SHARPLES SCHOOL

CONSULTATION PROPOSAL DOCUMENT

PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE ADMISSIONS POLICY

Proposed change to the admission arrangements for Sharples School to provide priority for pupils attending The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School

Consultation period: Monday 19 October 2026 to Monday 30 November 2026 at 5.00pm

Proposed implementation: For admissions to Year 7 from September 2028

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sharples School is consulting on a proposed change to its admission arrangements for entry to Year 7.

The proposed change would introduce a specific admissions priority for children who are attending either of the school's two closely linked partner primary schools:

- The Oaks Primary School
- Sharples Primary School

The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of parents, carers, pupils, staff, governors, the two partner primary schools and other interested parties before the governing board considers whether to adopt the proposed change.

This consultation concerns admission to Sharples School only. It does not propose any change to the admission arrangements of either The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.

Sharples School is an academy and is its own admission authority. The school must comply with the requirements of the School Admissions Code and relevant admissions legislation when determining and applying its admission arrangements.

The School Admissions Code applies to academies as well as maintained schools and sets requirements concerning admission arrangements, applications, offers, fairness and appeals.

The current Sharples School admission policy provides for an admission number of 240 pupils into Year 7. Where applications exceed the admission number, places are allocated using the school's published oversubscription criteria.

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2. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

Sharples School proposes to amend its oversubscription criteria so that children attending either The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School receive a defined priority when applications for Year 7 exceed the number of places available.

The proposed additional criterion would be:

Children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.
This criterion would be placed after the existing Children of Staff criterion and before the geographical proximity criterion.

The proposed change would therefore recognise the established educational relationship between Sharples School and these two primary schools while retaining the existing admission criteria above it.

The proposal would not increase the number of Year 7 places available at Sharples School.

The governing board is consulting on this change because it considers that the existing arrangements do not fully recognise the exceptional and established educational relationship between Sharples School and these two primary schools.

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3. WHY IS SHARPLES SCHOOL PROPOSING THIS CHANGE?

Sharples School has developed particularly close and sustained relationships with The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School.

These relationships go significantly beyond the normal relationship between a secondary school and local primary schools.

The schools work together on a regular basis to support pupils' education. Sharples teachers work within the primary schools on a weekly basis, supporting teaching and learning and sharing subject expertise.

In addition, pupils from The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School regularly visit Sharples School. These visits enable primary pupils to experience aspects of secondary education, use specialist facilities and work with Sharples staff as part of their primary education.

The partnership therefore provides educational benefits to pupils before they reach secondary school and helps create continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The relationship is also supported through close governance arrangements. There are shared governors, and staff from each school sit on the governing body of partner schools. This provides an additional level of strategic collaboration and means that the schools work together to support school improvement and the educational experience of children and young people.

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4. THE PARTICULAR ISSUE THE PROPOSAL SEEKS TO ADDRESS

Most families whose children attend The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School live relatively close to both their primary school and Sharples School.

However, families' circumstances can change.

On occasion, a family may move house outside the immediate area while their child remains at one of the partner primary schools.

Under the current admission arrangements, the child's new home address may mean that they are no longer able to secure a place at Sharples School when they transfer to secondary education.

This can result in a child being separated from the majority of their primary-school classmates at the point of transition to secondary school.

It can also mean that a child who has participated in years of joint work, visits, lessons and transition activities with Sharples School does not continue that educational journey into Year 7.

The proposed change seeks to address this particular circumstance by recognising a child's established educational connection with The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.

The proposal is therefore not intended simply to give preference based on geographical proximity. It recognises an existing educational partnership and the continuity that has been developed between the schools over a number of years.

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5. EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposed change is intended to support continuity of education and effective transition from primary to secondary school.

The anticipated benefits include:

5.1 Continuity of learning

Children attending The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School already have opportunities to work with Sharples staff and experience aspects of learning at Sharples.

Giving these pupils priority for admission would support continuity between their primary and secondary education.

5.2 Continuity of peer relationships

Children who have attended the same primary school together may have developed strong friendships and social networks.

Where families have moved outside the immediate area but the child remains at one of the partner primary schools, the current arrangements can result in that child being separated from their established peer group at the point of transfer.

The proposed change would reduce the likelihood of this occurring where the child has an established connection with one of the partner primary schools.

5.3 Enhanced transition

The Oaks Primary School, Sharples Primary School and Sharples School already work closely together to support transition.

The proposed arrangement would provide greater opportunity for children who have already participated in this partnership to continue their transition journey at Sharples.

5.4 Consistency of educational approaches

Regular work between staff in the primary schools and Sharples enables teachers to share knowledge, approaches and information about teaching and learning.

Maintaining these relationships as children move into Year 7 can support a more coherent educational experience.

5.5 Recognition of established partnership working

The proposed admissions criterion would formally recognise a partnership which already exists in practice.

It would reflect the significant amount of collaborative work undertaken by staff and pupils across the schools.

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6. CURRENT ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Sharples School currently has a published admission number of 240 places for Year 7.

Where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, applications are ranked according to the school's published oversubscription criteria.

The current admission arrangements provide for priority categories including:

1. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the school.
2. Children in public care, including relevant previously looked-after children.
3. Children subject to relevant child protection arrangements.
4. Children with an older sibling attending the school.
5. Children with a qualifying medical condition or disability.
6. Children of qualifying school staff.
7. Children who live nearest to the school.

The proposed change would introduce an additional criterion:

Children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.

This criterion would be placed after Children of Staff and before geographical proximity.

The proposed arrangement would therefore become:

1. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the school.
2. Children in public care and relevant previously looked-after children.
3. Children subject to relevant child protection arrangements.
4. Children with an older sibling attending Sharples School.
5. Children with a qualifying medical condition or disability.
6. Children of qualifying Sharples School staff.
7. Children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.
8. Children who live nearest to Sharples School.

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7. PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Subject to the outcome of this consultation and the governing board's decision, the oversubscription criteria would be amended to include the following criterion:

Children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School

This criterion would be applied after the existing Children of Staff criterion and before geographical proximity.

The proposed criterion would not guarantee a place at Sharples School to every child attending either primary school.

Sharples School would continue to have a published admission number and the oversubscription criteria would continue to be applied where the number of applications exceeds the number of available places.

Where a particular criterion is oversubscribed, the school's published tie-break arrangements would continue to apply.

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8. WHAT WOULD NOT CHANGE?

The proposal would not:

- increase the number of Year 7 places available at Sharples School;
- guarantee a place to every pupil attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School;
- remove the statutory priority afforded to children whose Education, Health and Care Plan names the school;
- remove existing protections and priorities for looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- remove sibling priority;
- prevent families from applying for other secondary schools;
- prevent parents from expressing a preference for Sharples School;
- remove the statutory right of appeal where a place is refused;
- change the admission arrangements of The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School;
- change the arrangements for children already attending Sharples School; or
- change the school's published admission number.

The proposal changes the order in which eligible applications are considered where the school is oversubscribed. It does not create additional school places.

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9. WHO WOULD BE AFFECTED?

The proposal would potentially affect children applying for a Year 7 place at Sharples School where the school receives more applications than places available.

The principal groups potentially affected would be:

- pupils attending The Oaks Primary School;
- pupils attending Sharples Primary School;
- pupils applying to Sharples School from other primary schools; and
- families who may move into or out of the local area while their child remains at primary school.

For children attending one of the two partner primary schools, the proposal could increase their priority compared with the current arrangements.

For children attending other primary schools, the proposal could affect their position in the oversubscription ranking where Sharples School is oversubscribed.

For this reason, the consultation is intended to obtain views not only from the two partner primary schools but from all families and other stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed change.

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10. WHY NOT SIMPLY USE DISTANCE FROM HOME?

The current admission arrangements already give significant weight to geographical proximity.

However, the school considers that distance alone does not fully recognise the established educational relationship between Sharples School and The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School.

The circumstances which have led to this proposal are particularly relevant where:

- a child has attended one of the partner primary schools for several years;
- the child has participated in regular activities with Sharples School;
- Sharples staff have worked with the child and their teachers;
- the child has visited Sharples as part of their primary education;
- the child has established friendships and peer relationships with other pupils who are likely to transfer to Sharples; and
- the family has subsequently moved outside the immediate geographical area.

The proposed criterion would therefore recognise educational continuity as well as geographical proximity.

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11. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS

The relationship between Sharples School, The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School is longstanding and comprehensive.

Examples of partnership working include:

- Sharples teachers working in the primary schools on a weekly basis;
- primary pupils visiting Sharples School to participate in lessons and educational activities;
- joint curriculum and enrichment activities;
- transition activities for pupils in Years 5 and 6;
- sharing of professional expertise between teachers;
- opportunities for primary pupils to experience specialist facilities and teaching at Sharples;
- communication between primary and secondary staff regarding pupils' learning and transition; and
- governors and staff contributing to the governance of partner schools.

This partnership provides opportunities for children to become familiar with Sharples School before they reach secondary school.

It also allows staff to develop professional relationships and a shared understanding of the curriculum and educational needs of pupils.

The proposed admission criterion would therefore recognise a relationship that is already embedded in the day-to-day educational experience of pupils and staff.

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12. GOVERNANCE

The partnership is also supported through governance arrangements involving individuals who have roles across the schools.

There are shared governors, and staff from each school sit on the governing body of partner schools.

This provides opportunities for strategic discussions about school improvement, educational standards, transition and the wider needs of children and young people.

The governance relationship reinforces the wider educational partnership between the schools.

The proposed admission criterion would complement these existing governance and educational arrangements.

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13. FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

The governing board recognises that any change to admission arrangements can affect different groups of applicants differently.

The proposed arrangements will therefore be considered against the requirements of the School Admissions Code and relevant equality and admissions legislation.

The criteria will be:

- clear;
- objective;
- published in advance;
- capable of being consistently applied; and
- subject to the statutory right of appeal.

The proposal does not remove parents' ability to express a preference for Sharples School.

Where a child is not offered a place, parents will continue to have the right to receive information about the decision and the relevant appeal arrangements.

The school will undertake any further equality considerations required before the admission arrangements are formally determined.

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14. EFFECT ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The intended effect of the proposal is to support continuity for children who attend The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.

In particular, it seeks to reduce circumstances in which a child:

- attends one of the partner primary schools for a number of years;
- participates in joint activities and transition work with Sharples;
- develops established relationships with pupils who are likely to transfer to Sharples;
- works with Sharples teachers during their primary education; but
- is subsequently unable to secure a place at Sharples because their familyhas moved outside the immediate geographical area.

The proposal is intended to support a smoother transition for these pupils.

It is recognised, however, that giving priority to one group of applicants can affect the position of other applicants where a school is oversubscribed. This is whythe school is consulting openly on the proposal before any decision is made.

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15. EFFECT ON OTHER LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The proposal relates specifically to the established educational relationship between Sharples School, The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School.

The school recognises that other local primary schools also have relationships with Sharples and that pupils from a range of primary schools transfer to Sharples each year.

The proposed criterion is not intended to suggest that pupils from other schools are less valued or that Sharples does not work positively with other primary schools.

Rather, the proposal recognises the particular depth, frequency and governance links that exist with The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School.

The consultation provides an opportunity for other schools and families to comment on this distinction.

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16. TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

The proposal does not introduce any new transport arrangements.

Families will remain responsible for considering the practical implications of their child's journey to and from school in accordance with the arrangements applicable to them.

The proposal does not change the location of Sharples School or either partner primary school.

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17. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposal would not increase the published admission number for Sharples School.

The proposed change would therefore not create additional Year 7 places.

The proposal is not expected to result in significant additional financial costs to the school.

Any financial implications associated with implementation of the revised admission arrangements will be considered by the governing board before the arrangements are determined.

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18. CONSULTATION PROCESS

The governing board is consulting on the proposed change to the admission arrangements for Sharples School.

The consultation provides parents, carers, pupils, staff, governors, the partner primary schools and other interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the proposal.

The consultation is intended to be open and transparent.

The school will consider all relevant responses received during the consultation before the governing board makes a final decision.

The school will also ensure that the final admission arrangements comply withthe School Admissions Code and other relevant legal requirements.

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19. CONSULTATION TIMESCALES

The consultation will open on:

Monday 12 October 2026

The consultation will close at:

5.00pm on Monday 23 November 2026

Responses received after the closing date may not be considered as part of the formal consultation.

The proposed timetable is:

Stage	Date
Consultation opens	Monday 12 October 2026
Consultation period	Monday 12 October – Monday 23 November 2026
Consultation closes	5.00pm Monday 23 November 2026
Responses considered	Following closure of consultation
Governing Board considers consultation responses	23rd November to 31st December 2026
Final admission arrangements determined	By 31st December 2027
Revised arrangements published	By 31st January 2027
Revised arrangements apply to	Year 7 admissions from September 2028

The school will communicate the outcome of the consultation following consideration of the responses.

20. HOW TO RESPOND

Parents, carers, pupils, staff, governors, primary schools and other interested parties are invited to comment on the proposal.

Responses should address the proposed change to the admission arrangements and may include:

- whether you support or do not support the proposed change;
- the reasons for your views;
- any potential benefits you believe the change would provide;
- any potential disadvantages or unintended consequences;
- whether you consider the proposed admission criterion to be clear and fair;
- the potential impact on pupils attending other primary schools; and
- any alternative arrangements you believe the governing board should consider.

Responses should be submitted by:

Email: admissions@sharplesschool.co.uk

Post:
Admissions Consultation
Sharples School
Hill Cot Road
Bolton
BL1 8SN

Closing date: 5.00pm on Monday 23 November 2026

Please ensure that responses are received by the closing date in order to be considered as part of the formal consultation.

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21. WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE CONSULTATION?

Following the closing date, the governing board will consider the responses received.

The governing board will consider:

- the views expressed by parents and carers;
- views from pupils;
- views from staff;
- views from the partner primary schools;
- views from other local schools and stakeholders;
- any equality considerations;
- the educational rationale for the proposal;
- the practical implications of the proposal; and
- the requirements of the School Admissions Code and relevant legislation.

The governing board will then determine whether to adopt the proposed change, amend the proposal or retain the existing admission arrangements.

The final decision and determined admission arrangements will be communicated and published in accordance with the applicable admissions requirements.

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22. CONCLUSION

Sharples School is proposing a change to its admission arrangements to recognise the established educational partnership between the school, The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School.

The proposal has arisen from the particular circumstances of pupils who may spend their entire primary education within this partnership, participating in joint teaching, visits, curriculum activities and transition work, but who may subsequently be unable to secure a place at Sharples because their family has moved outside the immediate geographical area.

The proposed change would give defined admission priority to children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.

The new criterion would sit after the existing Children of Staff criterion and before the geographical proximity criterion.

The proposal would retain the school's published admission number and all other existing oversubscription criteria.

The school believes that the consultation is an important opportunity to consider whether the proposed arrangements appropriately recognise the educational continuity, established relationships and transition benefits associated with this partnership.

No final decision has been made.

The governing board welcomes views from parents, carers, pupils, staff, governors, the partner schools and all other interested parties before a decision is taken.

APPENDIX 1 – PROPOSED OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

Subject to consultation and final determination, the proposed admission criteria for Year 7 would be:

1. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan naming Sharples School.
2. Children in public care and children who were previously in public care, as defined within the School Admissions Code.
3. Children who have a child protection plan or who have been subject to a child protection plan within the applicable period.
4. Children who will have an older sibling attending Sharples School at therelevant date(s).
5. Children who have a qualifying medical condition or disability which meets the school's published requirements for priority under this criterion.
6. Children of qualifying members of Sharples School staff, in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
7. Children attending The Oaks Primary School or Sharples Primary School.
8. Children who live nearest to Sharples School.

Where more applications are received within a criterion than there are places available, the school's published tie-break arrangements will apply.

The final wording of the criteria will be reviewed for compliance with the SchoolAdmissions Code before the governing board determines the admission arrangements.

APPENDIX 2 – KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSULTATION

The governing board would particularly welcome views on the following questions:

1. Do you support the proposal to introduce an admissions priority for children attending The Oaks Primary School and Sharples Primary School?
2. Do you consider that the proposal appropriately recognises the educational partnership between these schools?
3. Do you consider that the proposed criterion is clear and capable of being applied consistently?
4. Do you have any concerns about the effect of the proposal on children attending other primary schools?
5. Do you consider that placing the new criterion after Children of Staff and before geographical proximity is appropriate?
6. Are there any alternative arrangements that you believe should be considered?
7. Is there any other information that you believe the governing board should take into account before making its decision?

APPENDIX 3 – STATUTORY AND POLICY CONTEXT

The admission arrangements for Sharples School must comply with the statutory framework applying to admissions in England.

The School Admissions Code is statutory guidance applying to maintained schools, academies and free schools. It covers admission arrangements, applications and offers, fairness and relevant admissions legislation.

Sharples School, as an academy, is required to comply with the School Admissions Code and the law relating to admissions, including the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The school will ensure that the final admission arrangements are reviewed against the current statutory requirements before they are determined.