



## **Allocation of Primary School Places for Reception 2026**

### **Equal Preference System - Information for Parents**

In the past, some schools and Local Authorities (LA) operated a 'first preference first' system. Admissions authorities could prioritise those who had listed a school as their first choice on their application form. In practice, this meant that a child who lived some distance from a school but had made it their first choice could be offered a place above a child who lived nearer but had listed it as their second choice.

The Schools Admission Code outlawed the first preference first system. Admission authorities are now legally required to operate an 'equal preference' system. This means that places are offered purely on the strength of how well children fit the admissions criteria (see below).

#### **Admission Criteria**

1. Children who are looked after (in the care of the Local authority).
2. Children with and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
3. Children with social or medical recommendation from a professional (e.g. doctor social worker).
4. In catchment siblings.
5. In catchment on distance.
6. Out of catchment siblings.
7. Out of catchment on distance.

Schools can't favour children who listed the school as their first choice, nor rule out those who placed it lower down their list. Schools are not even told where they were ranked in your list of preferences.

#### **How Do Allocations Work?**

The dates that school applications open are published on the North Yorkshire school admissions website.

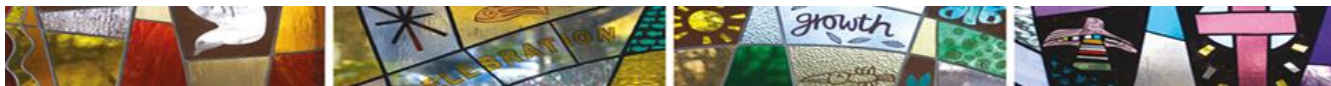
On the application, parents will be asked to list your top choices of school in order of preference. In North Yorkshire parents can list up to five schools.

After the closing date, the LA will put your child's name on the list for all the schools listed. Their position on the list will depend on how well your child fits the school's admission criteria (see above) – for example, they may be higher up a school's list if you live very near to it.

The equal preference system means that at this stage, the order in which you ranked the schools will not be taken into account. Your child will be put on the list for every school you have applied to.

Each school has a Published Admission Number (PAN): the number of places it has to offer. **At St Peter's this is 30 places.** The LA will mark up the names at the top of each school's list, up to its PAN and these children will be offered a place. Those children whose names fall outside the PAN will be placed on a waiting list. If your child's name appears on only one school list, your child will be offered a place at that school, regardless of where it ranked in your preferences.





If your child is on more than one School List, the LA will then take into account the order in which you ranked the schools on your common application form. Your child will be offered a place at the school that you ranked highest. This happens around April 16 for Reception places.

If your child isn't allocated a place at any of your ranked schools, the LA will allocate a place at the nearest school with a space.

If you have been offered a school that wasn't your first choice, your child will remain on the waiting list for any other schools that you ranked higher than the one they have been offered. If a vacancy then comes up because another child decides not to accept a place, the LA will allocate the place to the next child on the waiting list. You can find out where your child is on the waiting list by contacting the admissions authority.

Some parents think that if they have a very clear first choice of school, they should leave all their other options blank to show the admissions authority how strongly they feel. However, it's important to list at least three choices, and ideally use all five options. If you have only listed one, your child could be placed at any other school in the area that has space, regardless of your opinion of it. It's important that your form includes at least one school, and preferably more, that you would consider as a reasonable alternative to your first choice. Similarly, please don't be tempted to list the same school in every space on your application form. The application will only be counted once.

If your child doesn't get their first choice of school, they will automatically be placed on the waiting list for all the schools that you listed above the one they were allocated. It is advisable to accept the place you've been offered even if you intend to appeal, so you know your child has a school to attend in September.

We hope this guide is helpful. If you would like any further clarification or have further questions, please do get in touch with us by emailing [admin@stpeters.ycst.co.uk](mailto:admin@stpeters.ycst.co.uk) or calling 01423 569684.

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