



"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn, love and grow together"

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IN YEAR MAIN SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2024 – 2025

St. Vincent de Paul School is a Catholic foundation intended for the education of Catholic children. The admission of pupils rests with the Board of Governors whose criteria for admissions are set out below. The first and most important criterion for the school is to determine that the child comes from a Catholic family. As a Catholic school we aim to provide a Catholic education for all our pupils. At a Catholic school, Catholic doctrine and practice permeate every aspect of the school's activity. It is essential that the Catholic character of the school's education be fully supported by all families in the school. All applicants are therefore expected to give their full, unreserved, and positive support for the aims and ethos of the school.

The Governors intend to admit sixty children, which is the Published Admission Number (PAN) to Reception.

The offer of a place in the Nursery does not guarantee a place in Main School. Parents of children attending St Vincent de Paul nursery must make a fresh application for reception.

Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will always be given to Catholic applicants in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Diocese of Westminster. Applications will be ranked using the criteria listed below.

In this policy applicant refers to the person making an application on behalf of a child.

Oversubscription Criteria

1. Catholic 'looked after children'¹ and Catholic children who were previously looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted² (or made subject to 'Child Arrangements Orders'³), or 'special guardianship orders'⁴ including those who appear to the admission authority to have been in state care outside of England. Places are allocated to children in public care according to chapter 7, section 2 of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (see definition)
2. Catholic Children with a 'Certificate of Catholic Practice'⁶, who are baptised 'Catholics'⁷ and who have 'siblings'⁸ in our main⁹ school at the time of admission.
3. Catholic Children with a 'Certificate of Catholic Practice', who are baptised Catholics, 'resident'¹⁰ in St. Joseph's Parish¹¹, Stevenage New Town or The Church of the Transfiguration Stevenage Old Town.
4. Catholic Children with a 'Certificate of Catholic Practice', who are baptised Catholics, resident in any other parishes and for whom St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School is their nearest Catholic Primary School.
5. Catholic Children with a 'Certificate of Catholic Practice', who are baptised Catholics and for whom St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School is not their nearest Catholic Primary School.

6. Other Baptised Catholic children.
7. Other '*looked after children and children who were previously looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted² or made subject to 'Child Arrangements Orders'³ or 'special guardianship orders* including those who appear to the admission authority to have been in state care outside of England
8. Catechumens or members of an '*Eastern Christian Church*¹² as defined in Diocesan Guidance who can provide a certificate of baptism or reception.
9. Children of other Christian denominations¹⁵ with either a certificate of baptism or a letter from their minister confirming membership of the faith community.
10. Children of other faiths¹⁶, whose membership of the faith community is confirmed by a letter from their faith leader.
11. Any other children.

Within each of the categories listed above, the following provisions will be applied in the following order.

- (i) Where evidence is provided at the time of application of an exceptional social, medical or pastoral need of the child which can be most appropriately met at this school, the application will be placed at the top of the category in which the application is made. (see note 11)
- (ii) The attendance of a brother or sister at the school at the time of admission will increase the priority of an application within each category so that the application will be placed at the top of the category in which the application is made after children in (i) above.

Few applications are accepted under this rule.

Tie Break

Where one child of twins/triplets/siblings for the same academic year has been offered a place and the other(s) have not the additional sibling will be offered a place, even though this would mean the class size is over the admission number.

Where there are more applications for places than the number of places available, places will be offered according to the order of priority of the numbered criteria above.

Where the offer of places to all the applicants in any of the criteria listed above would exceed the number of places available the following provisions in each criterion will be applied:

- (a) Children who have a sibling already attending the main school at the time of admission.
- (b) Proximity of the child's home to the school as provided by Hertfordshire County Council.
- (c) Two families in the same block of flats or the distance given based on the HCC guidelines is the same and there is only one remaining place, then the offer of the place will be decided by random allocation. This will take place in the presence of an independent witness.

Definitions

¹ **'looked after child'** is a child who is in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by that authority in accordance with section 22 of the Children Act 1989 at the time of the application and who the local authority has confirmed will still be looked after at the time of admission into school. These children will be prioritised under this rule.

Highest priority will also be given to children who were previously looked after, including those looked after outside England, but ceased to be so because they were adopted, or became subject to a child arrangement order or a special guardianship order.

A "child looked after" is a child who is:

- a) in the care of a local authority, or
- b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (section 22(1) of The Children Act 1989)

All children adopted from care who are of compulsory school age are eligible for admission under this rule (This definition has been amended in accordance with paragraph 1.7 (footnote 17) of the School Admissions Code that came into force on 19 December 2014).

Children in the process of being placed for adoption are classified by law as children looked after providing there is a Placement Order and the application would be prioritised under this rule.

Children who were not "looked after" **immediately** before being adopted, or made the subject of a child arrangement order or special guardianship order, **will not** be prioritised under this rule.

Children previously looked after abroad and subsequently adopted will be prioritised under this rule if the child's previously looked status and adoption is confirmed by Hertfordshire's "Virtual School".

The child's previously looked status will be decided in accordance with the definition outlined in The Children & Social Work Act 2017:

- i. to have been in state care in a place outside England and Wales because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately, and
- ii. to have ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted.

A child is in "state care" if he or she is in the care of, or accommodated by –

- (a) a public authority,
- (b) a religious organisation, or
- (c) any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

² **'Adopted'**. An adopted child is a child whose parents can give proof of adoption following being looked-after.

³ **'Child Arrangements Order'**. Under the provisions of the Children and Families Act 2014, which amended section 8 of the Children Act 1989, residence orders have now been replaced by child arrangements orders which settle the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live.

⁴ **'Special Guardianship Order'**. Under 14A of The Children Act 1989, an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian or guardians.

⁵ **'Catechumen'** means a member of the catechumenate of a Catholic Church. This will normally be evidenced by a certificate of reception into the order of catechumens.

⁶ **'Certificate of Catholic Practice'** Means a certificate issued by the family's parish priest (or the priest in charge of the church where the family attends Mass) in the form laid down by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It will be issued if the priest is satisfied that at least one Catholic parent or carer (along with the child, if he or she is over seven years old) have (except when it was impossible to do so) attended Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation for at least five years (or, in the case of the child, since the age of seven, if shorter). It will also be issued when the practice has been continuous since being received into the Church if that occurred less than five years ago. It is

expected that most Certificates will be issued on the basis of attendance. A Certificate may also be issued by the priest when attendance is interrupted by exceptional circumstances which excuse from the obligation to attend on that occasion or occasions. Further details of these circumstances can be found in the guidance issued to priests
<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/governors/admissions/>

⁷ **'Catholic'** means a member of the Church in full Communion with the See of Rome. This includes the Eastern Catholic Churches. This will be evidenced by a Certificate of Baptism in a Catholic Church or a Certificate of Reception into the full communion with the Catholic Church. For the purposes of this Policy this includes a looked-after child who is part of a Catholic family and in the process of adoption, where a priest's letter demonstrates that the child would have been baptised or received were it not for their status as a looked-after child.

⁸ **'Sibling'** This means a 'brother' or 'sister' which includes:

- (i) all natural brothers or sisters, half brothers or sisters, adopted brothers or sisters, stepbrothers or sisters, foster brothers or sisters, whether or not they are living at the same address; and
- (ii) the child of a parent's partner where that child for whom the school place is sought lives for at least part of the week in the same family unit at the same home address as the child who is the subject of the application.

⁹ **'Main School'** Classes from Reception to Year 6 (excludes Nursery)

¹⁰ **'Resident'** This relates to the child's home Address. The address provided must be the child's current permanent address at the time of application.

At the time of application" means the closing date for applications

*"Permanent" means that the child has lived at that address for at least a year. Where a family has not lived at an address for a year, they **must** be able to demonstrate that they own the property or have a tenancy agreement for a minimum of 12 months* **and** the child must be resident in the property at the time of application.*

The application can only be processed using one address. If a child lives at more than one address (for example due to a separation) the address used will be the one where the child lives for the majority of the time. If a child lives at two addresses equally, parents/carers should make a single joint application naming one address.

If a child's permanent residence is disputed, parents/carers should provide court documentation to evidence the address that should be used for admission allocation purposes. If two applications are received, with different addresses and/or different preferences, neither will be processed until the address issue is reconciled.

It is for a child's home LA to determine address. If two applications, with different addresses are received from the same LA, it will be for that LA to determine permanent address. If two applications are received from two different LAs, the above process will be used. If two different applications are received for the same child from the same address, e.g., containing different preferences, parents/carers will be invited to submit a joint application or provide court documentation to evidence the preferences that should be used for the admission process. Until the preference issue is reconciled neither application will be processed. For the transfer application rounds, if the initial differing applications (one or both) were received "on-time", an amended joint application will also be considered "on-time" if received before the "late deadline". If the amended joint application is received after the late date, it will be treated as "late". The late deadline for the 2024/25 transfer application process is 1 February 2024. If these dates change, amendments will be published on the HCC admissions web pages at the start of the 2023/24 application process in September 2023.

* If, because of the nature of the agreement, it is not possible to provide a 12-month tenancy agreement, alternative proof of address will be requested and verified as necessary with the Shared Anti-Fraud Service.

¹¹ **For the purposes of this policy, parish boundaries are as shown on the attached map in Appendix 2.** Distance of the child's home to the school will be measured in line with Hertfordshire County Council Guidelines.

¹² **"The Eastern Christian Churches"** (other than the Eastern Catholic Churches) include the Orthodox Churches as well as those Eastern Churches resulting from divisions following the early Church Councils." (Paragraph A18 Joint Guidance on Admissions revised February 2007).

¹³ Children previously looked after are those children adopted or with a special guardianship order or child arrangements order. This definition was amended following a determination by the OSA (Office of the Schools adjudicator) in August 2014.

¹⁴ A sibling link will not be recognised for children living temporarily in the same house, for example a child who usually lives with one parent but has temporarily moved or a looked after child in a respite placement or very short term or bridging foster placement.

¹⁵ **"Children of other Christian denominations"** means: children who belong to other churches and ecclesial communities which, acknowledging God's revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and, in obedience to God's will and in the power of the Holy Spirit commit themselves: to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body; and to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. An ecclesial community which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition, is included if it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and is committed to working in the spirit of the above. All members of Churches Together in England and of CYTŪN are deemed to be included in the above definition, as are all other churches and ecclesial communities that are in membership of any local Churches Together Group (by whatever title) on the above basis.

¹⁶ **"Children of other faiths"** means children who are members of a religious community that does not fall within the definition of 'other Christian denominations' and which falls within the definition of a religion for the purposes of charity law. The Charities Act 2011 defines religion to include:

- A religion which involves belief in more than one God, and
- A religion which does not involve belief in a God.

Case law has identified certain characteristics which describe the meaning of religion for the purposes of charity law, which are characterised by a belief in a supreme being and an expression of belief in that supreme being through worship.

Pupils with an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHC)

The admission of pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC) is dealt with by a completely separate procedure. Details of this separate procedure are set out in the EHC plan code of practice. If your child has an EHC you must contact your local authority SEN officer. Children with this school named in their EHC Plan will be admitted.

Fair Access Protocols

The school is committed to taking its fair share of vulnerable children who are hard to place, in accordance with locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal round of admissions, the governing body is empowered to give absolute priority (admitted before children on the continued interest list) to a child where admission is requested under any local protocol which carries the agreement of both the governing body and the diocese for the current admission year. The governing body has this power even when admitting such a

child would exceed the normal admission number.

Continuing Interest List

A Continuing Interest List will be maintained by the governing body in the order of the oversubscription criteria and not in the order in which the applications are received. Names are kept on the list for at least one year. The school will then contact families and ask if they wish to remain on the Continuing Interest List. If a family does not respond to this request their name will be removed from the continued interest list.

Fraudulent applications

The admitting authority will do as much as possible to prevent applications being made from fraudulent addresses, including referring cases to the Shared Anti-Fraud service for further investigation as necessary. Address evidence is frequently requested, monitored and checked and school places will be withdrawn when false information is deliberately provided. The admitting authority will take action in the following circumstances:

- When a child's application address does not match the address of that child at their current school;
- When a child lives at a different address to the applicant;
- When the applicant does not have parental responsibility;
- When a family move shortly after the closing date of applications when one or more of the following applies:
 - The family has moved to a property from which their application was less likely to be successful;
 - The family has returned to an existing property;
 - The family lived in rented accommodation for a short period of time (anything less than a year) over the application period;
 - Official/public records show an alternative address at the time of the application
- When a child starts at the allocated school and their address is different from the address used at the time of application.

Parents/carers will need to show that they have relinquished residency ties with their previous property and they, and their child(ren) are permanently residing at the address given on the application form.

Where suspicions lie as to the validity of an address, the Admitting Authority may make unannounced visits to the applicant's claimed address or any other address suspected to be the normal permanent residence of the child's primary carer or the address where the child resides for the majority of the week. The aim of these visits is to verify that the address information provided on the application form is accurate. If an address appears to be unoccupied at the time of a visit, a letter will be left confirming that an attempted visit took place. This letter will ask the occupant to contact the Admissions & Transport Team within 24 hours to confirm receipt of the letter and details of the occupant. It is reasonable to expect that an applicant living at the address stated on the application form can respond within 24 hours. If contact takes longer than 24 hours, the applicant will be asked to explain why and provide evidence why they did not respond within the specified time.

If, following the initial investigation or any further investigation, it is concluded that, on the balance of probability, a fraudulent address has been used on an application, correspondence will be sent to the applicant confirming this decision. This will outline the factors taken into account in making the decision as well as the action which will be taken with the application. It will also set out which address will be considered to be the child's permanent home address for the purpose of their application for admission to school.

Appeals

Parents wishing to appeal who applied through Hertfordshire's online system should log in to their online application and click on the link 'register an appeal'. Out of county residents and paper applicants should call the customer Service Centre on 03001234043 to request their registration details, log onto www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals and click on the link 'log into the appeals system'.

Appeal forms must be completed and returned by 22 May 2024.

Your appeal will be heard by an independent appeals panel. If you are appealing against the decision not to offer your child a place you should still accept the offer of a place at the alternative school you have been offered. This will mean that, if your appeal is not successful, you will still have a school place for your child.

Distance

Distances are measured along a straight line between a child's address and the relevant school(s). A computerised mapping system is used, accurate to two decimal places. The measurement is taken from the AddressBase Premium address point of the child's house to the address point of the school. AddressBase Premium data is a nationally recognised method of identifying the location of schools and individual residences.

In year applications

Applications for In-Year admissions are made directly to the school using the school's application form. The LA will also provide parents with an In-Year application form upon request at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/inyear. Where there is no Continuing Interest List, the child will be admitted. If more applications are received than there are places available, then applications will be ranked by the governing body in accordance with the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria.

If a place cannot be offered at this time then you may ask us for the reasons and you will be informed of your right of appeal. The county council will write to you with registration details to enable you to login and appeal online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals.

You will be offered the opportunity of being placed on a Continuing Interest List. This list will be maintained by the governing body in the order of the oversubscription criteria and not in the order in which the applications are received. Applicants are kept for one year. If you wish your child to remain on our continued interest list you must re-submit the SIF and Certificate of Catholic Practice annually, to be received by the school before the end of the summer term each year. When a place becomes available the governing body will Re-rank the list so an offer can be made. Parents wishing to appeal should contact the school directly in the first instance.

Deferred Entry

Children born on and between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019* would normally commence primary school in Reception in the academic year beginning in September 2023. All Hertfordshire infant, first and primary schools provide for the full-time admission of all children offered a place in the Reception year group from the September following their fourth birthday. If a parent wants a full-time place for their child from September (at the school at which a place has been offered) then they are entitled to that full-time place.

Parents can defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the same academic year or

until the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age. Summer born children are only able to “defer” entry to Reception class until the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the offer was made.

Where parents wish, children can attend part-time until they reach compulsory school age. Any parents wishing to take up a part-time place or deferred entry should contact the school admissions governors/headteacher to discuss their child’s requirements.

Part-time attendance

Applicants may also request that their child attend part-time until statutory school age is reached.

Summer Born Children

Legally, a child does not have to start school until the start of the term following their fifth birthday. Children born between 1 April 2020 and 31 August 2020 are categorised as “summer born” and if parents/carers do not believe that their summer born child is ready to join Reception in 2024 they should contact the home LA, and any own admission authority schools, for guidance before making an application. Further clarity will be provided upon the publication of a new School Admissions Code or, at the latest, prior to the start of the 2024 primary application round.

Summer born applications that are delayed for a year (for entry in September 2024) will be processed in exactly the same way as all other reception applications received at that time and there is no guarantee that an offer will be made.

If parents wish to delay their application for a Reception place they are advised to discuss their child’s needs /development with their current early years teacher and/or the headteacher. If parents wish their child to remain in our nursery class for a further year (rather than moving into the Reception year group) they must let us know before the end of the Spring term in 2024 (before the Easter break). The request should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors by 15 January 2024 and an application made in the usual way.

A nursery application must be made in the normal way. The ranking process will then be applied.

Children educated outside their chronological age group (except Reception applications for summerborn children)

Parents may apply for their child to be educated outside his/her chronological age group i.e. a year behind or a year ahead. Application should be made to the Chair of Governors at the time of application. Governors will consider each case on its own merits and permission will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Procedures

- Applications are invited for September 2024 from families whose child attains 4 years of age between 01/09/2024 and 31/08/2025. If parents/carers have not received a letter from Herts County Council (HCC) they should contact the Customer Service Centre (CSC) on, tel: 0300 123 4043 or access the website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk or www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions
- In line with the Hertfordshire County Council admissions procedure, all parents/carers seeking a place for their child, whether they are Catholic or not, are requested to complete and return to the school a Supplementary Information Form (i.e. school application form) **as well as completing the Hertfordshire County Council online application form**. A copy of the Supplementary Information Form can be obtained directly from the school or via the school web site at www.stvincent.herts.sch.uk Both forms must be completed and returned by 14 January 2024. If you do not complete and return both the forms described above by the closing date, the governing body will be unable to consider your application fully and your child is unlikely to get a place at the school. If an application is received after the closing date, it will be considered as a late application and will be dealt with after consideration of all on time applications, so you will be much less likely to gain a place at the school. Notification letters will be sent out by the LA on behalf of the governors on 15 April 2024. Baptism certificates must be produced at the time of application along with necessary supporting statements.
- Before applying, parents are warmly welcome to arrange a visit to see the school at work.
- Early application does not confer any higher or additional priority.
- If any of the details on either of your forms changes between the date of application and the receipt of the letter of offer or refusal, you **must** inform the school and the local authority immediately.
- The address provided must be the child's current permanent address at the time of application. 'At the time of application' means the closing date for applications. "Permanent" means that the child has lived at that address for at least a year and/or the family own the property or have a tenancy agreement for a minimum of 12 months.
- The application can only be processed using one address. If a child lives at more than one address (for example due to a separation) the address used will be the one which the child lives at for the majority of the time. If a child lives at two addresses equally, the address of the parent/carer that claims Child Benefit/Child Tax Credit will be considered as the child's main residence.
- If you deliberately give fraudulent information, the governors will withdraw the offer of a place.
- Unsuccessful candidates will be offered the opportunity to be placed on a continued interest list. This list will be maintained in order of the oversubscription criteria set out in the policy.

Certificate of Catholic Practice

Applicants applying under criteria [2-5] must submit a Certificate of Catholic Practice (CCP) by the closing date. This form is available from the parish in which you normally worship, diocesan website www.rcdow.org.uk/Education. It is the parent's duty to ensure that the CCP is submitted to the school in good time. The priest will only sign this form if he knows you and agrees that you are a practising Catholic family.

Parents of children who attend the school nursery must apply in the normal way for a reception place. Attendance at the nursery does not guarantee admission to the school.

Appendix 1

Children for whom it can be demonstrated that they have a particular medical or social need to go to the school:

Applications will only be considered at the time of the initial application, unless there has been a significant and exceptional change of circumstances within the family since the initial application was submitted. All schools in Hertfordshire have experience in dealing with children with diverse social and medical needs. However in a few very exceptional cases, there are reasons why a child has to go to one specific school. Few applications under this section are agreed. All applications are considered individually but a successful application should include the following:

- a. Specific recent professional evidence that justifies why only one school can meet a child's individual needs, and/or
- b. Professional evidence that outlines exceptional family circumstances making clear why only one school can meet the child's needs
- c. If the requested school is not the nearest school to the child's home address clear reasons why the nearest school is not appropriate.
- d. For medical cases – a clear explanation of why the child's severity of illness or disability makes attendance at only a specific school essential.

Evidence should make clear why only one school is appropriate.

Applications under this section can only be considered when supported by a recent letter from a professional involved with the child or family, for example a doctor, psychologist, a priest or police officer. The supporting evidence needs to demonstrate why only one named school can meet the social/medical needs of the child.

A panel of governors will determine whether the evidence provided is sufficiently compelling to meet the requirements of this rule.

