



*Shining Bright Together
as One Family*

Admissions and Appeals: Policy and Guidelines 2026

Introduction

The Governing Body of St. John's Church of England Primary School, Shildon, is the Admissions Authority for the school. We follow the Statutory Guidelines published in the School Admissions Code (2021).

We intend to admit up to 30 pupils to the reception year group in September 2024. This arrangement follows consultation between the governing body, the local authority, all other schools in the area and all other Admissions Authorities in the area. It includes statutory requirements of the code not requiring consultation.

Admission arrangements to the Reception Year in September 2026

Parents (see Note 1) wishing to apply for the Reception Year in September must complete the common application form provided by their home local authority (the home LA). This form must be completed even if your child attends our Early Years Unit or other school nursery /pre-school setting. The home LA is the LA in whose area the parents live at the time of the application. The form must be returned to that LA no later than 15 January. Applications received after this date will normally only be considered after all those received on or before the cut-off date. Offers and refusals of places will be posted by the home LA.

Over-subscription criteria

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming St. John's C of E (VA) Primary School will always be offered places. If there is then greater demand for admission than there are places available, the following criteria will be applied in the order set out below:

1. Looked-after children and children who were previously looked after, but ceased to be so because, immediately after being looked after, they became subject to an adoption, child arrangements or special guardianship order. (see Note 2) **including children previously in state care outside of England** who have ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted (See note 3)

2. Medical Reasons

Children with very exceptional medical factors directly related to the school placement. Applications under this criterion must be supported by written evidence from a doctor or other professional practitioner, and will be considered on a case by case basis, using the Local Authority criteria. (see note 4)

3. Family Links

Children who have a brother or sister already attending St. John's Church of England Primary School, and who are expected to be on roll at the time of admission. A family link means the children are half, full or adoptive brother or sister or the child of the parent / carer's partner where the same child for whom the school place is sought is living in the same family unit at the same address as that sibling. (see note 5)

4. Faith Criteria

- a. Children of practising Christian families at the heart of St John's Church, Shildon.
- b. Children of practising Christian families attached to St. John's Church, Shildon.
- c. Children at the heart of any Anglican church or any church that is affiliated to "Churches together in Shildon", and resident in the Anglican parish of St. John, Shildon.

'At the heart of the church' means a regular worshipper, who worships at least twice a month. To accommodate different patterns of work and family relationships account will be taken of week-day worship. "Attached to the church" means a regular, but not frequent worshipper. For example: someone who usually attends a monthly family service, or is regularly involved in a weekday church activity including an element of worship. The worshipper could be the child for whom application is made or one or both parents. A map showing the boundaries of the Anglican parish of St. John, Shildon is available from the school office.

Note: Applications under these criteria must be supported by a letter from a minister.

5. Distance

Children who live nearest the preferred school measured from the front door of their home address to the permitted entrance to the school site by the shortest walking route judged to be safe. This will be based on the home address of the child.

The home address is the child's permanent address where he or she generally resides.

If a place is offered on the basis of false information or if parents do not respond within the stated timescale to the offer of a place the governing body reserves the right to withdraw their offer.

In assessing home to school distance the LA measures by the shortest walking route. Routes are measured from the centre point* of the child's house, or in the case of a flat from the centre point* of the building, to the nearest school site entrance. A Geographic Information System (GIS) is used to identify and measure the shortest walking route. The GIS identifies routes on the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network (ITN) and Urban Paths Network (UPN), which are national recognised datasets. The LA will not include any other routes. In all cases the GIS identifies the route to be measured by connecting in a straight line the centre point* of the child's house to the closest point on the nearest route on the ITN/UPN.

* In accordance with the co-ordinates of the Basic Land and Property Unit on the National Land and Property Gazetteer.

6. Other Children

Tie breaker

Where there are places for some, but not all, applicants within a particular criterion distance from the front door of the home address to the main entrance of the school on Jubilee Road will be the deciding factor. This will be measured using the method set out in the 'Distance Criteria' above.

Other Information

The home address is the address of the parent/carer receiving the child benefit. The addresses of child minders or family members sharing in the care of children must not be used.

The School as the Admissions Authority will provide parents with the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme booklet and attached Preference Form: this informs parents of the admissions procedure and criteria to be used for the allocation of places. This form must then be forwarded to the Local Authority.

If you wish your child to attend St. John's School, you must fill in the preference form, even if your child attends the nursery. Attendance at the nursery does not guarantee a place at the school.

Parents who wish their child to attend St. John's Church of England Primary School are welcome to visit the school for a tour and an initial discussion with the Head Teacher.

Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school

The School Admissions Code 2021 requires school admission authorities to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. However, a child is not required to start school until they have reached compulsory school age following their fifth birthday. For summer born children (those born after 1 April) this can sometimes be almost a full school year after the point at which they could first be admitted.

Some parents may feel that their child is not ready to start school in the September following their fourth birthday. Parents are entitled to request in writing that:

- their child attends part-time until they reach compulsory school age, or
- that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until later in the same academic year or until the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age

The school will hold any deferred place for the child, although, in the majority of cases, we find that children benefit from starting at the beginning of the school year, rather than part way through it.

- that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until the term after the child reaches compulsory school age.

The child must, however, start school full-time in the term after their fifth birthday.

If parents of summer born children wish to defer entry as outlined above and wish them to be admitted to the Reception Year in the term following their fifth birthday, rather than year 1, then parents should apply at the usual time for a place in September of the current academic year together with a written request that the child is admitted outside of his or her normal age group to the Reception Year in September the following year providing supporting reasons for seeking a place outside of the normal age group.

This should be discussed with the Head Teacher as soon as possible. If their request is agreed, and this should be clear before the national offer day, their application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before any place is offered and they should reapply in the normal way for a Reception place in the following year.

If their request is refused, the parents must decide whether to wait for any offer of a place in the current academic year (NB it will still be subject to the over-subscription criteria in this policy) or to withdraw their application and apply for a Year 1 place the following year. Parents should be aware that the Year 1 group may have no vacancies as it could be full with children transferring from the previous Reception Year group.

Further information and advice on the admission of summer born children is available from Durham County Council or refer to DFE School Admissions Code at www.gov.uk/

The admissions process for casual vacancies

A casual vacancy occurs when the number on roll in a class falls below the school's standard number, published in the school's *Prospectus*.

Casual Vacancies will be allocated in accordance with the Primary In Year Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme. Parents will be required to name up to three schools of their choice in order of preference. The scheme will be operated by the Admissions Team within Children and Young Peoples Services at Durham County Council. The team will provide advice on places, send out application forms and confirm the offer of a place to parents.

Waiting lists

Where no casual vacancies exist, a waiting list will be kept of all applicants for such a place in each year group. After the decision regarding admissions to Reception Class has been made by the Governors those unsuccessful applicants will be included on a waiting list throughout the academic year of proposed entry. This waiting list will be produced in rank order as a consequence of the application of the published admission's criteria to each child. Waiting lists for each year group will be maintained for the remainder of the school year. In July, at the end of the school year, those parents who applied for a casual vacancy and were unsuccessful will be circulated to ascertain whether they wish their child's name to remain on the list. It will be the responsibility of parents to update or provide information regarding any change of circumstance.

Procedure for appeals against decisions to turn down an application for admission or a deferred entry request

Parents have the right to appeal if they are not satisfied with the Governors' response to their expressed preference. Parents who wish to appeal should inform the school in writing. Further guidance is available on the school website: www.st-johnscofe.durham.sch.uk

Admission outside normal age group

Requests from parents for places outside a normal age group will be considered carefully on its own merits and circumstances (e.g. for those who have missed education due to ill health). However, such admissions will not normally be agreed without a consensus that to do so would be in the pupil's interests. It is recommended that parents discuss their wishes with the head teacher in advance of applying for a place. The governors may ask relevant professionals for their opinion on the case. It should be noted that if a place in the requested age group is refused, but one in the normal age group is offered then there is no right of appeal.

Appeals

There are established arrangements for appeals against non-admission. Details are available from the school, including the date by which an appeal should be submitted. It should be noted that, in the event of an unsuccessful appeal against non-admission to the school, the school does not consider any further application in the same school year

(1 September – 31 August), unless there has been a material change in circumstances, for example a change of address which results in a move from outside the catchment area to inside it.

Parents who wish their children to attend the school are most welcome to visit. Arrangements can be made through the Secretary at the school.

Notes

Note 1 "Parent" is defined in law (The Education Act 1996) as either:

- any person who has 'parental responsibility' (defined in the Children Act 1989) for the child or young person; or
- any person who has care of the child or young person.

If you are in any doubt, please contact the school for advice.

Note 2 By a "looked-after child" we mean one in the care of a local authority or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of its social services function. An adoption order is one made under the Adoption Act 1976 (Section 12) or the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Section 46). A 'child arrangements order' is one settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live (Children Act 1989, Section 8, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014, Section 14). A 'special guardianship order' is one appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian/s (Children Act 1989, Section 14A). Applications under this criterion must be accompanied by evidence to show that the child is looked after or was previously looked after (e.g. a copy of the adoption, child arrangements or special guardianship order).

Note 3 Children previously in state care outside of England means children who have been looked after outside of England by a public authority, a religious organisation or another provider of care whose sole purpose is to benefit society. The care may have been provided in orphanages or other settings. In the case of children adopted from state care overseas, the admissions authority will require evidence that a child is eligible by asking the child's parents or carers for appropriate evidence of their previously looked-after status.

Note 4 When applying under criterion ii (exceptional medical or social needs), you must include supporting evidence from an independent professional person who is aware of the situation and supports your reasons for preferring St. John's CE (Aided) Primary School. This supporting evidence must clearly

demonstrate why the school is the most suitable and must illustrate the difficulties that would be caused if your child had to attend another school. The person supplying the evidence should be a doctor, health visitor, social worker, etc. who is aware of your child's or your own case. The school reserves the right to ask for further evidence or clarification where necessary and may seek the advice of appropriate educational professionals where necessary.

Note 5 By normal home address, we mean the child's home address. This must be where the parent or legal carer of the child lives with the child unless it is proved that the child is resident elsewhere with someone else who has legal care and control of the child. The address should be a residential property that is owned, leased or rented by the child's parent/s or person with legal care and control of the child.

To avoid doubt, where a child lives with parents with shared responsibility, each for part of a week or month, the address where the child lives will be determined having regard to a joint declaration from the parents stating the exact pattern of residence. If the residence is not split equally, then the relevant address used will be that at which we are satisfied that the child spends the majority of the school week. Where there is an equal split or there is any doubt about residence, we will make the judgment about which address to use for the purpose of determining whether or not to offer a place. We will take into account, for example, the following:

- any legal documentation confirming residence
- the pattern of the residence
- the period of time over which the current arrangement has been in place
- confirmation from any previous school of the contact details and home address supplied to it by the parents
- where the child is registered with his/her GP
- any other evidence the parents may supply to verify the position.

We may ask for evidence of the normal home address in the form of a recent bill. This could be, for example, the most recent Council Tax bill, utility bill no more than three months old, a current TV licence, buildings and contents insurance, mortgage statement or rent book which shows the address concerned. Parents who are unable to provide this evidence should contact the school to discuss what evidence might be acceptable. If it becomes clear or if there is any doubt that the parents and child are not living at the address given on the application form, the school may seek further evidence. The school works closely with the LA to ensure that places are not obtained at the school on the basis of false addresses, and, in cases of doubt, will take steps to verify the information provided. If a place at the school is offered, and it later becomes clear that the offer was made on fraudulent or misleading information (e.g. a false claim to living in the catchment area), and the school has denied a place to a child with a stronger claim, the school will withdraw the offer of a place. The offer can also be withdrawn even after the child has started at the school.

We regard a child's home address to be where he or she sleeps for the majority of the school week (Monday to Friday). We may ask to see official documentation, such as a child benefit book or medical card if there are reasons why a child does not live at his or her parent's address. For example, if he or she is resident with a grandparent, this needs to be made clear on the application form. If such arrangements are not declared or a relative's address is used on the application, we may consider that a false declaration has been made, and withdraw the offer of a place. Childcare arrangements are **not** sufficient reason for listing another address.

If parents move house after the application has been made, but before any offer of a place has been made, the home LA must be informed.

If parents are moving, we will ask for evidence of the move, before considering any application for a place under the co-ordinated scheme.

We would not accept an address where the one given is that of a second home with the main home being elsewhere. If there are two or more homes, we will check which is the main home, and may refuse to base an allocation of a place on an address which might be considered only temporary. Nor would we accept an address where the child was resident other than with a parent or carer unless this was part of a fostering or formal care arrangement. We would not normally accept an address where only part of

a family had moved, unless connected with a divorce or permanent separation arrangement, in which case we would require proof.

Note 6 By sibling we mean a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, or the child of the parent's/carer's partner where the child for whom the school place is sought is living in the same family unit at the same address as that sibling. It is helpful if parents make it clear on the application form where the sibling has a different family name. Where there is more than one sibling at the school, only the youngest should be listed on the application form.

Note 7 The straight-line distance used to determine proximity of the home to the school will be measured by the geographical measuring system as described in the LA admissions booklet.