

Monday, 14th October 2024

Dear Parents, Carers and stakeholders,

RE: Consultation on Admission Arrangements at WMG Academy Solihull

We are writing to draw your attention to a recently published consultation on behalf of WMG Academy for Young Engineers Solihull in relation to proposed changes to the Academy's admission arrangements. These proposals include plans to admit students into a new Year 9 cohort at the age of 13 from September 2026, and some further changes to the Published Admission Number (PAN) as detailed in the Academy's admissions policy.

This consultation document follows the consultation procedure set by the [Admissions Code of Practice 2021](#) and seeks the views of parents and carers, community members, educational institutions, the Local Authority, and other stakeholders.

WMG Academy for Young Engineers Solihull

WMG Academy Solihull is a University Technical College (UTC) which opened in September 2016. The Academy is part of the WMG Academy Trust which operates a further UTC near to the University of Warwick campus in Coventry. The WMG Academy Trust was founded by the late Professor Lord Bhattacharyya to provide high-quality technical education for young people in the West Midlands. The Academy specialises in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and digital technologies subjects.

Since opening in 2016, WMG Academy Solihull has admitted students between the age of 14 and 19 with entry points at Year 10 to the main school and at Year 12 to the Sixth Form. With a 'business-like, business-led' ethos, the Academy works with employer partners to deliver innovative educational pathways in modern and state-of-the-art facilities with an industry-backed curriculum. WMG Academy has large Key Stage 4 cohorts and a very popular sixth form provision, delivering A Levels, T Levels and BTEC qualifications.

Proposals

WMG Academy is committed to providing high-quality technical education for young people across the West Midlands and proposes to extend its current age range to include up to 100 Year 9 students aged 13 from September 2026. This will see the existing entry point for students wishing to join the Academy in the main school move from age 14 in school Year 10 to age 13 in school Year 9.

At present, the PAN for the Academy is 150 in each of the four year groups, giving a possible 300 students in each key stage and 600 overall. The proposal will see each of the three year groups in the lower school having capacity for 100 students each, giving a key stage capacity of 300 students. The PAN for entry into the Sixth Form of 150 for both Year 12 and Year 13 will remain unchanged, giving a Post 16 capacity of 300. In summary, the overall spaces available for students joining in both key stages will not change; the proposed change being three year groups in the main school totalling 300 as opposed to the current situation of two year groups totalling 300.

This proposal will result in transitional arrangements in the academic year 2026/27. The cohort moving from Year 10 to Year 11 at this time will have a capacity of 150. At the same time, there will be one year of double recruitment where students will be able to enter the academy at either Year 9 or Year 10. Both year groups will have a capacity of 100. From September 2027, students will only be able to join the main school in Year 9 with all three year groups having a capacity of 100 students.

In summary, WMG Academy Solihull is proposing to change its current main school offer of two year groups (Years 10 and 11) containing 150 students each to three year groups (Years 9, 10 and 11) each containing 100 students. The current PAN for the Sixth Form of 150 students in each of Years 12 and 13 remains unchanged.

Proposed Changes to the Admissions Policy

The proposed WMG Academy Solihull Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

The policy includes revisions to reflect proposals to admit students into a new Year 9 cohort from September 2026 and the necessary transitional arrangements to facilitate this. Whilst there are no changes to the admission arrangements for students wishing to join the Sixth Form, the revised policy includes details on the priority arrangements for internal applicants wishing to transition from Year 11 to Year 12 and the impact on the capacity for external students entering the Sixth Form caused by changes to the PAN in the lower school.

The revised policy also confirms that WMG Academy intends to become its own independent admissions authority using the Applica portal to administer applications at all entry points. This is a change to current practice whereby lower school admissions are administered by Solihull MBC. The revised policy also confirms the oversubscription criteria, academic entry requirements and appeals processes.

Why are we considering admitting Year 9 students?

We believe that admitting Year 9 students would provide several benefits including:

- A smoother transition to UTC education: students would have an extra year to settle into the WMG Academy environment and familiarise themselves with our unique specialist curriculum
- Exposing students at a younger age to employer and university learning experiences and engagements giving them a deeper and richer curriculum experience
- More time to cover the key skills and concepts demanded from GCSE courses that they will begin in Year 10
- More opportunities for personalised learning: we would be able to identify and support students' individual needs at an earlier stage, providing them with the tailored support they need to succeed
- A stronger pipeline of students for our Post-16 programs: so would be able to attract more students to our Post-16 programs, which offer a range of specialist vocational qualifications which now include T Levels
- More opportunities for the young people in the local area to work with leading employer partners and to benefit from a UTC education.

What would admitting Year 9 students mean for WMG Academy Solihull?

Admitting Year 9 students would require some changes to WMG Academy Solihull, including:

- Adapting our curriculum and teaching methods: we would need to ensure that our curriculum is appropriate for Year 9 students and is a solid, broad and balanced foundation year that is a springboard for formally examined course that they would start on in Year 10

- Adapting our teaching methods to ensure they are tailored to student needs particularly those that may not have embedded habits of independent learning
- Expanding our facilities: in the longer term we may need to provide additional classrooms, study spaces, and other facilities to accommodate the extra students, however, WMG Academy currently has ample space available
- Increasing our staffing levels: we would need to recruit additional teachers and support staff to ensure that we can provide high-quality education for all our students in some of the national curriculum areas currently not covered in our Key Stage 4 specialist curriculum.

How would admitting Year 9 students benefit stakeholders?

We believe that admitting Year 9 students would benefit stakeholders in the following ways:

- **Parents/carers:** Parents would have more choice when it comes to their children's education
- **Community members:** The community would benefit from having a more diverse range of educational options available
- **Educational institutions:** Other schools and colleges would benefit from having a stronger pipeline of students for their Post-16 programs
- **Local employers:** Local employers would benefit by having more pupils taught technical qualifications from industry standard equipment and specialist staff and this would also help the significant skills gap in the technical and engineering employment and apprenticeship market
- **The local authority:** The local authority would benefit from having a more efficient use of school places.

How to Submit Your Feedback

The Academy wants to hear your views on this proposal. It is important that as many stakeholders as possible respond to this consultation to ensure the views of the WMG Academy community are well reflected. The views of parents, pupils and the wider community will be considered by our Trust Board, Local Governing Board and Solihull MBC when determining whether to publish a Statutory Notice to admit Year 9 pupils to WMG Academy Solihull.

The consultation was published on Friday 11th October 2024 and will run for six weeks, in line with the Admissions Code of Practice. Please submit your feedback by completing the online survey by 9am on Monday 25th November 2024.

The online survey can be accessed [here](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact WMG Academy Solihull by email to admissions@wmgacademy.org.uk if you have any questions or would like further information.

Yours sincerely,



Mr S Tait
Chief Executive
WMG Academy Trust



Mrs C Morris
Associate Principal
WMG Academy Solihull