

Applicaa Webinar Q&A - 04 Feb 2026

Admissions Code Compliance

This guidance is based on the School Admissions Code and recent adjudicator rulings. It's designed to help you understand the requirements, but it doesn't replace proper legal advice.

We've tried to be clear and practical. When we say don't collect certain information at the application stage, we explain why. When there are compliant alternatives, we show you how.

EHCP & SEN Information

Q: Can we ask about EHCPs / SEN at application stage?

A: Schools must not ask directly whether an applicant has an EHCP or SEN as part of the application or pre-admissions process. EHCP/SEN *status* must not be requested or visible prior to enrolment (i.e. once a firm place has been accepted).

Suggested alternative (access needs only):

Do you require any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments to fully take part in interviews, assessments, taster days or events?

This information is collected solely to help us make appropriate arrangements and will not be used in admissions decisions.

This is lawful because it focuses on access requirements, not SEN status. Responses must be handled separately and must not be visible to staff involved in admissions decision-making.

Schools may also include guidance in their admissions arrangements directing families with EHCPs to the Local Authority consultation process, which operates outside the standard admissions route.

Q: How can we ensure we can meet a student's SEN needs if we cannot ask in advance?

A: The Admissions Code prioritises fair access over early planning. Full EHCP and SEN information must be collected after enrolment, once a firm place has been accepted, at which point schools are expected to put appropriate support in place.

Before enrolment, schools may only collect limited access-needs information (as above). Schools must not refuse admission, limit offers, or prioritise applicants based on perceived ability to meet SEN needs.

Medical, Disability & Accessibility Information

Q: Can we ask about disability or accessibility needs for interviews or taster days?

A: Yes, where this is necessary to make reasonable adjustments.

Suggested wording:

Do you require any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments to take part in interviews, assessments or taster days?

This information will not be used in admissions decisions.

Responses must be used only for access planning and must not be visible to admissions decision-makers.

Q: Can we collect medical information for duty of care at pre-admission events?

A: Yes, where genuinely required for health and safety.

Suggested wording:

Please let us know of any essential medical information we need to be aware of to ensure your safety during this event.

This information is collected for health and safety purposes only and will not be used in admissions decisions.

Predicted Grades & Entry Criteria

Q: Can we use predicted grades to make conditional offers?

A: Yes. Predicted grades may be used to assess whether applicants meet published entry requirements and to decide whether to make a conditional offer.

Once eligibility is met, predicted grades must not be used to rank or prioritise applicants.

Q: Can we ask for predicted grades at application stage?

A: Yes, but only to assess eligibility.

Suggested wording:

Please provide your predicted grades so we can assess whether you meet the published entry requirements for your chosen courses.

Oversubscription & Offer-Making

Q: What if we are oversubscribed and cannot offer places to all eligible applicants?

A: Where eligible applicants exceed available places, schools must apply their published oversubscription criteria.

Oversubscription criteria must be:

- objective
- transparent
- published in advance
- applied consistently

Common lawful examples (where published) include:

- priority for looked-after or previously looked-after children
- priority for internal students
- distance from the school
- defined feeder-school priority (where lawful)
- random allocation (lottery)

Predicted grades, references, attendance, behaviour, APS based on predictions, or preference ranking must not be used as oversubscription criteria.

If no criteria are currently published, schools should adopt an objective method (such as random allocation) and update their admissions arrangements.

Parent / Carer Information

Q: Can we collect parent or carer contact details at application stage?

A: Student contact details may be collected at application stage. Parent or carer contact details should normally be collected at enrolment.

They may be collected earlier where there is a clear and legitimate purpose, such as event communication.

Suggested wording:

Please provide parent/carers contact details if you would like them to receive communications about interviews, taster days or events.

Q: Can we ask for the parent title (Mr / Mrs / Ms)?

A: This is not explicitly prohibited, but it has no direct relevance to admissions decisions and is therefore best avoided at application stage.

Best practice is to collect this information at enrolment if required for administrative purposes. If included earlier, it should be optional and not required to submit an application.

Personal Statements, Hobbies & Aspirations

Q: Can we ask for personal statements, hobbies, interests or career aspirations?

A: Not on the application form. This information is subjective and risks introducing bias.

These topics may be discussed verbally during Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) meetings, provided they are not recorded or used in admissions decisions.

Q: Can we ask why a student wants to study at our school?

A: Not on the application form. This may be discussed verbally in an IAG context for guidance purposes only.

FSM, Pupil Premium & Priority Groups

Q: Can we ask about Free School Meals or Pupil Premium?

A: Yes, but only where FSM or Pupil Premium status forms part of the published admissions or oversubscription criteria.

Suggested wording (where applicable):

Please indicate whether the applicant is eligible for Pupil Premium, as this forms part of our published oversubscription criteria.

If not part of published criteria, this information should be collected at enrolment.

Attendance & Behaviour

Q: Can attendance be used as part of admissions criteria?

A: No. Attendance must not be used in offer-making, ranking, or oversubscription decisions.

Q: Can we ask about behaviour or exclusions in references?

A: No. References must not request or include behaviour, attendance, exclusion, SEN or welfare-related information.

Suggested reference wording:

Please confirm subjects studied and predicted grades only. Do not include information relating to behaviour, attendance, SEN or welfare.

Photos, Biometrics & Identity

Q: Can we collect photos at the application stage?

A: No. You must not request photographs of a child for any part of the admissions process, other than as proof of identity when sitting a selection test.

Q: When can biometric data be collected?

A: At or after enrolment only.

Nationality, Residency & Right to Study

Q: Can we ask about nationality or residency at the application stage?

A: No. This information should not normally be collected at the application stage.

Suggested wording:

We may need to verify your right to study in the UK once an offer has been made. We will contact you if this information is required.

References

Q: What can we include in reference requests?

A: References must be limited to objective academic confirmation.

Suggested wording:

Please confirm subjects studied and predicted grades only. Do not include information relating to behaviour, attendance, SEN or welfare.

Implementation & Timing

Q: When do these requirements take effect?

A: Immediately. We recommend schools review and update their application forms and admissions processes as a priority.

Q: Is there a grace period?

A: No. There is no formal grace period under the School Admissions Code.