Gracewood Academy – Admission Rules 2026/27 (Determined)

Gracewood Academy is a mixed 11-18 specialist comprehensive school. The published admission number (PAN) for the school year commencing 1st September 2026 is 120 pupils.

Parents/carers must make applications for Year 7 places online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions before 31 October 2026.

Over subscription

When applications for admission exceed the number of places available the following criteria will be applied, in the order set out below, to decide which pupils to admit. These criteria will continue to be used to allocate places should any fall vacant after the initial allocation. 90% of allocations (108) will be made using the following criteria (Rule 1 to Rule 5) in the order set out below and the remaining 10% (12) of allocations will be made using criterion (Rule 6).

If there are fewer applications than places available, all applicants will be admitted.

Appeals

Parents/external candidates have a statutory right of appeal to an independent Admission Appeal Panel against the refusal of a place at the Academy. The refusal letter will set out full details of this right, including where the grounds of appeal must be sent and the deadline for doing so.

All appeals will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code 2022 (as revised and republished from time to time).

The Academy will publish an admission appeal timetable for appeals against refusals in the 'normal admission round' here.

If you wish to appeal, please use this link to complete your appeal via Education Appeals online. Please do NOT use ANY other appeal form or send your form to your local authority. It is **highly recommended** that you download the explanatory booklet about appeals which you should read **before** you complete the appeal form (Booklet Link). Please contact clerk@educationappeals.com for further information or they can be contacted via **020 3151 0400 option 1.**

Continuing Interest

After places have been offered, Hertfordshire County Council will maintain a continuing interest (waiting) list for all community and voluntary controlled schools. A child's position on a CI list will be determined by the admission criteria outlined above and a child's place on the list can change as other children join or leave it. The county council will contact parents/carers if a vacancy becomes available and it can be offered to a child. Continuing interest lists will be maintained for every year group until the summer term (date to be confirmed). To remain on the CI (waiting) list after this time, parents must confirm they are still interested in a place by completing an In Year application form.

In year admissions

Parents can make an online in year application via the Hertfordshire County Council website www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions or contact the Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043 for a paper application form. Parents should return the application form direct to the County Council.

For in-year admissions parents will be contacted in writing with the outcome of their application. For unsuccessful applications, the County Council will provide registration details to enable parents to login and appeal online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals.

Children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires the governing bodies of all maintained schools to admit a child with an EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plan that names the school. These children will be admitted within the school's PAN but before any child prioritised under the school's oversubscription criteria.

Applications for children out of year group

Hertfordshire County Council's policy is for children to be educated within their correct chronological year group. This is in line with DfE guidance which states that "in general, children should be educated in their normal age group". If parents/carers believe their child(ren) should be educated in a different year group they should, at the time of application, submit supporting evidence for consideration. The evidence should be from relevant professionals working with the child and family stating why the child must be placed outside their normal age-appropriate cohort.

Summer born children who delayed their application to Reception and have been educated out of year group ever since will be accepted out of year.

Fair Access

Gracewood Academy participates in the county council's Fair Access protocol and will admit children under this protocol before children on the continuing interest list and, if necessary, over PAN.

ADMISSION RULES

Rule 1: Children looked after (CLA) / Previously looked after (PCLA) (See note 1).

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 order[1] or a special guardianship order[2].

Rule 2: Medical or social needs (See note 2).

Children for whom it can be demonstrated that they have a particular medical or social need to go to the school.

Rule 3: Sibling (See note 3).

Children who have a sibling at the school at the time of application, unless the sibling is in the last year of the normal age-range of the school.

Rule 4: Children of Staff (See note 4).

Children of a permanent member of staff who has parental responsibility for them.

Rule 5: Children living nearest to the school (See note 5).

This applies to all other children who live nearest to the school. The school uses home school measurements provided by Hertfordshire County Council, which measures the distance between the child's address point and the school's address point.

Rule 6: Aptitude in Music (See note 6).
The remaining 10% of places (12) will be allocated for children who show an aptitude in Music based on an assessment of aptitude carried out by the school. Priority will be given to those with the highest score in this assessment. In the event of a tie-break being required under this criterion, places will be allocated using criteria 5 (home-school distance using the home-school measurement system used by Hertfordshire County Council as outlined in the County's admission arrangements and application literature).

In the event that applications for places under this criterion are less than 10% of the total (12), any remaining places will be added to the places available under criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (in that order until all the places have been allocated).

ADMISSION NOTES

Note 1: Children looked after (CLA) / Previously looked after (PCLA)
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.

These children will be prioritised under Rule 1.

Highest 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 arrangement order or a special guardianship order.

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 22(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. Applications made for these children, with suitable supporting professional evidence, can be considered under rule 2.

[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 Rule 1 if the child's previously looked after 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.

Note 2: Medical or social needs

Rule 2 applications will only be considered at the time of the initial application, unless there has been a significant and exceptional change of circumstances within the family since the initial application was submitted.

All schools in Hertfordshire have experience in dealing with children with diverse social and medical needs. However, in a few very exceptional cases, there are reasons why a child has to go to one specific school.

Few applications under Rule 2 are agreed.

All applications are considered individually but a successful application should include the following:

a) Specific recent professional evidence that justifies why only one school can meet a child's individual needs, and/or

b) Professional evidence that outlines exceptional family circumstances making clear why only one school can meet he child's needs.

c) If the requested school is not the nearest school to the child's home address clear reasons why the nearest school is not appropriate.

d) For medical cases – a clear explanation of why the child's severity of illness or disability makes attendance at only a specific school essential.

Evidence should make clear why only one school is appropriate. A Rule 2 application will generally not be upheld in cases where more than one school could meet the child's need.

In exceptional cases relating to a disability, where more than one school in the county can meet the child's specific needs, a clear and compelling case can be made for the "nearest" school with the relevant facilities, environment or location. You must clearly explain why attendance at the "nearest" school with these facilities is essential.

Applications under Rule 2 can only be considered when supported by a recent letter from a professional involved with the child or family, for example a doctor, psychologist or police officer. The supporting evidence needs to demonstrate why only one named school can meet the social/medical needs of the child.

Applications for children who were not "looked after" immediately before being adopted or made the subject of a child arrangement order or special guardianship order may be made under this rule.

Governors will make the decisions on all Rule 2 applications.

Note 3: Sibling

A sibling must be on the roll of the named school at the time the younger child starts. A sibling means 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 in the same house from Monday to Friday.

Where a place is obtained and the child admitted to the school and it is subsequently identified that this place was gained fraudulently, there will be no sibling connection available to subsequent children from that family.

This criterion will apply to children who have a sibling at the school at the time of application, unless it is anticipated that the sibling will have left the school before the date of proposed admission of the applicant.

Twins or multiple births: In the event of one sibling being allocated a place at the school because they have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) which names the school, or they have been offered a place under any of the criteria, all other multiple birth siblings of that sibling will then also be offered a place.

Note 4: Children of Staff

Children of a permanent member of staff who has parental responsibility for them. The member of staff **must:**

- have 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 fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage

This criterion will apply to all members of staff (both teaching and non-teaching) on a permanent contract regardless of number of hours worked.

Note 5: Children living nearest to the school

A 'straight line' distance measurement; is used in all home to school distance measurements. 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 to the school. AddressBase Premium data is a nationally recognised method of identifying the location of schools and individual residences.

A child's home address is defined as that at which the child is living from Monday to Friday during term time. In those cases where there is a shared parental responsibility for a child, the child's 'home' is the address at which the child lives for the greater part of the school week, i.e. Monday to Friday. If a child lives at two addresses equally we will use the closest geographical address.

In the event of there being two or more applicants at a flat or multi-occupational dwelling vying for the last available place the tie-breaker of a random lottery (independently verified) will be used. Parents applying under this criterion must provide proof that the home address submitted, whether owned or rented, is the permanent residence of the applicant.
This proof must include the following three documents:

- An original Child Benefit Annual Statement; and
- The most recent Council Tax statement; and
- An original utility bill, not older than three months from the date of application.

These documents should be sent to the Clerk to the Admissions' Committee, Gracewood Academy, Church Road, Potters Bar, EN6 1EZ.

Applicants who are living in rented accommodation must also provide:

- A signed tenancy agreement of at least 12 months showing the start date of your tenancy.

If a family is in the process of moving home applicants must provide:

- A solicitor's letter confirming that contracts have been exchanged and giving the date of completion;
  or
- A signed tenancy agreement of at least 12 months showing the start date of your tenancy.

New addresses will only be considered up to the date when applications under the Hertfordshire County Council Coordinated Scheme close. The school reserves the right, at a later stage, to require evidence that the child is living at the new address.

All documentation will be returned after checking. Without this documentary proof the school will be unable to consider applicants under this criterion. The governing body reserves the right to withdraw a place, or an offer of a place, if incorrect or misleading information is given. In such cases siblings of that child will have no right of admission to the school under criterion 3.

Note 6: Aptitude in Music

All applicants for places under Rule 6 must take a practical assessment of aptitude in Music. The assessment of aptitude may be taken by any child in Year 6 who is due to transfer to secondary school. It will take place in the Autumn Term before the admission year.

A child with an aptitude in Music is one who is identified as being able to benefit from teaching in Music and who demonstrates a particular capability to succeed in Music. The assessment will be for aptitude in Music and the ability to learn, prior learning or experience in Music, or any other aptitude.

Full details of the assessment may be obtained by contacting the Clerk to the Admissions' Committee, Gracewood Academy, Church Road, Potters Bar, EN6 1EZ. Parents wishing to make an application under this criterion must complete the Supplementary Information Form for Aptitude in Music and return it to the school. Those unable to attend on the date set by the school for the assessment due to compelling reasons will be offered one alternative date.

Gracewood Academy – Aptitude in Music Assessment

If you wish for your child to have the opportunity to apply to Gracewood Academy place under the aptitude in music criteria (Rule 6); then they will be required to sit the Aptitude in Music Assessment.

Please note the assessment is designed to discover signs of talent and interest and will not be concerned with ability, prior learning or experience in music, or any other aptitude.

Assessment Part 1

The first part of the assessment will last for approximately 30 minutes and will consist of questions involving five elements: Melody, Dynamics, Tempo, Texture and Rhythm.

- **Melody:** Applicants listen to a short melody and identify it from a choice of four written melodies.
- **Dynamics:** Applicants to identify changes in dynamics within a short extract of music.
- **Tempo:** Applicants to identify changes in tempo within a short extract of music.
- **Texture:** Applicants listen to extracts of music and identify either the number of parts playing or changes in the number of parts.
- **Rhythm:** Applicants listen to two extracts of music and identify whether the rhythm has changed or remains the same.

All answers will be through multiple choice.

Assessment Part 2

There will be a short test in pattern spotting using linguistic patterns.

If you would like your child to apply to Gracewood Academy under Rule 6 please complete the form on the following page and return to the school.

Gracewood Academy

Supplementary Information Form – Aptitude in Music

Student's first name	
Student's surname	
Home address	
Current school	
Parent/carer's first name	
Parent/carer's surname	
Daytime telephone	
Email address	
Signed (parent/carer)	
Please print name in full	

Date	