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Committee: Curriculum
Date of Trustee approval: 11 December 2024
Date of next review: Autumn 2025
Review frequency: Annual

Birchwood High School Admissions Policy Years 7-11 for entry in September 2026

Context

This policy sets out the admissions criteria for students admitted into Years 7-11 at Birchwood High School. Birchwood admits 240 boys and girls per year into Year 7 (the “published admission number” or PAN). If the school is over-subscribed, the allocation criteria are set out below in hierarchical order of importance. The general principle of these criteria is to give priority to students with brothers or sisters already at the school or those who live locally to the school address. We do not apply aptitude tests and are proud of our all-ability intake.

Admission Arrangements for Entry to Year 7 in September 2026

The Local Authority Common Application Form (CAF) must be completed when applying for a place at Birchwood High School in order for your application to be assessed correctly.

The CAF form you should complete depends on where you live. Secondary Transfer Forms are available from your Local Authority. Hertfordshire residents must use the form supplied by Hertfordshire County Council available at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions Essex residents must use the form supplied by Essex County Council www.essex.gov.uk/Education-Schools/Schools/Admissions

Students with a Statement or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC):

Pupils with an EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plan that names the school will be admitted within the school’s PAN but before any child prioritised under the school’s oversubscription criteria.

Oversubscription Criteria

If the school is oversubscribed (more applicants than available places) places will be allocated using the following 5 criteria in the order set out below:

1. **Looked after child:** Children looked after and children who were previously looked after, including those 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 or became subject to a child arrangements order¹ or a special guardianship order². See below for further clarification regarding Children Looked After.
2. **Siblings:** Children who, at the closing date for applications, have a brother or sister currently attending Birchwood High School in years 7 – 11. They also need to live at the same permanent address from Monday to Friday and to have joined the school during years 7 – 11.

For information 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 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.*

'Currently attending' means children who are actually at the school, or children who have been offered or accepted place but have not yet started at the school.

3. **Staff:** Priority is given to the children of Birchwood employees provided that they have been employed for a minimum of two years and/or are recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skills shortage. All students also need to live at the same permanent address as the member of staff from Monday to Friday.
4. **Priority Area:** Children who, at the closing date for applications, live in the Priority Area Electoral Wards of Bishop's Stortford, Thorley Parish and the area North West of Bishop's Stortford namely; Albury, Berden, Birchanger, Brent Pelham, Farnham, Furneux Pelham, Little Hadham, Manuden, Much Hadham, Stocking Pelham, Takeley and The Hallingburys. Addresses are routinely checked and places may be withdrawn if a false address has been given.
5. **Geographical distance:** Should there be places unfilled after applying criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4 the places will be offered on the basis of shortest straight-line distance from their permanent residence to the School as determined by Hertfordshire County Council, with those who are closer being accorded a higher priority. Addresses are routinely checked and places may be withdrawn if a false address has been given.

In the event of a tie for the last place in any of these criteria, a tiebreak will be made on the basis of shortest distance from their permanent residence to the School as determined by Hertfordshire County Council, with those who are closer being accorded a higher priority. Addresses are routinely checked and places may be withdrawn if a false address has been given. If the distance criterion is not sufficient to distinguish between two or more applicants for the last remaining place then random allocation will be used. This process will be supervised by somebody independent of Birchwood High School.

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.

Other Information:

The Governing Body will normally only admit children into their normal chronological age group, although each case will be considered on its facts, which must be included in any application form submitted for such a place

At secondary transfer the twin or multiple birth sibling of any child allocated a place will also be admitted if one child is allocated the last place available.

The Governing Body will normally only consider one application for admission to the school for a student in any one academic year. In the case where circumstances relevant to the application have substantially altered the governors may, at their discretion, consider a further application within the school year.

You must also return your Secondary Transfer Form to the appropriate Local Authority on time.

Failure to gain a place at Birchwood High School

If you fail to gain a place at the school, the Local Authority will offer you a place at a different school. Whether or not you accept such a place, you can ask to be placed on the Continuing Interest List for Birchwood High School. If a place becomes vacant during the year, the school will only offer it to someone from its Continuing Interest List, in strict accordance with the admission arrangements set out above. As the year progresses, the Continuing Interest List may include people who have just moved into the area and want a place for their child. They will have the same status as others on the list and, depending on which of the criteria they match, may be offered a place first.

Children who are the subject of a direction by a local authority to admit or who are allocated to a school in

accordance with the locally agreed Fair Access Protocol will take precedence over others on the Continuing Interest List. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/schools-and-education/admissions/fair-access-protocol/hcc-fair-access-protocol-2018.pdf>

It is the responsibility of parents to contact Hertfordshire County Council to state their continued interest at the start of each academic year.

You have the right to appeal. 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."

Admission Arrangements for Entry at other times (In-year admissions)

For in-year admissions, the following process applies:

- Contact Hertfordshire County Council to find out whether there are places in the year group concerned.
- The Governing Body will normally only admit children into their normal chronological age group, although each case will be considered on its facts, which must be included in any application form submitted for such a place
- If the year group concerned is full, the same over-subscription rules set out above will apply.
- If your application is processed successfully, we will then contact you to arrange to meet your child's Head of Year to discuss start dates, classes, form group, uniform and equipment and any questions you may have.
- If there are no places, your application will be added to our Continued Interest list. Once a place becomes available, your application will be assessed according to the allocation criteria points 1-5 above.
- Continued Interest lists will be annually reviewed to ensure those on the list are still interested in a place.
- 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
- The appeals process will be carried out in line with Hertfordshire County Council's Appeals' Administration Service. The decision of the Independent Appeal Panel is binding on all parties.

Change of Address

If your family is in the process of moving house, your new address will not be considered until a move into the area has actually taken place or you are able to offer proof of pending residence (e.g. a solicitor's letter indicating that there has been an exchange of contracts). New addresses will only be considered up to the agreed "late" date in the December preceding the allocation year.

Looked after Child footnote:

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. 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 arrangements order¹ or a special guardianship order². 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 221(1) of The Children Act 1989).

All children adopted from care who are of compulsory school age are eligible for admission under rule 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 Rule 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 rule 1. 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 Rule 1 if the child's previously looked 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) a public authority, (b) a religious organisation, or (c) any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society