

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2025/26

Introduction

St Thomas of Canterbury School was founded by the Catholic Church to provide education for children of Catholic families. Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will be given to Catholic children in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed below. The school is conducted by St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trust as part of the Catholic Church in accordance with its trust deed and articles of association, and seeks at all times to be a witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As 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 supported fully by all families in the school, therefore it is hoped that all parents will give their full, unreserved and positive support for the aims and ethos of the school. This does not affect the right of an applicant who is not Catholic to apply for and to be admitted to a place at the school in accordance with the admission arrangements.

St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trust is the admissions authority for St Thomas of Canterbury. Setting and management of admissions arrangements for St Thomas of Canterbury is delegated to the Local Academy Committee. The local authority undertakes the co-ordination of admission arrangements during the normal admission round. The Local Authority undertakes the coordination of the admission arrangements during the normal admissions round. Details of the co-ordinated scheme can be obtained from the Authority.

The Governing Body has determined the **Published Admission Number (PAN)**, for pupils to be admitted to the Reception year in the school year 2025/26, to be **30**. This number has been calculated according to the capacity of the school, which the law defines.

Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan or a Statement of Special Educational Needs

The admission of pupils with a Statement of Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan is dealt with by a separate procedure. Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school must be admitted. Where this takes place before the allocation of places under these arrangements, this will reduce the number of places available to other children.

Oversubscription Criteria

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

Category One

Catholic Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children

Category Two

Catholic children who are resident in the parishes of Our Lady of Beauchief and St Thomas of Canterbury, and The Holy Spirit, Dronfield.

Category Three

Other Catholic children

Category Four

Other Looked after and previously Looked After children

Category Five

Catechumens and members of Eastern Christian Churches

Category Six

Children of other Christian denominations whose membership is evidenced by a Minister of Religion.

Category Seven

Children of other faiths whose membership is evidenced by a Religious Leader.

Category Eight

Any other children

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

- (i) Where compelling professional written evidence is provided at the time of application of an **exceptional social, medical or pastoral need** of the child which can most appropriately be met at this school, the application will be placed at the top of the category in which the application is made.
- (ii) The attendance of a **sibling** at the school at the time of enrolment 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.

The Governing Body will, where possible, admit twins and all siblings from multiple births where one of the children is the 30th child admitted.

Please note that attendance at St Thomas of Canterbury Pre-School does not automatically guarantee that a place will be offered in the Primary School.

Tie Break

In the event of the school reaching capacity mid category, the Governing Body as the Admissions Authority will allocate places for all the children in that category using a random allocation process which will be overseen by the Local Authority Primary Admissions team. The names of the children who fall within this category will be entered into a computer program specifically designed to randomly allocate the places available. Siblings will take priority and if there is more than one application these will also be entered into the random allocation process separately within that category.

Application Procedures and Timetable

The Local Authority Common Application Form (CAF) provides the opportunity for parents/carers to express up to three choices of schools in rank order of preference. Applications will be considered on an Equal Preference basis; ranking by preference will only be used in the final allocation for a place where there is more than one potential offer.

Parents/carers are also requested to complete the Supplementary Information Form (SIF) attached to this policy if applying under oversubscription criteria 1 to 3 or 5 to 7. The Supplementary Information Form (SIF) should be returned to the school. **Parents/carers applying under oversubscription criteria 1 to 3 should attach a copy of the child's baptismal certificate.** This should be the original

certificate or a certified copy of the entry into the parish's baptismal register. The baptismal certificate will be copied by the school and the original returned to you.

You will be advised of the outcome of your application on 16th April 2026, or the next working day, by the Local Authority on the school's behalf. If you are unsuccessful (unless your child has gained a place at a school you ranked higher) you will be informed of the reasons, related to the oversubscription criteria listed above, and you have the right of appeal to an independent appeal panel. If you wish to appeal, you must set out the grounds for your appeal in writing and send it to the following address: **Sheffield School Appeals Policy and Democratic Engagement Room G13, Town Hall Pinstone Street Sheffield, S1 2HH**

You can find the details of the school's appeals timetable on the following webpage.

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schools-childcare/appeal-your-childs-school-place>

If you do not provide the information required in the SIF and return it by the closing date, together with all supporting documentation, your child will not be placed in criteria 1 to 3 or 5 to 7, and this is likely to affect your child's chance of being offered a place.

All applications which are submitted on time will be considered at the same time and after the closing date for applications which is 15th January 2025.

Late Applications

Late applications will be considered in accordance with the Local Authority's coordinated admissions scheme. You are encouraged to ensure that your application is received on time.

Please note that admission to the school does not guarantee eventual admission to one of the Catholic High Schools, which have their own admission policies.

Admission of Children Below Compulsory School Age and Deferred Entry

A child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday. A child's parents may defer the date at which their child, below compulsory school age, is admitted to the school, until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age, or beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which an offer was made. A child may take up a part-time place until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age. Upon receipt of the offer of a place a parent should notify the school, as soon as possible, that they wish to either defer their child's entry to the school or take up a part-time place.

Admission of Children outside their Normal Age Group

A request may be made for a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child, i.e. a child born between 1st April and 31st August, may request that the child be admitted out of their normal age group, to reception rather than year 1.

Any such request should be made in writing to the school at the same time as the admission application is made. The Governing Body will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the Head of School, the Governing Body will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals, as appropriate.

PLEASE CONTACT THE SCHOOL IF YOU NEED ANY HELP IN APPLYING FOR ADMISSION

Waiting lists

1. If children are refused admission to the school their names will be placed on a waiting list which will be established on the offer day. The waiting list will be maintained in order of the over-subscription criteria set out above and **not** in the order in which applications are received or added to the list. Each category on the waiting list will be subject to the random allocation process. Waiting lists for admission will operate throughout the school year until the last day of the Summer term.
2. Following the offer day, should an application be received for that school for a child with a higher priority, as determined by the admissions criteria for a place at the school, they will be placed on the list above those with a lower priority.
3. A vacancy only arises in the Reception year when the number of offers of admission to the school falls below the admission number.

Please note that inclusion in the school's waiting list does not mean that a place will eventually become available.

False Information

1. Where the Governing Body has made an offer of a place at the school on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application from a parent/carer, which has effectively denied a place to a child with a stronger claim to a place the offer of a place may be withdrawn.
2. If a child starts attending the school on the basis of fraudulent and intentionally misleading information the place may be withdrawn by the Governing Body, depending on the length of time that the child has been at the school.
3. Where a place or an offer has been withdrawn, the application will be reconsidered by the Governing Body and a right of independent appeal offered if a place is refused.

In-Year Applications

An application can be made for a place for a child at any time outside the admission round and the child will be admitted where there are available places. Application should be made Local Authority Primary Admissions department.

Where there are places available but more applications than places, the published oversubscription criteria, as set out above, will be applied.

If there are no places available, the child will be added to the waiting list (see above).

You will be advised of the outcome of your application in writing, and you will have the right of appeal to an independent appeal panel.

Fair Access Protocol

The school is committed to admitting its fair share of children who are vulnerable and/or hard to place, as set out in locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal admission round, the Governing Body is empowered to give absolute priority to a child where admission is requested under any locally agreed protocol. The Governing Body has this power, even when admitting the child would mean exceeding the published admission number (subject to the infant class size exceptions).

NOTES AND DEFINITIONS (*these notes form part of the oversubscription criteria*)

1. **A Statement of Special Educational Needs** is a statement made by the Local Authority under section 324 of the Education Act 1996, specifying the special educational provision for a child. An Education, Health and Care Plan is a plan made by the Local Authority under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014, specifying the special educational provision required for a child.
2. **A looked after child** has the same meaning as in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989, and means any child who is (a) in the care of a local authority or (b) being provided with accommodation by them in the exercise of their social services functions (e.g. children with foster parents) at the time of making application to the school.

A 'previously looked after child' is a child who was looked after, but ceased to be so because he or she was adopted, or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order. Included in this definition are those children who appear (to the governing body) to have been in state care outside of England and who ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

3. **Catholic** means a member of a Church in full communion with the See of Rome. This includes the Eastern Catholic Churches. This will normally be evidenced by a certificate of baptism in a Catholic Church or a certificate of reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. For the purposes of this policy, it includes a looked after child living with a family where at least one of the parents is Catholic.
4. For a child to be treated as Catholic, evidence of Catholic baptism or reception into the Church will be required. Those who have difficulty obtaining written evidence of baptism should contact their Parish Priest.
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. **Eastern Christian Church** includes Orthodox Churches, and is normally evidenced by a certificate of baptism or reception from the authorities of that Church.
7. **Children of other Christian denominations**, as defined by the Catholic Education Service (CES), are 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
 - 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 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) 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.

8. **Children of other faiths** means children who are members of a religious community that does not fall within the definition of 'other Christian denominations' at 6 above 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.

9. **Sibling** 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
- (ii) the child of a parent's partner where that child 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.

Documentation providing proof of the above will be required. This may include birth certificates and proof of residence.

10. **Parent/carer** means all natural parents, any person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility for a child, and any person who has care of a child.

Place of residence

11. A child's home address refers to the address where the child usually lives with a parent or carer, and will be the address provided in the Common Application Form (CAF). Where parents have a shared responsibility for a child, and the child lives for part of the week with each parent, the home address will be the address given in the CAF, provided that the child resides at that address for any part of the school week.

Appeals against the Governing Body's decision to refuse admission

1. If a place is not available at the school, parents/carers have the right of appeal. Such appeals against non-admission will be heard by an Independent Appeals Panel formed in accordance with the DfE Admissions Appeal Code. Details of the appeals process will be made available to all unsuccessful applicants
2. Parents/carers who intend to make an appeal against the Governing Body's decision to refuse admission must submit a notice of appeal, by the date specified in the refusal letter, to:
*Democratic Services
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Sheffield S1 2HH*

Appeal hearings will be held in accordance with the timescales specified in the DfE Admission Appeals Code.