THE HIGHCREST ACADEMY
ADMISSIONS POLICY & ARRANGEMENTS
FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2027 to 2028

The Highcrest Academy seeks a balanced and all-ability intake which is representative of the full range of ability of those applying to the academy each year.

Buckinghamshire County Council (the Local Authority) is responsible for co- ordinating Year 7 transfer admissions to The Highcrest Academy, using The Highcrest Academy Admissions Policy. Please see the Local Authority website https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk for dates.

The procedure adopted by the Local Authority to allocate Year 7 places is fully set out in their publication [Admissions to Buckinghamshire Secondary Schools: Guide for parents, which can be viewed online at the above web address.] In summary all those naming Highcrest as one of their preferences on the Local Authority Common Application Form (CAF) will be considered for places. If the number of applicants who name Highcrest as a higher preference than any other school that can make an offer is less than the number of places available all will receive an offer.

If, however, Highcrest is over-subscribed places will be allocated using the banded admission system and other over-subscription criteria set out below. It is expected that the school will be over-subscribed so all applicants are advised to take careful note of these arrangements.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THOSE JOINING YEAR 7 IN SEPTEMBER 2027 to 2028

GENERAL
We plan to admit 180 students to Year 7 each year.

To be considered for a place, you must complete the Buckinghamshire County Council Common Application Form (CAF) or the CAF for the local authority where you live. In addition, you will need to complete the Academy Banding Test Booking Form to help us run the banding process. You must apply before the closing date specified. Applicants will be prompted when completing the application for secondary transfer of the need to complete the banding test for The Highcrest Academy. Late applications or applications not made in accordance with the applications procedure will be considered in accordance with the Local Authority scheme.

You are strongly encouraged to visit The Highcrest Academy on an Open Day before making an application, subject to current Covid Guidance This visit does not form part of the admissions process and nothing that you say or do at that visit will influence the decision whether or not to offer a place. We would, however, like you to have enough knowledge of The Highcrest Academy to feel confident that it is an appropriate choice for your child.

THE PROCEDURE

Banding

A fuller explanation of how the test will be organised and how the banding system works is set out later in this document; but, in summary, banding will be used as follows.

We want a balanced intake which is representative of the full range of ability amongst those applying each year for places. In order to do this, all applicants will be asked to sit a Non-Verbal Reasoning test which will be used only as a performance indicator so that everyone can be allocated to one of four ability bands. We emphasise that this is not a "pass/fail" test because the process is designed to give all children of similar ability an equal chance of securing a place. For this reason, children need not be concerned about how well they do. Similarly, there is no advantage to be gained by coaching, as registering a score which exaggerates a child's natural ability will not necessarily increase their chance of success in gaining a place.

The four bands are solely a means to achieve an all-ability intake. Once in school, children will not be grouped by band and their opportunities will not be restricted in any way by the outcome of the admissions process.

Our non-verbal reasoning (NVR) test has been selected to be as fair and accessible as possible. There will be no cost to parents. All reasonable support will be offered to those with special needs. The NVR test has been selected to be non-discriminatory regarding language, ethnicity or prior educational standards.

Results of the test will be sent to parents as soon as possible and before the final date for submission of school preferences, although it should be stressed again that the results on their own will not give any indication of the likelihood of success.

Occasionally it may be impossible for some children to sit the test due to their specific needs outlined in an EHCP. In such circumstances the governors reserve the right to make an appropriate band allocation on the basis of alternative evidence. For example, this could be derived from the Buckinghamshire 11+ test or SAT scores where these are available.

After the closing date, if the number of valid applications exceeds the number of places available, all applicants will be evenly distributed across the following bands:

Band A the 25% of applicants with the highest scores.
Band B the 25% of applicants who fall above the median but below the 25% with the highest scores
Band C the 25% of applicants who fall below the median but above the 25% with the lowest scores
Band D the 25% of applicants with the lowest scores.

Allocation of Places
The 180 Places are distributed equally between the bands: 45 each.

Any children with an **EHCP** which names Highcrest will automatically be allocated a place. Any such children will be placed in the appropriate band. Thereafter the following criteria will be used within each band to decide the order in which offers will be made.

Oversubscription Criteria

1. A 'looked after child', an "internationally adopted previously looked after children" (IAPLAC), or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order. 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). An internationally adopted previously looked after child (IAPLAC) is a child who appears (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England (in the care of or accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society) and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. (See Admissions priority for children adopted from state care outside of England Guidance for admission authorities and local authorities July 2021.)

2. Children with a sibling attending the school in years 7 to 13 and expected to be on roll at the time of admission. Sibling is defined in these arrangements as children who live as brother or sister at the same address, including natural brothers or sisters, adopted siblings, stepbrothers or sisters and foster brothers and sisters. (See note A)

3. Other children by distance from the school, with priority for admission given to children who live nearest to the school using the distance measurement method operated by the LA. Distances are measured from the main entrance of the child's normal home address (See note B) to the main entrance of the school as specified in the school information pack.

Tie Break

If a band becomes oversubscribed within criteria one or two, the tie break is the distance from the child's normal home address (as set out in criterion 3).

If, within criterion 3, measured distances are equal (for example where it is necessary to differentiate between children living in flats using the same entrance) priority will be given to the children by a process of random allocation supervised by an independent person.

Notes

(A) Multiple Births - *The Academy will not separate multiple birth siblings. If multiple birth siblings apply and only one place is available, we will admit all siblings even if they are in different bands.*

(B) Normal home address *– For admission purposes this must be a residential property that is your child's only or main residence. It cannot be an address at which your child may sometimes stay or sleep due to your domestic arrangements. The property must be owned, leased or rented by the child's*

parents or person with a parental responsibility. A child's normal home address is where he or she spends most of the week, unless it is accommodation at a boarding school. To avoid doubt, where a child lives with parents/guardians (with or without parental responsibility) whether for part of a week, or month, the address where the child lives will be determined by confirmation of the registered address to which Child Benefit is currently being paid.

APPEALS

Parents have the right to appeal to an Independent Appeals Panel. They must notify The Highcrest Academy within 20 days of the notification of refusal of a place and details of how to appeal will be given at the time of refusal.

WITHDRAWAL OF PLACES

The Admissions Committee reserves the right to make its own enquiries to verify any information supplied in support of an application. If subsequently we find that a place was offered on the basis of information that was materially incorrect or misleading (e.g. normal home address) and the place would not have been offered if the information had been correct, The Academy may withdraw the offer. If that happens, you have a right of appeal to the Independent Appeal Panel.

ADMISSION OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN WHO ARE HARD TO PLACE OUTSIDE THE NORMAL ROUND OF ADMISSIONS

The Academy is committed to taking its fair share of vulnerable children who are hard to place, in accordance with locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal round of admissions, the governing body is empowered to give consideration to a child where admission is requested under any local protocol which carries the agreement of the governing body for the current admission year. The governing body has this power even where admitting such a child exceeds the normal admission number.

WAITING LIST

The Highcrest Academy will maintain a waiting list in the first instance for the duration of Year 7. Unsuccessful applicants who register their continuing interest will be placed on this list. Where places become available, they will be filled from the list according to above oversubscription criteria – i.e. the place will be offered to the next qualified applicant within the band where the vacancy has arisen. If there is no one on the list within the appropriate band, the place will be offered to the applicant who lives closest to the school in the nearest band (see below). This list will be closed at the end of the academic year.

IN-YEAR ADMISSIONS

Parents should make applications for In-Year admissions directly to the Highcrest. If a place is available and there is no waiting list, then The Highcrest Academy will communicate the governors' offer of a place to the family. Where the academy is full, applicants will be offered the opportunity to join the appropriate waiting list. The LA will be informed of any student admitted and updated on request of those who remain on a waiting list.

Those applying for In-Year Admission to Year 7 will be added to the September waiting list. To maintain the all-ability balance, it will be necessary for them to be allocated to the appropriate band. This will be done according to the admission arrangements using the best available evidence. The rank order of the band waiting list will be determined by the over-subscription criteria set out above.
Where applications are received for In-Year Admission in respect of looked after children (as defined in criterion1 above), they will normally take priority irrespective of band allocation.

Allocation of places to those applying for In-Year Admission to Year 8 and above will be managed via a single waiting list (without banding) prioritised according to the remaining oversubscription criteria above.
Where students successfully apply for In Year Admission and they are already on roll at a local school, the admission date will be set for the start of the next term.

THE BANDING TEST:

Application Procedure & Operational Explanation

The Highcrest Academy banding test is a non-verbal reasoning test chosen to be non-discriminatory as described above. The test is for banding purposes only and it should be emphasised to students that there is no pass or fail. Students should however be encouraged to do their best to give a true indication of their ability.

The test is marked and verified. The results of the test are "standardised", which means that they are benchmarked against national data to ensure consistency and also to take the actual age of the child into account when calculating the score, so that the results are a fair reflection of each child's true ability.

The test process is 45 minutes long. Children should bring a pencil and eraser with them. Conditions for the test will be formal to give every child suitable conditions, however, staff will make every effort to reduce stress by reassuring children there is no pass or fail.

Three Saturday morning test sessions will be offered and three after-school sessions which will be held at The Highcrest Academy site. Two Saturday tests will be held in the late summer term 2024 and the remainder will be held in September, October and November. The dates and times of these sessions will appear on the Academy website six weeks before the first test. Notification will be sent to local primary schools and follow-up emails, as well as a prominent poster alerting the public to the website publication.

Additionally, dates will be appear in our weekly parent bulletin to remind parents who already have children at the academy. Banding Tests will only be available on the published dates for children to qualify for consideration in the allocation process. Further testing will not be made available after the last published date in November.

Parents may apply for their child to sit a banding test during the next years set of scheduled dates. However, banding tests taken at this late stage will only qualify for the child to join the waiting list.

A completed Academy Banding Test Booking Form (ABTBF – see below) will be required from parents wishing their child to sit the test in order to gain a place at The Highcrest Academy. This form requests only basic contact details, confirmation that parents understand the test and wish their child to sit the

test and the nomination of a preferred test session. The ABTBF will also ask if a child requires any special arrangements or support. The Highcrest Academy Banding Test Booking Forms are available to be downloaded from the academy We are only able to accept electronic versions of the banding test booking form.

The Highcrest Academy will email each parent confirming the date of the test session allocated to their child.

Results of the test will be emailed to parents as soon as possible and before the final date for submission of school preferences, although it should be stressed again that the results on their own will not give any indication of the likelihood of eventual admission.

All enquiries must be made to the banding test co-ordinator. There is a dedicated email address bandingtests@highcrestacademy.org.uk which will be monitored daily whilst the banding test are live. Enquiries made by telephone will be directed to the website or transferred to the banding test co-ordinator. A record will be kept for all telephone enquiries received.

The oversubscription criteria (including the banding process) will then be applied and offers will be made on the national offer day as part of the Buckinghamshire co-ordinated process. See Bucks County Council website:
https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-libraries-and-parks/school-admissions-and-appeals/guides-and-policies/guide-to-moving-up-to-secondary-school/

The Banding Procedure

As set out above, each child is placed in one of four bands giving a distribution as close as possible to 25% in each band. It is acknowledged that, as some children may have the same score, an exact 25% per band distribution may not be possible.

In the unlikely event that any band is undersubscribed at initial allocation or later in the academic year, additional places will be filled by the highest placed child according to the criteria, from adjacent bands as follows:

For Band A take from Band B.
For Band B take from Band A and then Band C (alternating if more than one place is available).
For Band C take from Band B and then Band D (alternating if more than one place is available).
For Band D take from Band C.

Alternative Evidence

As indicated above we hope that all applicants will be able to sit the same test, as this is the most reliable way of creating the bands. However, where a child has an EHCP and there are genuine reasons why this is not possible, applicants can still be allocated to an appropriate band on the basis of alternative evidence.

This will be at the discretion of the academy but typical examples would be SAT results, other recognised ability test results (including the Bucks 11+), school evidence supported by a Headteacher or Principal. Decisions regarding alternative evidence will be made by a panel of three senior staff.

The Non-Verbal Reasoning Test and Testing Procedure

The test is a GL Learning Non-Verbal Reasoning test. These tests rely on children solving problems using shapes and patterns. Literacy requirements are minimal and this will minimise disadvantage to those whose first language is not English or who may have dyslexia. Further details can be found on the GL Learning website (http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk).

The test will be carried out under formal conditions and parents/guardians should prepare children for this. Children should bring a pencil and eraser with them.

A responsible adult must accompany the child to the test and remain on site.

Directions to the reception area will be given from the main Car park area.

ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS
FOR THOSE JOINING THE SIXTH FORM IN SEPTEMBER 2027

The Highcrest Academy offers post-16 opportunities for young people who can benefit from study at this level. The majority of those in the Sixth Form will transfer from the main the school and will not need to reapply through a formal process. An application for the appropriate course(s) will be required. We also expect to be able to accommodate some external applicants.

GENERAL
We plan to admit five additional students to Year 12 each year. The exact number will, however, depend partly on the availability of places on particular courses of study.

ACADEMIC CRITERIA

All entrants to the Sixth Form, both internal and external, will be required to have obtained the relevant academic entry requirements as follows:
1. To have passed at least five full subjects at grades 9-5 including English and Maths in their GCSE examinations (or equivalent) for Level 3 courses.
2. To have passed at least five full subjects at grades 9-5 (or equivalent) for Level 2 courses.
3. For certain courses prior study of particular subjects and specific grades may be required. Details will be set out in the Sixth Form prospectus each year.

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

For obvious reasons there will be no banding arrangements for Sixth Form entry. Otherwise, if there are more qualified applicants for Sixth Form places (on a course by course basis) the Year 7 numbered oversubscription criteria will be applied.

PROCEDURE
Those who are interested in joining The Highcrest Academy Sixth Form are encouraged to attend a 'course choice' discussion. This is intended to help applicants identify appropriate courses of study. It is not a competitive interview and will not influence decisions about offers that can be made. Subsequent to their application, The academy will write to arrange the interview.

External applicants should apply in writing, to The Head of Sixth Form. Applications will be accepted from the date of the Sixth Form 'Open Day' for that year. The closing date for applications will be 31 January 2027 (any late applications considered after publication of exam results). A request for academic data will be sent to the applicant's current Headteacher, so that staff in their own school will have the opportunity to comment on the applicant's predicted GCSE performance and AS/A Level potential in their subjects.

Provisional offers will be made by the end of the Spring Term but places will not be confirmed until appropriate examination results are available

If there are more applications than places, applicants may elect to join a Waiting List. Students will be placed on the Waiting List in order according to the oversubscription criteria. The Waiting List will be held from the allocation of places date until the end of October in Year 12. Applicants must inform the school on GCSE results day that they wish to remain on the waiting list.

Please note that the Academy cannot guarantee all subject offers. Group numbers must be viable.