



Admissions Policy for all Trust schools 2026 -2027

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SAST Schools' Admissions Policy

2026 - 2027

Sherborne Area Schools' Trust (SAST) is the Admissions Authority for all SAST schools listed below. This document sets out the policy of SAST with respect to Admissions for the academic year 2026/2027 for these schools.

Name	Published Admission Number (PAN)	County
Buckland Newton CE Primary School*	15	Dorset
Charlton Horethorne CE Primary School*	8	Somerset
King Arthur's School	112	Somerset
Motcombe CE Primary School*	30	Dorset
Shaftesbury School*	200	Dorset
Shaftesbury CE Primary School*	60	Dorset
Sherborne Abbey CE Primary School*	45	Dorset
Sherborne Primary School	48	Dorset
Shillingstone CE Primary School*	15	Dorset
St Andrew's CE Primary School (Yetminster)*	30	Dorset
St Andrew's CE Primary School (Fontmell Magna)*	30	Dorset
St Mary's CE Primary School*	17	Dorset
St. Mary the Virgin CE Primary School*	30	Dorset
St. Nicholas CE Primary School (Child Okeford) *	25	Dorset
Sturminster Newton High School	120	Dorset
The Gryphon School*	240	Dorset
Thornford CE Primary School*	15	Dorset

Admission of Pupils – General Principles

- SAST follows the national Schools Admissions Code.
- SAST schools serve a wide area of North and West Dorset and South Somerset. We welcome those of all faiths and of no faith.

- Those SAST schools with a religious character* are subject to the religious authority of the Diocese of Salisbury or the Diocese of Bath and Wells (see section below).
- SAST schools must comply with The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) Regulations where Reception, Year 1 and 2 classes are limited to 30 children.
- Admission arrangements are consistently and equally applied to all.
- The allocation of school places is made up to the planned admission number and in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.
- SAST primary schools are not always the “feeder” or “catchment” schools of The Gryphon School, King Arthur’s School or Sturminster Newton High School and admission arrangements for Year 7 and above are subject to the oversubscription criteria.

SAST Schools with a Religious Character*

For schools designated with a religious character, the school’s religious authority is either the Diocese of Salisbury (Dorset) or the Diocese of Bath and Wells (Somerset) and the school must have regard to its religious authority when setting the terms of its admission arrangements. Recognising their historic foundation, SAST schools with a religious character will preserve and develop that character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the churches at parish and diocesan level. Each school aims to support children and their families by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

Catchment Area and Published Admission Numbers (PANs) ****

The catchment area for SAST schools in Dorset is available at [Schools in your catchment area - Dorset Council](#) and in Somerset at [School catchment \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#) Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for each year group are listed above. Infant Class Size Regulations apply to Reception, Year 1 and 2 classes. These regulations require classes to be no bigger than 30 children although the PAN may be much lower than 30. Where there are multiple birth applications the PAN will, provided it is practicable, be exceeded or increased at the point of allocation in order to ensure that multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the school.

Applying for a place at a SAST School

Parents who wish their children to be admitted to a SAST school must complete the relevant admissions application form available through the Local Authority they reside in. Applications for children living in Dorset can be made online at [Apply for a school place - Dorset Council](#). The timetable, and information on how to apply, is available from the Local Authority (LA). Parents are responsible for providing all relevant information with the application. If you live in Somerset, you should apply through Somerset Admissions at [Apply to start school for the first time \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#). When applying to start school in Reception in September 2026 you must apply by the closing date of 15 January 2026. The LA will make a single offer of a place on 16 April 2026 (or next working day). When applying to start school in Year 7 in September 2026 all applications for admission must be received by your LA by the closing date of 31 October 2024. The LA will make a single offer of a place on 1 March 2026 (or next working day). Parents wishing to apply for a school with a Religious Character can evidence their child’s regular attendance at church using the SAST Supplementary Information Form at page 8 of this document. This form should be completed and sent directly to the school at the same time as your child’s school application is sent to the Local Authority.

Admissions outside Chronological Age

Applications for a child to be placed outside of their normal chronological year group will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. The placement of a child outside his or her normal age group is not an appropriate strategy for meeting special educational needs. This is in recognition of the significant and long-term impact on children who are placed outside of their normal year group. Again, only in exceptional circumstances, where a child is outstanding in every respect, will a child be considered for admission early or above their normal year group. Admission outside of the normal year group will also only be considered through the agreement of the Head Teacher, in conjunction with other professionals, where they have identified exceptional medical, physical, social or/and educational reasons.

In-Year Admissions

If applying for a child to join an already established year group in a Dorset school, you must contact the Dorset School Admissions Team to discuss place availability as part of the LA co-ordinated scheme. For parents making an in-year transfer application to a SAST School based in Somerset, the LA Admissions form should be sent directly to the school. Moving into

an area does not guarantee a place at your preferred, nearest or catchment school. You need to be aware of any likely alternative schools which may be offered and the implications of this if you move into an area where schools are full.

Special Educational Needs

Where a child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) school admissions for those living in Dorset are dealt with by the SEND Team [SEND Local Offer - Dorset Council](#). For those living in Somerset, school admissions for children with an EHCP are dealt with by the SEND team [Schools \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#). For those children with an EHCP naming a SAST school they will be given a place in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice and the PAN number will be reduced accordingly.

School Transport

The preference of school and the admissions criteria may affect your child's entitlement to 'free' or concessionary school transport. This includes later changes (e.g., change of address) which could have a bearing on continued eligibility for school transport. Some SAST schools also contract their own bus services. Details are available on the school website.

Withdrawal of School Places

Places will only be withdrawn where a place has been offered in error by the admission authority and the affected child/ren have not yet started at the preferred school; a place has been offered on the basis of a false, fraudulent or deliberately misleading application; the place has not been taken up by the agreed date – the parent will be contacted in advance of the withdrawal of a place; or the place has been declined by the parent.

Waiting Lists

If the school is oversubscribed for children due to start in 2026 - 2027, a waiting list will be maintained by the LA for the entire academic year. The position on the list will be determined by applying the published over-subscription criteria and not by date of receipt. This will mean the position will change if a later application is received from someone with higher priority according to the over-subscription criteria. The existence of a waiting list does not remove the right of appeal against any refusal of a place from any unsuccessful applicant. Parents can apply to have their child's name placed on a waiting list for a period of one term following refusal. If parents wish to keep a child on a waiting list beyond this term, they will need to write in for an extension each term.

Deferred entry and part time attendance below statutory school age for those applying to start in Reception

Every child must legally start their education the term after their 5th birthday, and it is expected that most children will begin school in the September following their 4th birthday. However, a parent applying for a place in September may defer entry until later in that academic year but not beyond the point they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the last term of that year. Any request for deferred entry must be discussed and agreed by the Headteacher and will be decided on a case-by-case basis in accordance with LA guidance.

Delayed entry of summer born children applying to start in Reception

Parents/carers of summer born children (which refers to children born from 1 April to 31 August) may wish to consider delaying the start date of their child's school place until the September after their 5th birthday. This must be discussed with the Headteacher and will be decided on a case-by-case basis according to the LA guidance. Note that:

- (i) You must make an application for admission to the School for **September 2026** entry but make it clear on the application form that you wish your child to enter the reception class in **September 2027**.
- (ii) Discussions directly with the chosen school are strongly recommended prior to making a decision to decline entry for an entire year and to be admitted to Reception in September 2027. Any decision will be on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned.
- (iii) If the request is agreed the September 2026 application may be withdrawn before a place is offered **but a fresh application will need to be made** for September 2027 entry **which will be processed as a fresh application along with all other applications and in accordance with the school's admission arrangements**. PLEASE NOTE that it is possible even if the request is agreed that the child may not be admitted in September 2027 as there is no guarantee of a school place.
- (iv) If the request is refused the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's 5th birthday.

Where a child has been accepted for delayed entry into Reception, they will then start their school education outside of their chronological year group. In line with government guidance, SAST will then adopt the premise that “Unless there are sound educational reasons to do otherwise, the assumption should be that children remain outside their normal year group (that is, in the year which they have been educated so far).” However, we also recognise that there may be sound reasons for returning to the chronological year. A formal review of placement must occur when the child is in Year 4 to ensure that the decision is still appropriate. This formal meeting should be between parents and the Headteacher. If a preferred secondary has already been identified, the Headteacher of that setting should also be invited to share the secondary perspective. Further review is recommended on transfer to secondary, during year 7 and 8, to ensure public examinations are undertaken.

Appeals Procedure

Parents have a right of appeal to an independent panel against the decision of the Trust to refuse application for a school place. Details of the appeals procedure are sent out with all refusal letters.

Oversubscription Criteria

Where all parental preferences for places at the school can be satisfied, all children seeking a place will be admitted. Where there are too few places available to satisfy all preferences, places will be allocated according to the following priority order by an Oversubscription Panel administered by the LA. Headteachers may be asked to attend this panel.

1. **Looked after or previously looked after children**, i.e., a “Child in Care” means any child who is in the care of a local authority in accordance with Section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989. A child who was “previously a Child in Care” means a child who after being Looked After became subject to an Adoption Order under Section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, a Residence Order under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 or Special Guardianship Order under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989. This category also includes Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children (IAPLAC). These are also children outside of England, who were deemed to have been in the care of the State (or by the 3rd sector where no state provision is available) prior to their adoption.
2. Where a **Child Protection Order or Child in Need document** identifies that there is a need for the child to be educated in a school closest to home or in an identified particular school/setting for their own safety.
3. **Children who have a physical or medical disability** where the identified school would be the only school providing specially adapted facilities to support the needs of the child or, in the case of the condition resulting in prolonged or recurring absence each year, would be best supported attending a particular school. This must be fully evidenced and supported by a community paediatrician or consultant.
4. **Children living within the school’s catchment area who will have a sibling** (s)** attending the school at the time of admission.
5. **Children of staff *** where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or the member of staff is recruited to a vacancy to meet a demonstrable skills shortage as at the date of application. This includes stepchildren, foster children and children of co-habiting partners.
6. **Children living within the school’s catchment area.**
7. **Children living outside the school’s catchment area who will have a sibling** (s)** attending the school at the time of admission.
8. **Children living outside the school’s catchment area and who were attending one of the preferred school’s recognised feeder schools** during the previous year (**secondary schools only**).
9. **Children living outside the school’s catchment area who meet the faith criterion***** where the child is a regular practising Christian at a Recognised Church or Religious Group prior to application.
10. **All other children living outside the school’s catchment area.**

If oversubscribed within any of the priority order categories above, places will be allocated on the basis of the shortest straight-line measurement using a geographical information-based system which identifies an Easting and Northing for the home address and the school building and calculates the distance between the two locations. Note - school transport is based on walking and driven distances.

Notes

*updated to reflect the Admissions code.

The term 'sibling**' means full brother or sister, half or stepbrother or sister, adoptive brother or sister and other nonblood related children who live with married or cohabiting parents in the same household and relates to all year groups provided by the school.

*** In order to qualify for consideration under the '**faith criterion**' category, parents/guardians will need to show that the child to whom the application relates has been attending a church that is the same denomination as (or is in fellowship with or partnership with) a member of: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (www.ctbi.org.uk), the Evangelical Alliance (www.eauk.org), the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (www.fiec.org.uk); or Affinity fellowship of Churches (www.affinity.org.uk), and regularly attends church. Regular attendance at church means at least once a month for a minimum of a year prior to the closing date for applications, however (Covid-19 Variation), in the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the church [or, in relation to those of other faiths, relevant place of worship] has been closed for public worship and has not provided alternative premises for that worship, the requirements of these [admissions] arrangements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the church [or in relation to those of other faiths, relevant place of worship] or alternative premises have been available for public worship). The application must also be supported by a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) signed by a church representative which is available via the SAST website www.sast.org.uk/governance/trust-policies and at the end of this policy.

**** Feeder or catchment schools for SAST secondary schools are as follows:

The Gryphon School -	Sherborne Primary Sherborne Abbey CE Primary All Saints CE VC Primary. Bishops Caundle St. Mary's CE Primary, Bradford Abbas Buckland Newton CE Primary Trent Youngs CE Primary Thornford CE Primary St. Andrew's CE Primary, Yetminster Charlton Horethorne CE Primary School
King Arthur's School -	Wincanton Primary School Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School Upton Noble CE VC Primary School Bruton Primary School St Nicholas CE Primary School, Henstridge Horsington Church School, Templecombe Charlton Horethorne CE Primary School Abbas and Templecombe CE Primary School Milborne Port Primary School
Shaftesbury School -	The Abbey CE Primary School, Shaftesbury St Andrew's CE Primary School, Fontmell Magna Motcombe CE Primary School Motcombe Shaftesbury CE Primary School St John's CE Primary School, Salisbury Chilmark and Fonthill Bishop CE VA Primary School Semley CE VA Primary School
Sturminster Newton High School –	Hazelbury Bryan Primary School Shillingstone CE Primary School St Nicholas CE Primary School, Child Okeford Stalbridge Primary School William Barnes Primary School, Sturminster Newton

If you have any questions in relation to this Admission Policy, please contact the SAST Head Office – office@sast.org.uk

The school will handle all personal data in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2026/2027 SAST SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION FORM (SIF)

All Faith Schools

Part A – Please ensure that you read before completing

The oversubscription criteria set out on page 6 of the SAST Admissions Policy will be used to prioritise the offer of school places where there are more applications received than places available. Please complete this form if you wish your application to be considered regarding Children outside the Catchment Area who meet the Faith Criterion.

This Page Applies to Criterion ‘Children Living outside the Catchment Area who meet the Faith Criterion’

A child [who] is a regular practising Christian at a Recognised Church or Religious Group

Regular practising Christian means a child who attends a Recognised Church or Religious Group regularly prior to application. Regularly means attends church at least once a month for a minimum of a year prior to the closing date for applications.

Recognised Church or Religious Group means a church that is the same denomination as (or is in fellowship with or partnership with) a member of: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (see ctbi.org.uk); the Evangelical Alliance (see eauk.org); the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (see www.fiec.org.uk); Affinity Fellowship of Churches (see www.affinity.org.uk).

If you wish your admission application to be prioritised on this basis you must ensure that this Supplementary Information Form is completed by the vicar, priest, minister, pastor, or churchwarden of the attended Church in order to confirm that the requirements of the above statement have been met.

Part B – Submitting your SIF

For a child to start in Reception or Year 7 in September 2026 - your completed SIF must be delivered directly to the school office on or before 31st October 2025 (Secondary School) or 15th January 2026 (Primary School).

For a child to join any year group during the 2026/2027 school year - your completed **SIF must be delivered directly to the school office** by post or by email with a cover letter stating the child's name, address, school applied for and the year/date the application form was submitted.

SAST Admissions Policy – Supplementary Information Form

Part C – Declaration to be made by vicar, priest, minister, pastor, or church warden.

I have consulted with the local church leadership team and can confirm that
..... (child's name) attends Church and has done so so
at least monthly for the last 12 months where a church service has been available*.

Signed.....

Print name.....

Position.....

Date.....