



ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Greenway, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 3LF

Reception Admissions Policy 2024 – 2025

St. Thomas More School is a Catholic Primary School founded by the Catholic Church to provide education for Catholic children. 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 support for the aims and the ethos of the school. Responsibility for the admission of pupils rests with the Board of Governors. The school is conducted by its governing body as part of the Catholic Church in accordance with its trust deed and instrument of government, and seeks at all times to be a witness to Jesus Christ.

Applications are invited for September 2024 from families whose child attains 5 years of age between 01/09/2024 and 31/08/2025.

Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will always be given to Catholic applicants.

The governors intend to admit up to the school's Published Admission Number of 30 pupils into the Reception in each school year.

The timetable for admissions, including late applications, is in line with the LA Admissions process and notification will be sent out by the LA on behalf of the governors on or about 19 April 2024.

Nov 1st 2023	Reception applications open
Nov/ Jan	Parent tours **dates tbc on school website **
Jan 15th 2024	Closing date for on time applications
April 16th 2024	Allocations despatched to parents
May 1st 2024	Deadline for accepting/ rejecting Reception places

If there are fewer applications than places available, the school will allocate places to all who have applied. Whenever there are more applications than the 30 places available, the following over-subscription criteria will apply:

Over-Subscription Criteria for Admission

1. Catholic₁ looked after₂ children and Catholic children previously looked-after who have been adopted₃ or made subject to child arrangement orders₄ or special guardianship orders ₅ Catholic₁ children previously from abroad who were cared for by the state because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately and subsequently adopted.
2. Baptised Catholic₁ children who will have a sibling₆ at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School at the time of admission.

3. Other Baptised Catholic children whose families live in the parish of – Berkhamsted (Sacred Heart Church) and Tring (Corpus Christi Church).*
4. Other baptised Catholic children.
5. Other looked-after or previously looked-after children who have been adopted or made subject to child arrangements or special guardianship orders. Other children previously from abroad who were cared for by the state because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately and subsequently adopted.
6. Children of Catechumens⁷.
7. Other children with siblings⁶ at the school at the time of admission.
8. Members of Eastern Christian Churches⁸
9. Christians of other denominations⁹.
10. Children of another faith/ tradition¹⁰
11. Any other applicant.

1 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 for a child 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 who is part of a Catholic family where a letter from a priest demonstrates that the child would have been baptised or received if it were not for their status as a looked after child (e.g. a looked after child in the process of adoption by a Catholic family).

For a child to be treated as Catholic, evidence of baptism or reception into the Church will be required. Those who have difficulty obtaining written evidence of baptism should contact their Parish Priest who, after consulting with the Diocese, will decide how the question of baptism is to be resolved and how written evidence is to be produced in accordance with the laws of the Church.

2 Looked after child has the same meaning as in s.22 of the Children Act 1989, and means any child in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by them (eg children with foster parents at the time of making an application to the school).

3 Adopted means those children who, following being looked after, have been adopted and whose parents can give proof of this status.

4 A child arrangements order is an order under the terms of the Children Act 1989 s.8 settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live. Children 'looked after' immediately before the order is made, qualify in this category.

5 A special guardianship order is an order under the terms of the Children Act 1989 s.14A which defines it as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian(s).

6 A Sibling refers to a brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister or the child of the parent/carer's partner, a child looked after or previously looked after and in every case living permanently in a placement within the home as part of the family household from Monday to Friday at the time of this application. 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. A sibling relationship does not apply when the older child(ren) will leave before the younger one starts.

7 Catechumen means a child who is a member of the catechumenate of a Catholic Church. This will normally be evidenced by a Certificate of Reception into the Order of Catechumens.

8 Eastern Christian Church includes Orthodox Churches, and is normally be evidenced by a Certificate of Baptism or Reception from the authorities of that Church.

9 **"Children of other Christian denominations"** means children who belong to other churches and ecclesial communities which, acknowledge 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 CYTÜN 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.

10 “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.

*Please see the websites of each church for further information regarding the Parish boundaries or the information provided on the SIF.

Within each of the over-subscription categories, priority will be given, in the following order, to children who:

- have exceptional needs, where:
 - i) The needs are presented at the time of application in the form of compelling written evidence from an appropriate professional such as a social worker, doctor or priest.
 - ii) The needs of the child can only be met at this school as opposed to any other. Governors will make the final decision.
- are children of staff (teaching and non-teaching, who have worked at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School for at least two years at the time of application), who live at the same home address as that member of staff.

TIE BREAK

In the event of these criteria not being able to distinguish between applicants, then the applicant living closer/closest to school will have priority. The home to school distance will be measured from the premium address point of the child’s home to the address point of the school, using Hertfordshire County Council’s ‘straight line’ distance measurement system. Distances are measured using a computerised mapping system to two decimal places. The measurement is taken from the AddressBase Premium address point of your 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 the event that two equidistant applicants are applying for the one remaining place, a random allocation (lottery) will be made in the presence of an independent witness. The child’s home is defined as where the child spends more than 50% of the week. *see additional note regarding the verification of home address.

If application is made for twins/triplets/siblings in the same academic year, and one child is offered a place, the governors will admit the twin/siblings.

The governors will maintain a continuing interest list for admissions, which will be ranked only when places become available in the school. Ranking will be in accordance with the published admissions criteria. Children will be kept on the continuing interest list until such time as their age makes them no longer eligible for admission, or parents request withdrawal from the list.

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 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Parents of children with an EHC Plan should contact their local authority SEN department. Children with this school named in their EHC Plan will be admitted.

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

Parents should complete a Supplementary Information Form (SIF), which is returned to St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School by post or hand delivered, and an online e-admissions form from the local authority area in which they live. www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions. Applicants may also ask their local authority for a paper form if they wish. The SIF is available from the school website (www.stmore.herts.sch.uk) or by post from the school at the request of the parents. The date for return of the SIF is **15th January 2024** and is the same as the closing date for the local authority form. Parents should complete the SIF and the online e-admissions form by **15th January 2024**. If a SIF is not completed, the Governing Body will apply their admission arrangements using the information submitted on the e-admissions form only, which may result in the application being given a lower priority.

A Baptismal Certificate will be required to accompany all applications by Catholics.

The Admissions Committee of the Governing Body will meet in the Spring Term to consider applications for the following September. Successful applicants will be invited to spend an afternoon in school during the latter part of the Summer Term, prior to admission.

Late Applications

Applications arriving after the closing date of **15th January 2024** will be dealt with after all initial offers have been made.

RECEPTION YEAR DEFERRED ENTRY

Applicants may defer entry to school up until compulsory school age i.e. the first day of term following the child's fifth birthday. Application is made in the usual way and then the deferral is requested. The place will then be held until the first day of the spring or summer term as applicable. Applicants may also request that their child attend part-time until compulsory school age is reached. Entry may not be deferred beyond compulsory school age or beyond the year for which the application has been made. Therefore, applicants whose children have birthdays in the summer term may only defer until the 1st April 2024.

SUMMER BORN CHILDREN

If a parent wishes his/her summer born child to start school in Reception in the September following his/her 5th birthday i.e. a child born between 1st April – 31st August being admitted to Reception at 5 years of age, they should make the school aware of this by writing a letter to the Chair of Governors at the time of application. Parents must then submit an application, in the normal way, for the year they wish their child to join the school. This application will be treated in the same way as all other applications and there is no guarantee that an offer will be made. A decision will be made taking into account the child's best interest. The Governing Body will assess the child's individual circumstances and any professional evidence submitted.

CHILDREN EDUCATED OUTSIDE THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL AGE GROUP (except summer born 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 and any supporting evidence should be submitted at the same time.

Governors will consider each case on its own merits and permission will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

IN_YEAR ADMISSIONS

For In-Year applications, parents should contact the school directly in the first instance.

Applications for In-Year admissions are made directly to the school. Where there is no waiting list the local authority will be notified and the child admitted. If more applications are received than there are places available, then applications will be ranked by the Governing Body in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. If a place cannot be offered at this time, then a request can be made for the reasons and information will be given of the right of appeal. The opportunity of being placed on a waiting list will be made. This waiting 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. When a place becomes available the Governing Body will rank the list according to the criteria and make an offer.

FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOLS

The school is committed to taking its fair share of children who are vulnerable and/or hard to place, as set out in locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal admissions round the Governing Body is empowered to give absolute priority to a child where admission is requested under any local protocol that has been agreed by both the Diocese and the Governing Body for the current school year. The Governing Body has this power even when admitting the child would mean exceeding the published admission number. Children admitted under HCC's Fair Access Protocol will be prioritised before children on a continuing interest list.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

All unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal to an independent panel for a place to be made available for their child. Hertfordshire parents wishing to appeal, who applied online, should log onto their online school application and click on the link 'register an appeal'. If the application was not made using Hertfordshire's online application system, parents should contact the Customer Service Centre (0300 123 4043) to request an appeal pack. Out of county residents and paper applicants should call the Customer Service Centre on 0300 1234043 to request their registration details and log into www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions and click on the link "log into the appeals system".

In the event of fraudulent information being presented in an application, the Governing Body reserves the right to withdraw the offer of a place.

***Verification of Address**

Home is the child's permanent place of residence, not the child-minder, friend or relative's address. Applicants should note that where an address contained within an application qualifies it for admission, that address will be verified. All applicants will be required to provide current evidence of two of the following three documents:

- A bank or building society statement which shows the address at which the child is resident (photocopy not acceptable)
- A utility bill (eg electricity, gas, TV license, telephone) which shows the address at which the child is resident
- The child's medical card

All supporting documents must be originals and not a facsimile or photocopy.

If the requested evidence is not provided to the Board of Governors by the deadline given, this will result in the withdrawal of an offer of a place. Similarly, if information is supplied which appears to be false or misleading in any material way, the offer of a place will be withdrawn.

Original documents will be returned and a copy held until the end of the admissions process. Applicants preferring not to put verifying documents in the post or seeking alternative verifying arrangements should contact the school to agree alternative verification arrangements. All photocopied documents will be returned or shredded at the end of the allocation process.