

## Admissions Criteria for Entry September 2026

### BALLYMENA ACADEMY

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Principal: Mr S W BLACK, M.Sc., PGCE, PQH (NI)

Chairman of the Board of Governors: Dr D JOHNSTON, O.B.E., M.B., M.Sc., M.Med.Sc., F.R.C.G.P.

### Voluntary Grammar School (Non-Denominational)

Age Range of pupils: 11-18 years

Admissions Number: 176

Enrolment Number: 1200

**The school will be open for visits by Parents/Guardians and prospective pupils on:-**

**Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2026 – 7.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.**

**Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2026 – 7.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.**

**To Parents/Guardians naming Ballymena Academy as a preference on their child's Transfer Application. Please ensure that you provide the following information on or with the application :**

#### **Entrance Assessment Results**

Ballymena Academy will use the Total Standardised Age Score (TSAS) awarded to children sitting the Entrance Assessment provided by the Schools' Entrance Assessment Group (SEAG) as specified by the school. Parents should record their child's SEAG Unique Pupil number and Total Standardised Age Score on the Transfer Application and upload the Statement of Outcome received from SEAG with the Transfer Application.

SEAG is very clear that its Entrance Assessment consists of two papers. A pupil who only takes one paper (i.e. Paper 1 or Paper 2 but not both) will not have completed the full Entrance Assessment. Such pupils will, however, have their "single paper" marked and will receive a Statement of Outcome. Outcomes for pupils who sit only one paper will have the designation "e" for estimate immediately after the Outcome, for example, Total Standardised Age Score TSAS 194e. Such pupils will only be considered for admission by Ballymena Academy under Special Provisions.

#### **Special Circumstances**

Parents/Guardians wishing to claim Special Circumstances must complete Form SC, available from Ballymena Academy. The completed Form SC, together with appropriate documentary evidence corroborating the claim for Special Circumstances, must be uploaded with the Transfer Application.

#### **Special Provisions**

Parents/Guardians wishing to claim Special Provisions must complete Form SP available from Ballymena Academy. The completed Form SP, together with appropriate documentary evidence corroborating the claim for Special Provisions, must be uploaded with the Transfer Application. Special Provisions will not be considered in advance of the deadline for submission of Transfer Applications.

Upon receipt of a request in writing by a pupil's parent/guardian, a Primary School must disclose the relevant pupil's record of progress and achievement. The onus is on the parent/guardian to obtain from the Primary School full information on the pupil's academic performance and test results and to provide this to Ballymena Academy. No information will be sought by Ballymena Academy directly from the Primary School.

### **Capital Fee**

There is a capital fee of £140 per annum (set by the Department of Education, which may be subject to VAT), which is payable by all Parents/Guardians of pupils enrolled in the school.

Parents/Guardians are also asked to make a voluntary contribution to the Education Enrichment Fund. This voluntary contribution helps to support the educational and co-curricular provision within the school. The suggested contribution for 2025/2026 was £120.00.

A detailed prospectus and information on school policies and organisation may be obtained from the school, free of charge. Detailed information is also available on the school website.

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### **Respective function of the Board of Governors and Principal in relation to Admissions to the school**

The Board of Governors is the relevant admissions authority for Ballymena Academy. The Board of Governors draws up and approves the Admissions Criteria and delegates to an Admissions Panel - nominated and approved by the Board of Governors, to include the Principal - the responsibility for considering all applications for admission to Year 8.

Any reference to the term 'the Board of Governors' within these Admissions Criteria includes the Admissions Panel, nominated and approved by the Board of Governors, for the purposes of applying the Admissions Criteria set out in this document.

### **ADMISSIONS CRITERIA FOR ENTRY INTO YEAR 8**

In producing these criteria, the Board of Governors of Ballymena Academy has had regard to relevant material on the Transfer Procedure, issued at various times by the Department of Education. These materials have been given active and receptive consideration; the decisions taken reflect the Board of Governors' focus on communicating clearly, complying with legal guidance and providing an efficient and effective service for children and parents.

**When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on, or uploaded with, the Transfer Application. Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's admissions criteria is stated on the Transfer Application or uploaded with it.**

**Parents of all children transferring from Primary to Post-Primary school are eligible to apply for a place in Ballymena Academy.**

**During the admissions procedure when applying the criteria punctual applications will be considered before late applications are considered. The application procedure opens on 27 January 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) and an application submitted by the closing date of 19 February 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) will be treated as a punctual application. An application received after 12 noon (GMT) on 19 February 2026 and up to 4pm on 24 February 2026 will be treated as a late application.**

**Ballymena Academy will use the Entrance Assessment provided by SEAG. If there are more applications than places available, the Total Standardised Age Score awarded following the Entrance Assessment will be used as part of the admission procedure. Precedence will be given to those applications which include a Total Standardised Age Score in respect of the Entrance Assessment provided by SEAG.**

#### **1. Eligibility, Priority, Considering Applications and Verification of Information**

##### **ELIGIBILITY:**

- 1.1 For a child to be considered eligible for admission to Year 8 in Ballymena Academy ("the School") in September 2026, an application in his/her name on a completed Transfer Application, must be submitted according to the requirements of the Transfer Procedure conducted through the Education Authority.

##### **PRIORITY to be given to applications:**

- 1.2 In determining those children to be admitted, the Board of Governors will consider children who are resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission to the School before those children who are not so resident.
- 1.3 Priority shall be given, on equal terms, to two categories of application:
  - Applications for children who have taken the Entrance Assessment (provided by SEAG, as specified by the School) in an approved Assessment Centre, whether or not an application includes a claim for Special Circumstances (Special Circumstances: see Sections 4 and 5 below).
  - Applications for children for whom a valid claim for Special Provisions has been made (Special Provisions: see Sections 4 and 6 below).

Then, if places remain after all applications in these categories have been accepted, all remaining applications shall be considered.

##### **CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS**

- 1.4 If, after consideration of 1.3, there are still places available, all remaining applications shall be considered as follows.
  - If the number of applications remaining does not exceed the number of places available, all shall be accepted.
  - If the number of such applications exceeds the number of places available, the procedure identified in section 2 shall be applied until all places are allocated.

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## VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

- 1.5 Duty to Verify: Parents should be aware that the Board of Governors of the School reserves the right to require such supplementary evidence as it may determine to support or verify the information on or uploaded with any Transfer Application. The obligation rests with parents to provide this evidence for verification purposes on request.
- 1.6 The provision of false or incorrect information, or the failure to provide information within the deadlines set by the School, can result in the withdrawal of a place or the inability to offer a place.

## 2. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION OF PUPILS TO YEAR 8 IN SEPTEMBER 2026

### **Applications for children who have taken the SEAG Entrance Assessment specified by the School** (or for whom a valid Special Provisions claim has been made)

- 2.1 Where the number of applications for children who have taken the SEAG Entrance Assessment specified by the School along with those for whom a valid claim for Special Provisions has been made, exceeds the School's Admissions Number, the School shall apply the Total Standardised Age Score obtained in the Assessment or determined by the process applied to Special Provisions claims, as detailed below at Section 6.
- 2.2 On the basis of the Total Standardised Age Score achieved in the SEAG Entrance Assessment or a Score allocated as a result of a claim for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provisions, applications shall be placed in rank order; higher scores will be accepted before lower scores.
- 2.3 Where the Total Standardised Age Score obtained by two or more children is identical, and insufficient places remain to admit both or all of them, the following sub-criteria shall be applied in the stated order.

Precedence shall be given, in the following order to an application for a child:

- 2.3.1 in order of preference with first preference applications being selected before second preference applications and so on.
- 2.3.2 who has sibling(s)\* currently enrolled in the School, or has sibling(s) already approved for acceptance by the School in the current admissions process.  
(**N.B.** Preference shall be given on the basis of the greatest or greater number of siblings).
- 2.3.3 who is the eldest\*\* or only child of the family to be eligible to apply for admission to the school (details to be supplied on the Transfer Application).
- 2.3.4 who, at the time of application, attends a Primary School which is within the former Ballymena Borough Council area.

\* Where applicable "sibling" is defined as another child of the family (Article 2(2) of the Domestic Proceedings (NI) Order 1980) to include, for example, half-brothers and sisters, together with children who are adopted or fostered.

\*\* Twins and other multiples who are eldest in the family are treated as joint eldest children.

- 2.4 If, after the implementation of each of 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4, there remain more applications with identical Total Standardised Age Scores than there are places available, then the following random selection process as determined by the Board of Governors and overseen by the Admissions Panel shall be applied to determine the remaining applications to be accepted:
  - each application to be considered at this stage is allocated a random number electronically generated within 'Microsoft Excel';
  - the applications are then ranked in order of the random number, with higher numbers having precedence.

### **Applications for children who have not taken the SEAG Entrance Assessment specified by the School** (and for whom a valid Special Provisions claim has not been made)

- 2.5 Should any place(s) remain after all applications which include a Total Standardised Age Score or are made on the basis of a valid claim for Special Provisions have been accepted, then other applications shall be considered for the remaining place(s).

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- 2.6 If the number of such applications does not exceed the number of places available, all the applications shall be accepted up to the School's Admissions Number.
- 2.7 Where the number of such applications exceeds the number of places available, sub-criteria 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 and 2.4 shall be applied in the stated order until all places have been allocated up to the School's Admissions Number.

### 3. Admissions following conclusion of Transfer Procedure

- 3.1 Should a vacancy arise after the Transfer Procedure concludes, between 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 and 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2026, further admission to Year 8 shall be considered if fewer pupils are enrolled in Year 8 than the Admissions Number allows. At that point all applications (including those received after the final date for changes of preference) will be considered, and the published admissions criteria applied (see 2.1 – 2.7 above).

Parents/Guardians who wish to have their child considered for admission in the event of a place becoming available after 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2026 should write to the Principal stating this. An acknowledgement will be issued. If any place(s) subsequently become available and there are more applicants than places available, then a decision will be made upon application of the Admissions Procedure set out at Section 2 to those children seeking admission at the time the place(s) become available.

- 3.2 If the School's Admissions Number has been reached, an application for a child moving into the area can be considered, subject to the Department of Education granting a temporary extension to the admissions number.

### 4. Special Circumstances and Special Provisions: Context & Summary

- 4.1 'Special Circumstances' refers to the claim that medical or other problems, constituting a temporary illness, injury or indisposition experienced by a child at or about the time the SEAG Entrance Assessment was conducted, have detrimentally affected her or his performance
- 4.2 'Special Provisions' refers to applications which claim that children were unable to sit the SEAG Entrance Assessment on the basis that:
- (a) they are transferring from Primary Schools outside Northern Ireland; or
  - (b) they have received more than half of their primary school education outside Northern Ireland; or
  - (c) they have been affected by medical or other serious problems supported by appropriate documentary evidence which have prevented them from sitting one or both papers in the SEAG Entrance Assessment.

### 5. Claiming Special Circumstances

- 5.1 It is the sole responsibility of parents to obtain and present all such material as they consider will enable the School to make a judgement in respect of the Total Standardised Age Score to be used in the application of Section 2. **Parents who wish to apply to the school under Special Circumstances should complete Form SC, obtainable from the school, and upload it, along with appropriate documentary evidence, with the Transfer Application.**

**Parents are reminded that when considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on, or uploaded with, the Transfer Application. Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's admissions criteria – including Special Circumstances claims – is stated on the Transfer Application or uploaded with it.**

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<b>The School requires:</b>	<b>Examples of material which Parents are required to provide:</b>
Information about the Special Circumstance which is claimed to have affected the child's performance.	<b>Details of medical or other problems which occurred just before or during the SEAG Entrance Assessment.</b>
Evidence that the Special Circumstance existed.	<b>Evidence to corroborate the existence of the problem. Parents should note that greater weight will be applied to independent evidence.</b>
If claimed problem is medical: Evidence that the child was examined by a medical practitioner in relation to the illness, that the problem was as described, and that the child's health and well-being were impaired at or about the time of the SEAG Entrance Assessment.	<b>Written statement from a Doctor or appropriate medical practitioner specifying illness or condition, its impact on the child and dates of examination(s). For children who have tested positive for COVID-19, documentary evidence such as a positive PCR test result should be included.</b>
If claimed problem is non-medical: Details of the problem and independent professionally-sourced evidence to corroborate its existence and impact on the child.	<b>Written statement from an appropriately qualified individual who knows and/or works with the child in a formal and professional context and is able to give independent confirmation of the nature of the problem, when it occurred and its impact on the child.</b>
Robust educational evidence to show Total Standardised Age Score does not correspond to the child's ability.	<b>'Robust educational evidence.' e.g. scores obtained in all standardised tests in English and Mathematics, taken by the child since the start of Key Stage 2.</b>

**Please note that these examples are neither compulsory, nor exhaustive. The School will consider all such material presented to it and parents should include appropriate educational evidence.**

- 5.2 Accurate information about the child's attainment is essential. To that end, parents should ensure that information, which they are entitled to receive from the primary school, such as scores obtained in standardised tests and dates on which taken and other relevant assessment outcomes, are obtained and used as supportive evidence for a Special Circumstances claim.
- 5.3 Parents are free to provide any other educational evidence for consideration by the Admissions Panel by attaching it to the Transfer Application and Form SC. The Admissions Panel will consider all evidence provided in exercising its judgement in order to award a score to the applicant. However the onus lies with the parents/guardians to provide such evidence and have it, when necessary, appropriately verified. It should be noted that in all cases independent evidence will carry greater weight.

## 6. Special Provisions

- 6.1 Applications for Special Provisions must be uploaded with the Transfer Application and be made in line with the detailed procedures set out below. This includes the appropriate Form (SP), a copy of which should be uploaded with the Transfer Application and requires parents to submit appropriate, independent, documentary evidence in support of the claim.
- 6.2 Special Provisions claims may be considered for children who have not taken the SEAG Entrance Assessment:
- 6.2.1 who are transferring from primary schools outside Northern Ireland;
  - 6.2.2 who have received more than half of their primary education outside Northern Ireland;
  - 6.2.3 have been negatively affected by serious medical or other problems, supported by appropriate documentary evidence and who may, as a consequence, have been unable to take any, or both of the SEAG Entrance Assessment papers.
- 6.3 It is the parents' sole responsibility to ensure that information is provided for the School to be able to determine if the child is eligible for Special Provisions.
- 6.4 Decisions on admitting a child for whom a Special Provisions claim has been made, require the Admissions Panel to form an educational judgement based on evidence of that child's ability and determine an appropriate Total Standardised Age Score for that child, following which, that child shall then be considered with all other applicants by application of Section 2 above.

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- 6.5 Parents are free to provide any other educational evidence for consideration by the Admissions Panel by uploading it with the Transfer Application and Form SP. The Admissions Panel will consider all evidence provided in exercising its judgement in order to award a score to the applicant. However the onus lies with the parents/guardians to provide such evidence and have it, when necessary, appropriately verified. It should be noted that in all cases independent evidence will carry greater weight.

**Year 8 Applications and Admissions**

Year	Admissions No.	Total Applications All Preferences	Total Admissions
<b>2023/24</b>	176	204	176
<b>2024/25</b>	176	206	176
<b>2025/26*</b>	176	190	176

*\*The Total Admissions for year 2025/2026 include all Year 8 children admitted to the school including those who have a statement of special educational needs and/or may be attending SPiMS.*

*(SPiMS = Specialist Provision in Mainstream School)*

*The data for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 does not include children who were admitted to the school with a statement of special educational needs.*

- N.B.** The Department of Education has determined that the Transfer Criteria will not provide parents with detailed information on the pattern of applications and admissions to this school. Additional information may be obtained on request from the school or on the school website.

### **Admission to Years other than Year 8**

Admissions Criteria for students transferring into Years 9 – 12 and for students applying for Sixth Form places are available from the School Office.