

AQUINAS DIOCESAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Principal: Dr Marie Dowling BSc, PGCE, MEd, PhD, PQH(NI)

Chair of Board of Governors: Mr Peter Coll

Voluntary Grammar School

Co-Educational

Age Range: 11-18

Admission No: 130

Enrolment No: 910

Open Day will take place on Saturday 10th January 2026 from 9.00am-12.30pm

To Parents/Guardians naming Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School as a preference on their child's On-Line Transfer Application.

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School will give preference to, (apart from those who qualify for either the Special Circumstances or Special Provision procedures), those applicants awarded a **band and SAS score** by SEAG in completing the SEAG Entrance Assessments on **Saturday 15th November 2025 and Saturday 22nd November 2025**. Parents/guardians must upload the **SEAG Band and SAS score result form** to the On-line Application.

RESPECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND PRINCIPAL IN RELATION TO ADMISSIONS TO THE SCHOOL

The Board of Governors draws up the admissions criteria and delegates to an Admissions Sub-Committee, which includes the Principal, the responsibility for applying these criteria. Any reference herein to the term the Board of Governors includes any Committee or Sub-Committee appointed by the Board of Governors for the purposes of applying the Admission criteria set out herein.

CAPITAL FEE

From September 1993 parents of all pupils admitted to Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School (except in the case of pupils who are not resident in Northern Ireland and who are non E.C. nationals) have not been required to pay Tuition Fees. A Voluntary Contribution (currently £130 per pupil for the eldest family member, then £100 for any additional child) is requested.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA FOR ENTRY OF PUPILS TO YEAR 8 IN SEPTEMBER 2026

During the admissions procedure when applying the criteria punctual applications will be considered before late applications are considered. The application procedure opens on 27th January 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) and an application submitted by the closing date of 19th February 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) will be treated as a punctual application. An application received after 12 noon (GMT) on 19th February 2026 and up to 4:00pm on 24th February 2026 will be treated as a late application.

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School will initially consider only those applicants who have taken the SEAG Entrance Assessments and who have been awarded a band/SAS or assigned a band/SAS pursuant to the application of the Special Circumstance or Special Provision procedures and will admit pupils based on band/SAS achieved in the assessments or otherwise awarded.

The Board of Governors will not use as a criterion the position of preference given to Aquinas on the On-Line Application i.e. an applicant who has chosen Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School in any position on the On-Line Application will be considered equally with those who have put Aquinas first.

Note: It is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian of a prospective pupil to ensure that there is uploaded via the On-Line Application, all the information required to enable the Board of Governors to apply the Admissions Criteria of Aquinas to the application of the prospective pupil. Only evidence uploaded via the On-Line Application shall be considered by the Board of Governors in the allocation of a place to the applicant.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SPECIAL PROVISION PROCEDURES

Two documents are available on the school website for the parents/guardians of children who have taken the SEAG Entrance Assessment 2025:

- **Claiming Special Circumstances-A guide for Parents & Guardians**
- **Claim for Special Circumstances (Form SC)**

Special Circumstances usually refers to the claim that as a result of medical or other problems an applicant's performance in the SEAG Assessments was affected. Any claim for Special Circumstances must be submitted on a Special Circumstances Claim Form [SC].

Independent, verifiable documentary evidence which corroborates the Special Circumstances claim [SC form] must be uploaded to your On-line Transfer Application no later than **4pm on Tuesday 24th February 2026**.

Note on COVID-19

Special Circumstances will not be applied solely due to lost teaching and learning time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific COVID-19 impacts which are unique to the applicant may still be applicable to Special Circumstances.

NB: The existence of special circumstances **DOES NOT** in itself lead to automatic admission to Aquinas. Each case is considered on its own merits by the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors will consider applicants claiming that Special Circumstances or Special Provision exist. These will be considered first. Consideration of a claim for Special Circumstances consists of three stages. Stage 1 requires consideration of whether there is, in the judgement of the Admissions Committee, sufficient contemporaneous medical, professional or other evidence to warrant acceptance that the case is valid for consideration under Special Circumstances. If an applicant is permitted to be considered as having Special Circumstances, Stage 2 requires an educational judgement to be made by the Admissions Committee on the verifiable educational evidence provided to assess if the Total Standardised Age Score/Band achieved by the child in the SEAG Entrance Assessment does not correspond to the academic ability of the child. If Stages 1 and 2 are met, at Stage 3 the Admissions Committee will award a mark up to the top of the confidence band in the Special Circumstances Protocol (available from the school on request), taking into account the nature of the Special Circumstances claimed by each individual. Such applicants will then be considered with all applicants who have been awarded a SEAG Entrance Assessment band/SAS and the admissions criteria applied. If a claim for Special Circumstances is made in respect of matters for which Access Arrangements were provided to an applicant sitting the SEAG Entrance Assessment on 15th and/or 22nd November 2025, the Admissions Committee may take into account the fact that the applicant was provided with such Access Arrangements.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians/carers to ensure that such claims and all verifying information are included and form SC, must be uploaded via the On-line Application.

DETAILS OF MEDICAL OR OTHER PROBLEMS:

Where it is claimed that an applicant's performance in the SEAG Entrance Assessments has been affected by a medical or other problem, independent evidence of its existence **must** be provided via the On-line Application. Where the problem is a medical one of short-term duration which affected the applicant only at the time of the SEAG Entrance Assessments Aquinas will require the production of evidence that the applicant was examined by a medical practitioner in relation to the illness at the time of the SEAG Entrance Assessments. This evidence should be provided on headed notepaper of the medical practitioner and signed and dated by him/her.

Where the problem is of a non-medical nature the parents/guardians **must** upload via the On-line Application precise details of the problem and append any appropriate independent evidence to corroborate its existence. **Please refer to document: 'Claiming Special Circumstances – A Guide for Parents & Guardian's, SEAG 2025 Entrance Assessment'**. The guidance documentation is available from the school or to download from the school website.

EDUCATIONAL EVIDENCE:

Sufficient objective documentary evidence must be provided by the parents/guardians applying for Special Circumstances and be uploaded with the online Application and verified by the primary school to enable the Board of Governors to reach a decision.

The following information **must** be provided on form SC:

- Records of the results of KS2 CAT4 (verbal and quantitative) and/or PTE/PTM results. These must be verifiable and should be signed off by the Primary School Principal. The verified results must be recorded in section B of form SC and attached to the online transfer form.
- All test results should be recorded in section B of form SC, detailing the name of the standardised test supplier, the date of the test and be verified by the primary school (signature of Principal, Date signed, Name of Principal and Name of primary school).
- Any other relevant educational material from the Primary School.

The Board of Governors will, when considering the weight to be given to submitted evidence, consider standardised test results as ranking in priority to other submitted evidence.

The Board of Governors may decide in relation to an applicant in this category of special circumstances, that the band which the applicant in fact achieved in the SEAG Assessments is the band which the applicant would have achieved if they had sat the SEAG Assessments under normal circumstances. Once a decision has been made the applicant will be considered alongside applicants within that category.

It is emphasised that **the onus is on the parents/guardians** to ensure that the above information is provided by the primary school. Failure to provide such information may result in Aquinas being unable to consider the application for Special Circumstances. **Parents/guardians have a statutory right to request and obtain information on their child.** Further information on the rights to access pupil records is available from the Information Commissioner's Office or from the following website: <http://www.ico.org.uk>

Applicants considered under Special Circumstances will be considered on the evidence made available to the school and awarded a band/SAS using the school's Protocol which is available upon request.

NOTE ON SPECIAL PROVISION

Two documents are available on the school website for the parents/guardians who wish to claim Special Provision:

- **Claiming Special Provisions – A Guide for Parents/Guardians**
- **Application for Special Provisions (Form SP)**

Applications which fall into this category shall be considered before the consideration of the applications of those who sat the SEAG Entrance Assessments under normal circumstances.

Special provision may be made by the Board of Governors for applicants:

- a) who are transferring from primary schools outside Northern Ireland.
- b) who have received more than half of their primary education outside Northern Ireland.
- c) whose educational provision to date has been negatively affected by serious medical or other problems which is supported by independent verifiable documentary evidence and who have not taken the SEAG Assessments.
- d) who were entered for the SEAG Assessments, but the applicant was unable to sit either of the SEAG Assessments OR have an estimated outcome because they only sat one of the two Entrance Assessment Papers.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to provide precise reasons why the applicant did not take part in the SEAG Entrance Assessments and to ensure appropriate documentary evidence is uploaded with the Transfer Application.

Applicants in categories (a) & (b) above who wish to apply under Special Provision do not need to take the SEAG Entrance Assessments unless their parents/guardians so wish, in which case the SEAG Entrance Assessment band obtained would also be considered.

The Board of Governors will require a suitably qualified person or body approved by Aquinas to make an assessment of the applicant's ability. This will be known as the Special Provision Assessment.

The Board of Governors, within the operation of its admissions criteria, will decide whether these children should be admitted on the basis that they fall within the ability range of other pupils being admitted in that year.

Parents/Guardians of pupils presently enrolled in P7 wishing to claim Special Provision should complete Form SP available from Aquinas website, stating the case for eligibility under this category, and upload it as part of the pupil's On-line Transfer Application. This documentation must be uploaded to your On-line Transfer Application no later than 4pm on Tuesday 24th February 2026. Parents/Guardians of children who wish them to transfer from schools outside Northern Ireland, must complete the online Transfer Application process, in advance of the Transfer Office deadline of Tuesday 24th February 2026 no later than 4pm, beyond which any new/additional preferences received by the Transfer Office will not be processed until after the Admissions Procedure closes on Saturday 9th May 2026. Please refer to document: 'Claiming Special Provision – A Guide for Parents & Guardians, SEAG 2025 Entrance Assessment'. The guidance documentation is available from the school or to download from the school website.

The Board of Governors will consider each application for Special Provision. Where this is granted, the Board of Governors will:

- contact parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s) of the applicant;
- arrange a date and time for the applicant to sit the above assessment in Aquinas. As with the SEAG Assessments the Special Provision Assessment will also be marked by GL.
- The result of the test will be converted into a band / SAS and parents informed.

Where Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School is not your first preference school and you have sat the same / acceptable Special Provision Assessment in another school, Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School will use the results of that Special Provision Assessment in the Special Provision Procedure.

Such applications will **then** be considered with all other applicants who have received a SEAG Entrance Assessments band and the admissions criteria applied.

Verification

To assist with verification, Parents/Guardians are asked to use the Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School form V1 [www.aquinasgrammar.com] to assist in the verification of information used in our admissions criteria.

ALLOCATION OF PLACES

Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School will give preference to those pupils for whom a band/SAS relating to the SEAG Entrance Assessment method has been awarded by SEAG or assigned by the Board of Governors pursuant to the special circumstances/special provisions procedures. Information on the SEAG Entrance Assessment is available from Aquinas, or available to download from the Aquinas website at www.aquinasgrammar.com

Preference will be given to applicants resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission before any applicant who is not resident in Northern Ireland.

In order to determine which pupils will be accepted into Year 8 the following criteria will be applied in the order set down:

- (1)
 - (i) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 1 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 1 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.
 - (ii) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 2 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 2 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.
 - (iii) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 3 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 3 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.
 - (iv) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 4 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 4 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.
 - (v) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 5 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 5 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.
 - (vi) Priority will be given to those applicants who have been awarded a band 6 under the SEAG Assessment or who have been assigned a band 6 after consideration of Special Circumstances or Special Provision application. The school will award places on the basis of this band.

(2) In the event of there being more applicants in any band than places available within each such band, priority will be given in descending order to those who indicate on the On-Line Transfer Application that they:

- a have a sibling in the school. Siblings are children who, at the date of their application, have a child of the family currently enrolled in Aquinas. (Please name the sibling and class).
- b are applicants who are the eldest child of the family to be eligible to apply for admission to the school.

Eldest child of the family to be eligible to apply for admission to the school is defined to mean the eldest or only child of the family, with each twin or each multiple being regarded as an eldest child. The applicant will also be deemed as the eldest child of the family to be eligible to apply for admission to the school in circumstances where there is an elder child of the family but where that elder child has (at the date of application) completed their post primary education or cannot attend a mainstream school (e.g. attends a special school).

The verifying form V1 must be attached to the Transfer Application and state that the child is the eldest (as defined herein at 2 (b)) and that the child and family are known to the verifier.

It must be signed and where possible stamped or address provided by one of the following who is not a member of the applicant's family:

- i. a medical practitioner
- ii. a solicitor
- iii. a clergyman or equivalent
- iv. a primary school principal

- c Priority will be given to applicants if they are enrolled pupils in the following feeder primary schools in no specific order: St. Anne's PS BT10 ONE; St Bernard's PS, BT6 OJS; St Bride's PS, BT9 6FP; Holy Rosary PS, BT7 3DB; St Ita's PS, BT8 6YY; St Joseph's PS, BT8 8EX; St Malachy's PS, BT7 2BJ; St Matthew's PS, BT5 4EW; St Michael's PS, BT6 OBW.
- d Applicants who are a Child Looked After. A Child Looked After is defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995 as children 'who are in the care of a Trust or who are provided with accommodation by a trust.' (Accommodation may be a residential home, residential school, foster placement or in a family placement with a relative or occasionally at home.)
- e Applicants will be selected if they are entitled to Free School Meals. "entitled to Free School Meals" will mean applicants who are listed on the Education Authority register as entitled to Free School Meals at the date of which their parent or guardian has submitted their post-primary Transfer Application, or any date up to 4pm on the 24th February 2026.

Should family circumstances change after completion of the On-Line Transfer Application it is essential that parents/ guardians inform the Education Authority before 4pm on Tuesday 24th February 2026.

If it becomes necessary to make a final selection, in order to remain within the admissions number, applicants in this pool will be;

- f Ranked by their Score – Total SAS and places awarded until none are left.
- g If there are still ties for the final places after the above, then those tied for the final place(s) will be ranked for acceptance on the basis of a computer-based process which will make use of the names of applicants as shown on their On-line Transfer Application.

The process is carried out by means of a computer program which, for each applicant, generates a ranking number using the details from the full name as entered on the On-line Transfer Application as the seed for a random number generator. The outcome, for any given applicant, is dependent only on the applicant's name (as entered on the On-Line Transfer Application), and is not affected by the details of any other applicant. Although the process is repeatable, and the results may therefore be subsequently verified, it is not possible to predict, in advance of running the program, what the result will be for any given set of details. Applicants with the lowest ranking numbers will be given places up to the number of places available.

[Each letter of the alphabet will be given a random value. Some will be positive and the others negative numbers.] This will be overseen by the Admissions Sub Committee of the Board of Governors.

When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on On-Line Transfer Application. Parents should ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's admissions criteria is uploaded as part of the Transfer Application

WAITING LIST POLICY

Should a vacancy arise after 9th May 2026 all applications for admission to Year 8 that were initially refused, new applications and applications where new information has been provided will be treated equally and the published criteria above will be applied. This waiting list will be in place until 30th June 2027. The school will contact you in writing if your child gains a place in the school by this method.

Your child's name will be automatically added to the list. Please contact the school if you wish for your child's name to be removed from the list.

APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Year	Admissions Number	Total Applications i.e. All Preferences	Total Admissions*
2023/24	148	239	156
2024/25	130	258	144
2025/26	130	237	141

*Includes pupils placed in Aquinas through Education Authority Special Needs or Appeal or Exceptional Circumstances Body.

Criteria for admission to Year 9 and onwards

Available on request from the school.