage allows us to get to know the young person more, as well as allowing the young person the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

During the interview, we will seek to understand the young person's motivation for wanting to join and ask any questions we might have from reading your application. Parents/carers are more than welcome to accompany the young person to the virtual interview, but this is not a requirement, meaning the young person can attend alone if they wish.

Year 11 only - Taster Day

If making an application for Year 11, the final stage of the application process will involve attending a Taster Day. This will give learners the opportunity to experience the 14+ Academies first-hand by attending a range of sessions and getting a feel for the learning environment. The Taster Day will also provide the 14+ Academies with the opportunity to meet applicants, get to know them better and see them engaging and participating in a classroom setting.

6) Completion of Process

All completed applications are reviewed and communicated at the same time at the end of June. Places are not offered on a first come, first served basis; rather, all applications are considered and reviewed at the same stage when all interviews are complete. It is crucial that all outcomes are communicated to all young people and parents/carers at the same time to ensure that fairness continues to be at the heart of the process. If parents/carers wish to discuss the outcome of their young person's application when this has been communicated, contact must be made with the 14+ Academies.

Application Criteria

We receive far more applications than the number of places available, and we are very open and transparent, particularly at our open events, about the level of oversubscription. The nature of our provision itself - a specialist setting for young people who often have complex support needs - means we must take great care in shaping a safe and sustainable group dynamic. Almost all the learners who apply to us are doing so because their mainstream experience has broken down in some way, or because they need a different kind of environment to thrive. This makes the role of group balance and compatibility even more critical. Without this level of thoughtful planning, it would be unsustainable to meet the needs of our learners effectively, and it would place undue pressure on both the learners and the staff supporting them. Our overarching duty is to ensure that everyone who joins us is set up for success - emotionally, academically, and socially.

As a result of this, when allocating places, we apply a series of criteria to help make final decisions. These criteria are not ranked in order of importance but are used together to build a balanced and supported learner cohort. They include:

- Availability within vocational areas – each course has a limited number of places, and if a particular course is oversubscribed, we may not be able to offer a place, even where a learner is otherwise very suitable.
- Academic banding – consideration may be given to the overall academic profile of the cohort to support effective curriculum planning and inclusive teaching across the year group.
- School or EHE representation – where a significant number of applicants come from the same setting, consideration may be given to the impact this could have on successful transition, opportunities for a fresh start and the overall dynamics of the new cohort.
- Learner's readiness and motivation — consideration may be given to the young person's expressed reasons for applying, aspirations and engagement with the application process, taking account of any reasonable adjustments or individual circumstances that may affect how these are demonstrated.
- Individual needs – consideration will be given to any identified needs and the support required to enable the learner to access the provision successfully. This may include consideration of staffing, staff expertise and training, class sizes, specialist support capacity and relevant safeguarding or risk considerations. Reasonable adjustments will be explored fully and in good faith before any decision is made.
- Potential for positive peer influence — aiming to build groups where learners can support each other's progress and wellbeing, reducing isolation or potential conflict.
- Overall cohort balance – where necessary, consideration may be given to the overall composition of the cohort to ensure that available staffing, support and resources can be deployed safely, effectively and equitably.

No single criterion is considered in isolation and the criteria are not ranked in order of importance. Decisions are based on the information available through the completed application process and are considered collectively. This means that even where a learner's needs are clear and compelling, we may not be able to offer a place simply due to capacity, cohort balance, or availability in the chosen vocational areas.

Successful Applications

Learners who are successful in being offered a place are sent a letter to confirm their offer. A deadline is set within the letter for parents/carers to respond by email to the 14+ Academies to confirm that they wish to accept the offer of a place on behalf of their young person. The offer letter will also include confirmation of the vocational course that has been allocated to the young person. Due to capacity and limited places within vocational areas, we cannot guarantee that requests to change vocational allocation can be accommodated. If a place is not accepted by the deadline given, the waiting list will then be referred to.

Waiting List

Applicants who have completed all stages of the application process but have not been offered a place will be placed on a waiting list.

The waiting list does not operate as a fixed numerical ranking. When a place becomes available, the 14+ Academies will reconsider applicants in accordance with the published application criteria, including the vocational place available and the circumstances of the existing cohort at that time.

Being placed on the waiting list does not guarantee that a place will subsequently become available and the 14+ Academies cannot predict the likelihood of an offer being made.

Unsuccessful Applications

If a young person is not successful in being offered a place at the 14+ Academies, parents/carers will receive a letter via email to confirm this outcome. Regretfully, as previously outlined, the 14+ Academies is vastly oversubscribed and due to the high volume of applications received each year, there are more applications than places available to offer. If a young person is unsuccessful in their application for Year 10, they are welcome to re-complete the application process when they are eligible to apply for Year 11 if they wish to do so. All young people. regardless of the outcome, are able to apply for any Luminate (Leeds City College, Harrogate College and Keighley College) courses in the future. If possible and where appropriate, parents/carers may be signposted to relevant sources of information, advice or alternative education options.

Uncompleted Applications

Where an applicant has not completed all required stages of the application process by the communicated deadlines, their application will normally be considered incomplete and will therefore not proceed to consideration for a place. Any agreed reasonable adjustments will be considered before an application is closed.

Appeals Process

Each year, the 14+ Academies receive a very high volume of applications - significantly more than the number of places we have available. We are clear and transparent about this from the outset. This is communicated explicitly during our open events, through our website, and in application communications.

We want all young people and their parents/carers to understand from the beginning that we are a highly sought-after provision with a limited number of places. As such, even when a young person engages fully with each stage of the application process, we may not be able to offer a place simply due to the level of demand.

For more information regarding appeals for those who have completed the process, please contact the 14+ Academies.

Welcome Event

Learners who are offered a place at the 14+ Academies must attend a Welcome Event which they will be invited to within the offer letter. The Welcome Events typically take place in July each year. During the Welcome Event, learners will meet some of their peers and staff members and find out more about the 14+ Academies and how the start of the academic year will look. Parents/carers will be required to complete some paperwork which will be provided along with more information. Attendance at the Welcome Event is mandatory in order to confirm acceptance of a place.

Learners who are offered a place will join the 14+ Academies roll full time in September; the date will be confirmed at the Welcome Event. On the first day of enrolling, the 14+ Academies will inform the young person’s previous educational establishment to inform them that the young person is transferring to the 14+ Academies roll full time. Parents/carers are not required to inform their young person’s previous school, however can if they wish to do so.