



The Priory School, Hitchin

Excellence in education, for every young person, every day

Name of policy	Determined Admissions Arrangements 2027-2028
Statutory	Yes
Date policy was up-dated	February 2026
Date of next review	February 2027
Governors committee	Full Governing Body
Member of staff responsible for the policy	Matt Blayney

The Priory School, Hitchin: Determined admissions arrangements for 2027 to 2028

The Published Admissions Number (PAN) for September 2027 is 180 students. The school participates in the Hertfordshire Local Authority co-ordinated scheme for admissions and all deadlines outlined within that scheme should be adhered to by all applicants.

All applicants must complete the Common Application Form of their home Local Authority. Hertfordshire residents should apply online to Hertfordshire County Council or complete the Secondary Transfer Form. Families resident in other authorities must complete the form provided by the Authority in which they live.

Applicants to The Priory School, Hitchin do not need to complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF). Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires the Governing Bodies of all maintained schools to admit a child with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) that names the school. If there are fewer applications than places available at a school all applicants will be admitted. If there are more applications than places available, the oversubscription criteria outlined below will be used to prioritise applications.

Oversubscription criteria

Criterion 1: Children looked after or children who were previously looked after.

Children looked after and children who were previously looked after, including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England, and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. Previously looked after children are those who were looked after but ceased to be so because of being adopted or became subject to child arrangements order¹ or a special guardianship order².

Places are allocated to children in public care according to Chapter 2, Section 7 of the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012.

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 Criterion 1. 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 Criterion 1.

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 Criterion 1. Applications made for these children, with suitable supporting professional evidence, can be considered under Criterion 2.

¹ 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.

² 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. Children previously looked after abroad and subsequently adopted will be prioritised under Criterion 1 if the child’s

previously looked after status and adoption is confirmed by Hertfordshire's "Virtual School". The child's previously looked after 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 public authority, → a religious organisation, or → any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society.

Criterion 2: Children for whom it can be demonstrated that they have a particular medical or social need to go to the school

Criterion 2 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 Criterion 2 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. A Criterion 2 application will generally not be upheld in cases where more than one school could meet the child's need. In exceptional cases relating to a disability, where more than one school in the county can meet the child's specific needs, a clear and compelling case can be made for the "nearest" school with the relevant facilities, environment or location. You must clearly explain why attendance at the "nearest" school with these facilities is essential.

Applications under Criterion 2 can only be considered when supported by a recent letter from a professional involved with the child or family, for example a doctor, psychologist or police officer. The supporting evidence needs to demonstrate why only one named school can meet the social/medical needs of the child.

Applications for children who were not "looked after" immediately before being adopted or made the subject of a child arrangement order or special guardianship order may be made under this rule. Further details on the Criterion 2 process can be found in the Criterion 2 protocol.

A panel of Hertfordshire County Council officers, on behalf of the Governing Board of The Priory School will determine whether the evidence provided is sufficiently compelling to meet the requirements for this rule. The evidence must relate specifically to the school applied for under Criterion 2 and must clearly demonstrate why it is the only school that can meet the child's needs.

Criterion 3: Sibling attending the school

For the purposes of this admissions policy, a sibling is defined as: the sister, brother, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, child of the parent/carer or partner or a child looked after or previously looked after¹ and in every case living permanently² in a placement within the home as part of the family household from Monday to Friday at the time of this application.

A sibling must be on the roll of The Priory School, Hitchin at the time the younger child starts or have been offered and accepted a place. If a place is obtained for an older child using fraudulent information, there will be no sibling connection available to subsequent children from that family.

¹ 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 in August 2014.

² 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. If an applicant lives at more than one address, the sibling must also reside at the same address for the majority of the school week. The sibling's address will be verified by the school.

Criterion 4: Children of staff

Children of permanent (full time or part time) members of staff (teaching or support), are directly employed by The Priory School and have been employed at the school for a minimum of two years who live in the same house as the member of staff including children of partners

OR

Have been recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skills shortage, such shortage to be determined by the Governing Board Admissions Committee.

Criterion 5: Children who live in the Priority Admissions Area (PAA).

The Governing Board recognises that in 2013, the three unparished areas of Baldock, Hitchin and Letchworth were amalgamated into one single unparished area (North Hertfordshire, unparished area). To ensure our admission arrangements can be implemented accurately and as intended, the three unparished areas of Baldock, Hitchin and Letchworth will be considered separately to determine the parish and priority area for each applicant.

If the school is oversubscribed under this rule places will be offered as follows:

- To children living in the parishes of Hexton, Hitchin, Holwell, Ickleford, Langley, Lilley, Offley, Pirton, Preston, St. Ippolyts, Wymondley, Codicote
- On the basis of distance, with those living nearest the school prioritised.

Criterion 6: Children living outside of the Priority Admissions Area (PAA)

Children living outside of the school's PAA on the basis of distance, with those living nearest (straight line distance measurement) to the school given priority.

Multiple births

The Priory School, Hitchin will admit over the school's PAN when a single twin/multiple birth child is allocated the last place at a school.

Tie-break

When there is a need for a tie-break where two different addresses are the same distance from a school, in the case of a block of flats for example, the lower door number will be deemed nearest as logically this will be on the ground floor and therefore closer.

If there are two identical addresses of separate applicants, the tie break will be random. Every child entered onto the HCC admissions database has an individual random number assigned, between 1 and 1 million, against each preference school. When there is a need for a final tie-break the random number is used to allocate the place, with the lowest number given priority.

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 school week. If a child lives at two addresses equally, parents/carers should make a single joint application naming one address. If the child's living arrangements change after you apply and they now spend the majority of the school week living at a different address, you must provide evidence of the new permanent address.

We may ask for proof of your address at any time. If, following an initial investigation and/or any investigation by with the Shared Anti-Fraud Service, the county council concludes that, a fraudulent address has been used, correspondence confirming this decision will be sent to the applicant. We will explain the decision-making process and the action that will be taken with the application. We will also confirm which address will be used as the child's permanent home address for admission allocation purposes.

If we receive more than one application with different address details and parents do not agree, 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, neither will be processed until the address issue is reconciled.

If two different applications are received for the same child from the same address but contain 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.

If duplicate applications are made to different LAs for the same child, those LAs will liaise and share information. The child's home LA will determine if the 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 2027/28 transfer application process is 1st December 2026 for secondary. If these dates change, amendments will be published on the HCC admissions web pages at the start of the 2027/28 application process in September 2026.

** 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.*

Fraudulent applications

Hertfordshire County Council 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. Hertfordshire County Council 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:
 - (i) The family has moved to a property from which their application was less likely to be successful
 - (ii) The family has returned to an existing property
 - (iii) The family lived in rented accommodation for a short period of time (anything less than a year) over the application period
- 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.

Address Visits

Where suspicions lie as to the validity of an address, the Admissions & Transport Team 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. All visits will be made by two members of the Admissions & Transport Team.

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.

Home to School distance measurement for the purpose of admissions

A 'straight line' distance measurement is used in all home to school distance measurements for the school by Hertfordshire County Council. Distances are measured using a computerised mapping system to two decimal places. The measurement is taken from the Address Base Premium point of your child's house to the address point of the school. Address Base data is a nationally recognised method of identifying the location of schools and individual residences.

Continuing Interest List

Hertfordshire County Council administers the CI list on behalf of the school. All unsuccessful applicants will automatically be placed on the school's CI list. A child's position on a CI list will be determined by the admission criteria outlined above and a child's place on the list can change as other children join or leave it. The County Council will contact parents/carers if a vacancy becomes available and it can be offered to a child. Continuing interest lists will be maintained for every year group until the summer term (date to be specified and confirmed to parents at the time of allocation). To remain on the CI (waiting) list after this time, parents must confirm they are still interested in a place by completing an In Year application form.

Appeals

All unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal to an independent panel for a place to be made available for their child. 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 0300 123 4043 to request their registration details and log into www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals and click on the link 'log into the appeals system'.

In-Year Admissions

The school is part of Hertfordshire County Council's co-ordinated In-Year admissions scheme. Parents should make an In-Year Application online via the Hertfordshire County Council website at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions or by contacting the customer service centre on 0300 123 4043 for a paper application form.

Parents should return the form direct to Hertfordshire County Council. The county council will write to you with the outcome of your application and if you have been unsuccessful, will include registration details to enable you to login and appeal online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals.

In line with the Admissions Code (Department for Education, 2021) the school will admit if places are available '*unless admitting the child would prejudice the efficient provision of education or use of resources*' (p. 28).

Applications from children* from overseas

All children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) in England have a right of access to education. However, where a child is in England for a short period only, for example less than half a term, it may be reasonable to refuse admission to a school. An application for a school place will only be accepted for children currently overseas if, for In Year applications, proof is provided that the child will be resident in Hertfordshire within two weeks. In Year allocations are made on the assumption that the child will accept the school place and be on roll within that timescale.

For the Secondary transfer processes, applications will not normally be accepted from, nor places allocated to, an overseas address. The exception to this (for both In Year and transfer processes) is for children of UK service personnel and crown servants (and from military families who are residents of countries with a Memorandum of Understanding with the UK). In these cases, HCC will allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a HCC Unit postal address or quartering area address, for consideration of the application against oversubscription criteria.

Applications will also be considered, and places offered in advance for these families, if the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date but does not provide a quartering or unit address because the family will be residing in private accommodation. In these cases, if the family does not already have a permanent private address in Hertfordshire, the military base or alternative “work” address in Hertfordshire will be used for allocation purposes. If the family already has an established alternative private address, that address will be used for admission purposes as long as the parents provide evidence of the address and that the child will be living there.

HCC will also consider accepting applications from children* whose family can evidence intent to return to and/or permanently reside in Hertfordshire prior to the start of the new academic year. These applications, if accepted, will be processed from the overseas address until sufficient evidence is received to show the child is permanently resident in Hertfordshire. Evidence must be submitted at the time of application.

Evidence submitted after the date for late applications (1st December 2026 for secondary transfer and 1st February 2027 for the Under 11s process) cannot be considered before National Allocation Day. Decisions on these applications will be made by an officer panel and communicated to parents within 6 weeks of receipt. If an applicant owns a property in Hertfordshire but is not living in it, perhaps because they are working abroad at the time of application, the Hertfordshire address will not be accepted for the purposes of admission until the child is resident at that address.

Children from overseas, other than those mentioned above, do not generally have automatic right of entry to the UK. An application for a school place will not therefore be accepted until they are permanently resident in Hertfordshire. Proof of residency such as an endorsed passport or entry visa will be required with the application, in addition to proof of Hertfordshire address, for example a council tax bill or 12-month rental agreement.

**Children who hold full British Citizen passports (not British Dependent Territories or British Overseas passports) or have a UK passport describing them as a British citizen or British subject with the right of abode and normally have unrestricted entry to the UK. Freedom of movement into the UK for European Economic Area and Swiss citizens ended at the end of 2020. EEA (Irish citizens aside) and Swiss national children entering the UK after the end of 2020 are now treated the same as other foreign nationals. This means they will no longer have the right to enter the country to access a state-funded school unless they fall within certain immigration categories. Find out more about visas and immigration and the EU Settlement Scheme for European Economic Area and Swiss citizens.*

Children Seeking Admission outside their Chronological Year Group

Students will be admitted to the school in Year 7 at the age of 11 irrespective of physical or academic ability or age 12 if they are summer born children where a family chose to delay their entry to Reception by an academic year. It is the school's policy for children to be educated within their correct chronological year group as far as possible, with the curriculum differentiated as necessary to meet the needs of individual children. This is in line with DfE guidance which states that “in general, children should be educated in their normal age group”.

For children other than summer born delay entry, if parents/carers believe their child(ren) should be educated in a different year group they must, at the time of application, submit supporting evidence from relevant professionals working with the child and family stating why the child must be placed outside their normal age-

appropriate cohort. DfE guidance makes clear that “it is reasonable for admission authorities to expect parents to provide them with information in support of their request – since without it they are unlikely to be able to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case”.

The Governor Board Admissions Committee will decide whether the application will be accepted on the basis of the evidence submitted. If such an application is accepted it does not constitute an offer of a place, the application will then be processed by HCC in accordance with the admissions criteria. The Committee will make decisions based upon the circumstances of each case including the view of parents/carers, the Headteacher, the child’s social, academic and emotional development and whether the child has been previously educated out of year group.

There is no guarantee that an application will be accepted on this basis. The internal management and organisation of the school, including the placement of pupils in classes, is a matter for the Governors, Headteacher and senior leadership.

Fair Access Protocol (FAP)

The school participates in the County Council’s Fair Access Protocol (FAP) and will admit children under this protocol before those on the continuing interest list and above PAN if necessary.

Sixth Form admission arrangements

The school will admit up to 80 external students to its Sixth Form.

Minimum entry requirements are five GCSE passes at Grade 9-4, including English and Maths at Grade 4 or above. Some subjects will require grade 5 at GCSE.

Full details can be found in the Hitchin Sixth Form Consortium prospectus. The oversubscription criteria and tie break will be the same, unless identified otherwise, as that for KS3 and KS4 admissions (outlined above).

Sixth Form admissions appeals

Parents have the right of appeal against non-admission to the Sixth Form and should email school.appeals@hertfordshire.gov.uk if they wish to start the appeal process. Parents may also wish to visit the following website for further information www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals