



School Admission Arrangements for 2024/25 Academic Year

Part 1 - General Information

1.1 About our School

The Castle School is an 'outstanding' school (OFSTED 2009) with a record of high attainment and achievement that has been sustained over a number of years. We foster a supportive, family atmosphere and a strong sense of belonging for every student. Our aim is for every child to achieve, participate and belong, and this is at the heart of everything we do at The Castle School. We have been for some years now not only at the top of the performance tables in Somerset but in the top 5% of schools nationally for academic achievements. We believe in the absolute moral responsibility we have for equipping students with the best possible exam results; we know that this opens doors for students and equips them with outstanding attitudes and a strong moral foundation.

Equally important is nurturing every student's potential beyond the curriculum and we aim that every child participates in enrichment activities. This success is not simply the result of the outstanding teaching at The Castle School, but the strong family ethos and sense of belonging that we engender. The Arts are an essential part of our school; we know that the UK leads in the creative industries and we have an outstanding reputation in all the Arts at both regional and national level. We are equally proud of our sporting reputation and many of our students compete at regional and national level in a huge range of sports. We invariably win a good number of county cups and regional leagues as a school.

The Houses, (Balmoral, Buckingham, Caernarvon, Lancaster, Sandringham and Windsor) are the lifeblood of the School and ensure that every child has a strong sense of identity and belonging. They play a major role in ensuring that we never lose sight of the individuality of each child and that no child is invisible at The Castle School.

The Governing Body is the Admissions Authority and is responsible for admission decisions. For this purpose, the governors operate an Admissions Committee consisting of at least three governors.

The Castle School has formed The Castle Partnership Trust and expects families to apply for a place at the school within the Trust that is in their catchment area. For example, if a child lives

within the Court Fields School catchment area, it is expected that the family would apply for a place at Court Fields School.

Somerset Local Authority (LA) is responsible for coordinating all normal entry school place applications for maintained schools across Somerset. Therefore, these admission arrangements should be read in conjunction with the LA's published coordinated admissions scheme which is available at www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions or by contacting the Admissions and Entitlement Team at Somerset County Council.

1.2 Contact Details

The Castle School
Wellington Road
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 5AU

Telephone: 01823 274073

Fax: 01823 274080

E-Mail: office@castle.somerset.sch.uk

Website: www.castleschool.co.uk

1.3 The Published Admission Number (PAN)

The Castle School has an admission number of 240 for entry in Year 7 for 2024.

The school will accordingly admit this number of pupils each year if there are sufficient applications. Where fewer applicants than the published admission number(s) for the relevant year group are received, the Governing Body will offer places at the school to all those who have applied.

1.4 Relevant Documents

(Please refer to this information before applying for a school place)

School Admission arrangements must comply with The School Admissions Code and School Admission Appeals Code published by The Department for Education www.education.gov.uk.

Important documents published by Local Authorities are also relevant to some areas of school admissions procedure. Applicants are strongly advised to contact their 'home' Local Authority (the Local Authority area in which your child lives) or access the Local Authority website and ensure that they read and understand this information before proceeding with an application for a school place. Related documents of particular importance are:

- The Local Authority Coordinated Admissions Scheme (this applies to starting and transferring school for the first time)
- The Local Authority Secondary Admissions Guide
- The Local Authority Fair Access Protocol
- The Local Authority School Transport policy
- Free School Meal Entitlement.

Part 2 - Over Subscription Criteria

When The Castle School is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health and Care plan naming the school, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below, in priority order:

2.1 Over Subscription Criteria

- 1. Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children.** A Looked After Child is a child who is in the care of a Local Authority. Previously Looked After Children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so when they were adopted or became subject to a Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship Order. 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. (See important notes)
- 2. Children living in the designated catchment area with a sibling attending The Castle School at the time of application** (see sections 6.4 and 6.10).
- 3. Children attending Orchard Grove Primary School at the time of application** ¹.
- 4. Children of staff employed at The Castle School** (Children of staff at the school either where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.)
- 5. Children living in the designated catchment area** (see sections 6.10).
- 6. Children living outside the designated catchment area with a sibling attending The Castle School at the time of application** (see sections 6.4 and 6.10).
- 7. Children not satisfying a higher criterion.**

¹ Orchard Grove is a primary school within The Castle Partnership Trust in The Castle School's catchment area.

Important notes

A Looked After Child 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 (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989), as well as those 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. Relevant evidence will be required to be submitted.

For Children Previously Looked After: this includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted Adoption is defined under the terms of the Adoption and Children Act 2002(see section 46 adoption orders).

2.2 Tie Breaker:

If in categories 1-6 above a tie-break is necessary to determine which child is admitted, the child living closest to the school will be given priority for admission. Distance is measured in a straight line by a Geographical Information System (GIS) method from the geocoded point of the school site to the geocoded point of the pupil's home.

Random allocation by drawing lots supervised by someone independent of the school, will be used as a tie-break in categories 1-6 above to decide who has highest priority for admission if the distance between a child's home and the school is equidistant in any two or more cases.

However, if children of multiple birth (twins and triplets) are tied for the final place, those siblings will be admitted over PAN.

Part 3 – Transferring School to Year 7 for the First Time

Applications must be submitted to the home LA. If this is Somerset applications can be made on-line at [Starting at a secondary or upper school in September \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk). Any supporting information must be received by the closing date for applications.

Applications must be received by 23:59 hours on 31 October 2023, otherwise the application will be recorded as late. Late applications will be considered after those received on time. Please see the Somerset LA co-ordinated scheme for full details.

Outcomes for on time applications will be sent out by email (for on line applicants) or second-class post on 1 March 2024 (or next working day if this falls on a weekend or bank holiday).

Part 4 - Admission to Any Year Group During the 2024/25 Academic Year (In-year Admission)

In-year applications must be submitted directly to the school using the in-year application form which can be obtained on the school website or by request to the school office.

The Governors' Admissions Committee will consider batches of applications on a weekly basis with a 4pm deadline every Wednesday (term time only) for receipt of applications. If more applications are received than there are places available, the over-subscription criteria will be applied.

A decision will be notified in writing to the applicant within ten school days. Parents/carers must accept the offer of a place within ten school days.

Proof of address may be required to be submitted with the application. This will be either the formal 'exchange of contracts' letter from the solicitor for a house purchase or the signing of a minimum of a six-month tenancy agreement. **The Governing body reserve the right to seek further documentary evidence to support a claim of residence.**

Where there are more applications than places available within a particular year group, applications will be considered against the published oversubscription criteria and allocated up to the admission number/ limit.

Places will not be allocated more than six school weeks or half a term in advance of being required. The only exceptions are children of UK service personnel and other crown servants (including diplomats) returning to the UK with a confirmed posting to the area (see Children of UK service personnel).

Part 5 - Appeals Procedure

All applicants refused a place have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel constituted and operated in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code.

Details of how to appeal are included in the outcome email or letter.

Information on the timetable for the appeals process is published on our website by 28 February each year.

Part 6 – Important Information

6.1 Waiting Lists

The governors operate waiting lists for year groups 7 - 11. Where a child is formally refused admission to any year group, parents may request that his/her child's name is placed on the appropriate waiting list. Waiting lists will be maintained for years 8-11

until the end of the academic year and the end of December for Year 7. A further in-year application would need to be made in order for a pupil to remain on the waiting list.

A child's position on the waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. The waiting list will be reordered in accordance with the oversubscription criteria whenever anyone is added to or leaves the waiting list.

6.2 Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may request that their child is admitted to a year group outside their normal age range, for instance where the child is gifted or talented or where a child has suffered from particular social or medical issues impacting his or her schooling.

When such a request is made, the Governing Body will make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child concerned, taking into account the views of the headteacher and any supporting evidence provided by the parent. If a request is refused, the child will still be considered for admission to their normal age group.

The parent is required to make an on-time application for the child's normal age group (if relevant) but can submit a request for admission out of the normal age group at the same time. The LA will ensure the parent is aware of whether the request for admission out of age group has been agreed before National Offer Day and the reason for any refusal.

Requests for admission out of the normal year group will be considered alongside other applications made at the same time. An application from a child who would 'normally' be a Year 8 child for a Year 7 place will be considered alongside applications for Year 7.

If a request for delayed admission is agreed, the school place application may be withdrawn before a place is offered and a new school place application will need to be made as part of the normal admissions round the following year.

If a request for a child to transfer school a year early is agreed, the school place application will be processed and an outcome will be sent on the National Offer Day.

If a request for delayed admission is refused, the school place application will be processed and an outcome will be sent on the National Offer Day.

If a request for a child to transfer school a year early is refused, the school place application will not be processed and a new school place application will need to be made as part of the normal admissions round the following year.

There is no right of appeal against the decision not to allow your child to be admitted outside of their normal age group.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools.

For further information and important points to consider please visit: [Starting school early or late \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/starting-school-early-or-late/)

6.3 Children from Overseas

The Governing Body will treat applications for children coming from overseas in accordance with Home Office rules for Foreign nationals.

This is the most recent government guidance: [School applications for foreign national children and children resident outside England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/school-applications-for-foreign-national-children-and-children-resident-outside-england)

6.4 Siblings

For the purpose of school admission, the governors' definition of a sibling is 'a child living at the same address as a half or full brother or sister, an adoptive brother or sister, a step-brother or sister, or children of the same household at the time of application'. For applications to transfer from primary to secondary school, siblings must be on roll at The Castle School between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. For applications at any other time (in-year admissions) siblings must be attending The Castle School at the time of application.

Please see the information on shared residency arrangements which will apply if necessary in order to determine the sibling's permanent home address.

6.5 Parent

A 'parent' in education law includes natural parents, whether they are married or not and a person other than the natural parent(s) who has parental responsibility or care of a child or young person. Having 'care' of a child or young person means that person who looks after the child and with whom the child lives, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child.

6.6 Home Address

The school will not accept more than one address as the child's home address. The terms of a residency order may clarify the home address.

Where necessary to determine which address to recognise and in the absence of a residency order, the school will consider the home address to be with the parent with whom the child resides for most of the time. In reaching this decision, evidence will be requested to show the address to which any Child Benefit is paid and from which the child is registered with a medical GP at the point of application. Any other evidence provided by parents will also be considered by the school in reaching a decision on the home address for admissions purposes.

This may be necessary for instance where parents do not agree on the child's home address. Parents are urged to reach agreement or seek a Specific Issues Order from a court to decide which parent should or should not pursue an application. Where they do not, the school will determine the home address.

Where we ask for evidence of the address from which a child would attend school, this would usually be the exchange of contracts from a solicitor for a house purchase or a signed copy of a minimum of a six-month formal tenancy agreement from a letting agency. An address change due to a move to live with family or friends will not be considered until the move has taken place and suitable proof of residency has been obtained. Proof that a move from the previous address has taken place may also be required e.g. proof of the house sale, a tenancy agreement showing the end date of the tenancy or a notice to quit from the landlord. **The Governing Body reserves the right to seek further documentary evidence to support a claim of residence. A representative of the Governing Body may carry out a home visit/s without prior notice to verify a pupil's home address.** We recognise that some families may be unable to provide this, for example, where a house move is a very short notice or where a family is escaping domestic violence. If you cannot provide this evidence, please contact us. We do not intend to penalise families where there is a genuine reason why the usual evidence cannot be provided.

Where shared residence arrangements are in place and it is necessary to determine the home address, each parent may be required to write to the Governing Body and inform them of the number of days each week the child spends with them. Where the child spends equal time with both parents the Governing Body may ask for additional information including evidence of which parent/carer is in receipt of child benefit, and/or the name of the GP surgery at which the child is registered at the point of application.

6.7 Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are admitted to school in accordance with a separate process administered by the Local Authority (LA) in whose area the child lives. The governors must always admit a child whose EHC plan names The Castle School.

6.8 Withdrawing an Allocated Place

For in-year admissions the governors will require parents to confirm within 10 school days (of the date of the offer letter) their acceptance of any place offered and to have made arrangements for their child to start attending The Castle School. The governors reserve the right to withdraw the offer of a place if these conditions are not met and to reallocate the place to the highest ranked child/young person on a waiting list, or to a new applicant where no waiting list exists. The governors may also withdraw the offer of a school place if the child/young person's home address is subsequently found to be fraudulent.

6.9 Children of UK Service Personnel

The Admissions Authority endeavour to ensure that their admission arrangements support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for service children. In-year applications are usually considered for admission up to a maximum of half a term in advance of the place being taken up. An exception is made for children of UK service personnel with a confirmed posting to the area and Crown servants returning from overseas to live in the area where a place can be made available up to a year in advance of being required providing the appropriate documentation is provided as proof of posting (an official government letter (e.g. MOD, FCO or GCHQ) declaring a relocation date and intended posting.)

Usually, an in-year place may be allocated prior to actual residency, only on receipt of exchange of contracts or a formal signed rental agreement. An exception is made for children of UK service personnel with a confirmed posting to the area and Crown servants returning from overseas to live in the area. This means that, providing the application is accompanied by an official government letter (e.g. MOD, FCO or GCHQ) declaring a relocation date and intended posting, the admissions authority will process the application on that address. If proof of a home address is not available at this stage the admissions authority will accept a unit postal address or quartering area address. An offer of service family accommodation from the housing department is not sufficient to be accepted as proof of address, the signed tenancy agreement would be required.

If the parent/carer is moving to the area as a result of leaving the armed forces then no special consideration will be given to the application under the grounds of the application being made by a service family.

For further information please refer to the DfE explanatory note on Admission of Children of Crown Servants: [Admission of children of crown servants - explanatory note \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

6.10 Catchment Map

The governors prioritise some school places on the basis of living within a designated catchment area. Details of the catchment boundaries can be found at [School catchment \(somerset.gov.uk\)](https://somerset.gov.uk)

Alternatively, a map can be provided by contacting the school office (see Section 1.2 Contact details). For applications to transfer from primary to secondary school, children must be living in the designated catchment area on the application closing date (31 October 2023). For applications at any other time (in-year admissions) children must be living in the designated catchment area at the time of application.

6.11 Fair Access Protocol

All LAs are legally required to operate a Fair Access Protocol across their area – all schools are required to co-operate with that protocol. This ensures that children who are vulnerable or unable to access an appropriate school place under the standard admission arrangements for the area have an admissions safety net.

We participate in Somerset's Fair Access Protocol.

6.12 Transport

All parents should consider how their child will get to school for the whole of their time on roll. Parents are advised not to rely on lifts, car shares or public service vehicles always being available. Supported transport will be provided by the LA for those Somerset-resident children attending this school if it is either the designated transport area school or the nearest school to the home address. The home address must be further than a walking distance of three miles (for children aged 8 years old and over) from the school. Please note that our admissions direct line measurement policy does not apply to Somerset's school transport decisions.

6.13 Extended Schooling

Further information on extended schooling beyond the normal school day is available from the school office and our website.

6.14 Home-School Agreement

Admission to any school is not conditional on signing a home-school agreement.

However, we will offer this to all parents after children have been admitted as we consider agreements to be a positive way of promoting greater involvement between parents in their child's education.

6.15 Documentary Evidence

Once a place has been offered to a child, evidence of the child's identity may be requested – usually a short birth certificate. This may not be necessary where the child has been on roll at another school in England which can confirm that evidence has been seen at that school. The school may also request evidence that a child's address is genuine or that the person who made an application for admission was legally permitted to do so.

6.16 School Fees and Charges

There is no charge for applying for a place here, for admission or for the provision of education. We will not request donations before or during the admissions process and any donations made to the school following admission are entirely voluntary. No activities such as school visits are compulsory. A policy on charging for activities is available on request from the school office and can be viewed on our website.