



Balcombe C E Primary School

Admissions policy 2026-2027

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Balcombe C E Primary School

Admissions policy

2026-2027

1. Admissions Principles

The Hurst Education Trust (HET) is the admissions authority, responsible for the admissions policies and decisions on applications for admission to the schools within the Trust. Each school has individual admissions arrangements for each academic year. They are written to comply with the School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeals Code.

We seek to be an inclusive Church of England Trust, welcoming children from all backgrounds and of all abilities and our admissions arrangements reflect this. A child's level of achievement or specific needs are not a barrier to admission to our schools.

We believe that ideally each child should be admitted to the school of their parents' choice. However, the school buildings cannot accommodate an unlimited number of children and excessive class sizes are detrimental to the education of the children in the class. The Published Admissions Number for this school is included in their arrangements. The school will not usually admit children into classes if their admission would cause the class size to increase above legal or practical limits, or the Published Admissions Number to be breached.

2. Introduction to Balcombe C E Primary School

Balcombe C E Primary is a school in the Hurst Education Trust (HET) for children aged 4 to 11. As such the Trust is the Admission Authority responsible for all decisions in connection with admitting pupils and for the publication of Admission Arrangements which explain how the admissions process will be applied. The Trust delegates the responsibility for admissions to the Local Governing Body of the school.

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at the school
- Set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply
- Explain how to appeal against a decision not to offer your child a place

4. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):

- [School Admissions Code 2021](#)
- [School Admission Appeals Code](#)

As an academy, the school is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).

5. How to apply

For applications in the normal admissions round you should use the application form provided by your home local authority (regardless of which local authority the schools are in). You can use this form to express your preference for a minimum of 3 state-funded schools, in rank order.

The application form is completed and submitted online on the Local Authority website

[Starting school places - West Sussex County Council](#)

If you require a paper application form please telephone the local authority on 03330 142903. Paper applications should be returned to the school office by the end of the last school day before 15 January 2026.

The deadline for starting school (Reception) application is 15 January 2026.

All applications received after the closing date are considered as late and are ranked after those received on time.

You will receive an offer for a school place directly from your local authority in April 2026.

6. Allocation of places

6.1 Published Admission number

The school has an agreed admission number of 20 pupils for entry in Reception.

6.2 Oversubscription criteria

All children whose Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) name Balcombe C E Primary School will be admitted before any other places are allocated.

If the school is not oversubscribed, all applicants will be offered a place.

In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order until all places are filled.

1. Looked after children (children in public care), children who were previously looked after who ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a special guardianship order or child arrangements order. This includes children 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. Evidence must be provided. (Note 1)
2. Children who are subject to a special guardianship order who have not previously been in local authority care. Evidence must be provided. (Note 2)
3. Children who need a place at the school on exceptional and compelling social, psychological or medical grounds. Evidence must be provided. (Note 3)
4. Children who live in the catchment area* with brothers or sisters already at the school when the child starts. (Note 4)
5. Other children who live in the catchment area*.
6. Other children who live outside the catchment area* with brothers or sisters already at the school when the child starts. (Note 4)
7. Children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances: where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time which the admission to the school is made; and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. (Note 5)
8. Other children who live outside the catchment area*.

*Details of the catchment area for each school can be found here:

[School catchment areas - West Sussex County Council](#)

6.3 Tie break

In the event of oversubscription within any category, place allocation will be decided by prioritising applications on the basis of the distance from home to school. All distances are measured by a straight line from the school to the child's home address using Ordnance Survey data within the curtilage of the property.

In the event that applicants cannot be prioritised using the tie-breaker above because the distance measurements are the same, the Trust will use random allocation to decide which children will be offered the remaining places.

6.4 Oversubscription Criteria Definitions

Note 1: Looked after children and previously looked after children

Evidence is required to support applications for looked after children, or previously looked after children who ceased to be so because they were adopted, became subject to a special guardianship order, residence order or child arrangement order.

- Applications for looked after children, who are subject to a care order (under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989), should be made by the allocated social worker.
- Applications for previously looked after children who are adopted should be supported by a copy of the adoption certificate. This includes children 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.
- Applications for previously looked after children who become subject to a special guardianship order (made under Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 - as amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002) should be supported by a copy of the special guardianship order confirming the details of the arrangements for the child.
- Applications for previously looked after children who become subject to a residence order (made under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989) or child arrangement order (made under Section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014) should be supported by a copy of the court order confirming the details of the arrangements for the child.

Note 2: Children subject to a Special Guardianship Order

Applications for children who are placed under a Special Guardianship Order, who have not previously been in the care of the local authority should be supported by a copy of the special guardianship order confirming the details of the arrangements for the child.

Note 3: Applying under the Exceptional and Compelling Category

Parents wishing to apply for their first preference school under this category must provide independent professional evidence to support their application. The supporting evidence from the qualified professional (i.e. medical consultant or a psychologist) must explain clearly why it is essential for the child to attend the school named as their first preference. It must detail fully the child's needs and address the reason why these needs can only be met at the preferred school. Letters from parents alone are not sufficient nor are letters that do not address the question of which school the child must attend. Letters from teachers at the child's current school will not normally be taken into account. You should contact the school to discuss your child's needs. Issues such as difficulties with childcare arrangements or the child's ability / school performance are not covered by this category. If the evidence is not received by the application deadline of 15 January 2025, then the application will not be considered under the exceptional and compelling category but will be considered against the remaining admission criteria. The evidence must be sent to the Pupil Admissions Team, preferably by email but if posted it must be sent by Recorded Delivery mail. An acknowledgement that the evidence has been received will be sent, however it remains the parent's responsibility to ensure that an acknowledgement of safe receipt of the evidence is received. Please do not send original documents as these cannot be returned.

Note 4: Brothers and Sisters Category

Where priority is given for a sibling, brothers or sisters may be half or step-siblings (by marriage or co-habitation) or foster siblings but must be living permanently at the same address. Sibling priority is only given if the sibling will be at the school at the time of application and will still be in the school at the time of admission.

Note 5: Children of Staff members

Parents wishing to apply under this category must provide a letter from the headteacher of the preferred school, confirming the circumstances giving entitlement to staff priority, before the closing date. If a letter from the headteacher of the preferred school is not received by the application deadline of 15 January 2025, then the application will not be considered under this category but will be considered against the remaining admission criteria. The letter from the headteacher of the preferred school must be sent to the Pupil Admissions Team, preferably by email but if posted it must be sent by Recorded Delivery. An acknowledgement that the letter has been received will be sent, however it remains the parent's responsibility to ensure that an acknowledgement of safe receipt of the letter is received.

6.5 Multiple Birth Applications

For example, twins or triplets. A separate application must be made for every child. Please note that sibling priority is only given when a sibling is already attending the school, therefore twins and multiple births do not give sibling priority to each other, and their details should not be included as siblings on an application. Where the last child to be offered a place is a twin, the other twin will normally be admitted over the published admission number to ensure that multiple birth siblings can be allocated places at the same school.

6.6. Children below compulsory school age

Most children will enter school at the beginning of the academic year in which they become five. Children reach statutory school age at the start of the term following their fifth birthday. After this time children educated in the state sector must be in school full time for the 190 days of the academic year (i.e. morning and afternoons = 380 sessions)

Children will be able to start on a full-time basis, but parents/guardians may choose to send their child part-time until the child reaches statutory school age. Parents/guardians have the right to defer entry to the start of the Spring or Summer Term. The parents of a summer born child (April-August) may choose not to send the child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year 1. Please discuss any requests for part-time or deferred entry with the school once an offer has been received.

Parents wishing to apply for enhanced deferment (known as delayed entry) must apply in writing giving their reasons for this application. If delayed entry is granted then parents must follow the application round for the year group in which their child is to be admitted, even if a place was applied for and granted in the “normal” round of applications. This is not carried forward to the next academic year.

6.7. Challenging behaviour

We will not refuse to admit a child on behavioural grounds in the normal admissions round or at any point in the normal year of entry. We may refuse admission in certain cases where the specific criteria listed in the School Admissions Code (paragraph 3.8) apply, i.e. where section 87 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is engaged.

We may refuse admission for an in-year applicant for a year group that isn't the normal point of entry, only in such a case that we have good reason to believe that the child may display challenging behaviour that may adversely affect the provision we can offer. In this case, we will refer these pupils to the Fair Access Protocol. We will not refuse admission on these grounds to looked after children, previously looked after children and children with EHC plans listing the school

6.8 Fair Access Protocol

We participate in West Sussex County Council's Fair Access Protocol. This helps ensure that all children, including those who are unplaced and vulnerable, or having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, get access to a school place as quickly as possible.

6.9 Children with Special Educational Needs

Children are admitted to the school in accordance with the admission criteria. We do not discriminate for or against children with special educational needs or disabilities and would expect parents to fully inform the school of the nature of any known educational physical, medical or social needs when expressing a preference for their child to attend this school. Please contact the school to discuss these. This information will ensure that the child's entry to the school is as smooth as possible and help inform the level of provision the school can make to meet the individual needs of the child.

The SEND-IAS offers support to any parents who, for a variety of reasons, may have difficulties with the school application process. This includes helping parents formulate their thoughts when choosing the type of school that may be suitable for their child and supporting parents who may need assistance completing their application. For further information on this service contact: helpline on 0330 222 8555 (Mon.-Fri. 9am – 4pm), or by email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk

7. Accepting a place

If a place has not been taken up after 14 days from the date of the offer, the school will write and inform the parent that the offer may be withdrawn after a further 7 days if not taken. The school will then offer the place to the next on the waiting list in accordance with the admissions criteria.

8. Waiting list

If your child was refused a place in writing, they will automatically be added to the waiting list for Year R. Unless offered a place your child will remain on the waiting list for Year R until the end of the academic year they would have started school. If a place becomes available, you will be contacted using the information in your application. If we do not receive a reply from you within 5 working days of trying to contact you, your child's name will be removed from the waiting list and the place will be reallocated to the next child on that list. The waiting list is updated and ranked according to the oversubscription criteria when places become available. No account is taken of length of time on the waiting list. If you wish your child to be on the waiting list beyond the academic year in which you applied please contact the school office.

9. Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Children are educated in school with others of their own age group. However, in exceptional circumstances parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group. Please contact the school to discuss any request.

The parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year 1. (*Summer born children are those born from 1 April to 31 August*)

Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, this will include taking account of:

- Parents' views
- Information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional
- Whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The headteacher's views

Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria listed in section 6. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group.

Parents will always be informed of the reasons for any decision on the year group a child should be admitted to. Parents do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

10. In-year admissions

Parents can apply for a place for their child at any time outside the normal admissions round. As is the case in the normal admissions round, all children whose EHC plans name the school will be admitted.

Likewise, if there are spaces available in the year group you are applying for, your child will be offered a place.

If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. When a space becomes available, it will be filled by one of the pupils on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in section 6.2 of this policy. Priority will not be given to children on the basis that they have been on the waiting list the longest.

Applications for in-year admissions are co-ordinated by the Local Authority and you should make an application here: [Moving school - West Sussex County Council](#)

Parents will be notified of the outcome of your in-year application in writing within 15 school days.

Where people are moving into the area, we would require written confirmation of contract exchange or tenancy agreement before offering a place.

We do not accept applications more than 4 weeks in advance, and children must start within 10 school days of the date of the letter offering a place. Applications for September entry (apart from Reception) will be accepted from 20th May and will be processed from 1st June.

11. Appeals

If you have applied for a place at Balcombe C E Primary School and your child has been refused admission, you will be informed why admission was refused and given information about the process for hearing appeals. If you wish to appeal, you must set out the grounds for your appeal in writing. This applies to Reception class and In-Year Admissions.

West Sussex County Council administer the process for the school. Full details of the process and the online appeals form can be found here: [Make an admissions appeal - West Sussex County Council](#)

Contacts: The Schools Appeals Administrator, Legal Services, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ or Telephone: 03302 222732; Fax: 01243 777721; email: appealsadministrator@westsussex.gov.uk

The Appeals timetable will be published on our website.

12. Moving House

Places cannot be reserved. Any school place offered for your child will be on the basis of the address held on the Pupil Admissions Team records and the assumption that your child will still be resident at this address in September 2026.

Please contact the Pupil Admissions Team and supply proof of your new address if you move after the deadline has passed. We will only use a new address for the purpose of allocating a school place when contracts have been exchanged or when a tenancy agreement (usually of at least 6 months) has been signed. Until such evidence can be provided, we will process your application based on your existing address. You may be asked for additional evidence to confirm a move has taken place. This may include getting you to provide a copy of a council tax or utility bill for your new address or evidence that you will not be returning to your previous address.

13. Applications from Service Personnel and Crown Servants

Members of the armed forces and Crown Servants with automatic right of entry to the UK who are able to provide evidence of their relocation may apply for a school place ahead of a move. An application can be made as soon as confirmation of the relocation is available, with no restriction on how far advance the application is made.

Armed forces applications must be supported by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a unit postal address or quartering area address. It is this address that will be used when considering the application.

For Crown Servants, a UK address can only be used if there is evidence of the address the child is returning to. There is no guarantee that a place will be available; each application will be considered in line with the school's admissions criteria.

14. Monitoring arrangements

Whenever changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the agreed admission number), the governing board will publicly consult on these changes. If nothing changes, it will publicly consult on the school's admission arrangements at least once every 7 years.

Document History:

Admissions Policy – WSCC Criteria	
Policy Type:	Statutory – Customisable Trust Policy
Policy Source:	Based on The Key/WSCC oversubscription criteria and processes
Model Policy Approval:	HET Trust Board
Customised Policy Approval:	Individual Academy LGB
Review period:	Annual
Date of next consultation:	

Date Reviewed	Amendments Made	Date Model Approved by Trust Board	Date Customised Policy Approved By LGB	Next Review Due
Sept 2023	New Trust customisable model policy	3 rd October 2023		September 2024
Oct 2023	Updated with 2025/2026 dates; Summer born children note	16 th May 2024		September 2024
Sept 2024	Updated with 2026/2027 dates; amended in-year options to include LA co-ordination	1 st October 2024	13 th February 2025	September 2025

Appendix A: Definitions

The **normal admissions round** is the period during which parents can apply for state-funded school places at the school's normal point of entry, using the common application form provided by their home local authority.

Looked after children are children who, at the time of making an application to a school, are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Being provided with accommodation by a local authority in exercise of its social services functions

Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they:

- Were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or
- Became subject to a child arrangements order, or
- Became subject to a special guardianship order

This includes children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in state care due to being adopted.

A child reaches **compulsory school age** on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

Home Address:

It is important that the address information for each pupil is accurate to ensure the correct priority is applied to the application. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the Pupil Admissions Team in writing of any changes to their address at any time before 1 September 2026. All changes of address that are received after the allocation will be reviewed and, if the application gained an unfair advantage and the place would not have been offered, we will withdraw the offer made.

Shared residency:

We can only use one address for the purpose of allocating a school place. The address for the application is the one held on our records as being the address for your child. If your child regularly stays overnight with another parent or relative on a shared residency basis and therefore potentially has more than one address, you must confirm this in writing after making your application online. You should give both addresses and details of your child's living arrangements and state which address you believe should be used for the application i.e. your child's main address. We may contact you for further supporting evidence and this could include documentation such as a: council tax bill, medical card, utility bill, bank statement or child benefit documentation. Additional enquiries may also be made where necessary. Priority for your preferences will be decided according to the address which the Pupil Admissions Team determines as your child's main address. Parents should note that overnight stays relating to childcare arrangements are rarely considered to be a formal 'shared residency' and priority will not be given from a relative/carer's address in these circumstances. Parents should submit details of their child's shared residency by covering letter addressed to the Pupil Admissions Team.

Children coming from abroad during the normal admission round:

If a child is coming from abroad to the UK certain conditions must be met. Before applying for a state-funded school place it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that they and their child have a right of abode in the UK or that the conditions of their immigration status otherwise permit them to access a state-funded school. If a family has been living abroad and has proof of returning to a currently owned West Sussex property, or if you can provide acceptable evidence of a West Sussex address where you will be living, please do so before the deadline.