

Admissions Policy 2023/2024

St Mary's Roman Catholic School is a voluntary aided school in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the trusteeship of the Diocese. The school is conducted by its Governing Body as part of the Catholic Church in accordance with its Trust Deed and Instrument of Government, and seeks at all times to be a witness to Jesus Christ.

As a Catholic School, we aim to provide a Catholic education for all our pupils. At a Catholic school, Catholic doctrine and practice permeates every aspect of the school's activity. It is essential that the Catholic character of the school's education is fully supported by all families in the school.

The Governors welcome all applicants but as a Catholic school we exist primarily to serve the Catholic community and priority is given to baptised Catholic children who have one or both parents who are committed practising members of the Catholic Church. If insufficient applications are received in respect of baptised Catholic children, the Governing Body will admit practising Christians from other denominations and then, subject to the availability of places, from those of other faiths who support the religious ethos of the school.

The Governing Body has responsibility for admissions to the school and, having consulted with the local authority and other admissions authorities, intends to admit 45 pupils, without reference to ability or aptitude, to the Reception class. Children will be admitted in the September following their fourth birthday.

The Governors admit up to a maximum of 26 full time children or part time equivalent into the nursery. There is a separate Admissions Policy and Procedure for the Nursery. ***NOTE: A place in the Nursery does not guarantee that a place will be offered in a Reception Class in the main school.***

Where the number of applications for admissions exceeds 45, the Governing Body will apply the following admissions criteria, in the order of priority set out below, to decide which children to admit.

See page 3 for notes clarifying the admissions criteria.

1. Baptised Catholic 'looked after' children or 'looked after' children in the care of Catholic families and previously 'looked after' Catholic children who have been adopted or have become subject of a residence or guardianship order, at the time of the application to the school.
2. Baptised Catholic children of parents who are committed practising members of the Catholic faith and who live within the parish boundaries of St Mary's Church, Clapham, St Vincent De Paul, Altenburg Gardens, Clapham Junction and St Francis De Sales, Larkhall Lane, Stockwell. (The parish boundary maps can be found on the Parish websites. The St Mary's Parish boundary can also be found on the school's website, on the school's notice board and is available at the school's office.)
3. Baptised Catholic children of parents who are committed practising members of the Catholic faith who do not meet the criteria for 1 and 2 above and will have a sibling in the school who will be attending the school at the intended time of admission or baptised Catholic children of staff who have worked at the school for two years or longer.
4. Baptised Catholic children of parents who are committed practising members of the Catholic faith who live in other Catholic parishes.
5. Other 'looked after' children and other previously 'looked after' children who have been adopted or have become subject of a residence or guardianship order.

6. Children of parents who are Catechumens or baptised children who are members of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Evidence of Baptism or reception from the authorities of that Church will be required.
7. Children of families who are members of other Christian denominations that are part of the Churches Together in England and who support the aims and practices of the school. Evidence of Baptism (or dedication) provided by a priest or minister of a designated place of worship will be required.
8. Children of other faiths whose parents support the religious ethos of the school. Evidence of membership of the faith should be provided by a priest, minister or religious leader of a designated place of worship will be required.
9. Any other children.

The following will be applied, in the order of priority set out below, when applications within any of the categories exceed the places available and it is necessary to decide between applications.

- i. Children with a sibling who will be attending the school at the intended time of admission, with those living nearer the school receiving the highest priority. Evidence of the relationship will be required.
- ii. For categories 2, 3, and 4 above, the strength of evidence of commitment to the Catholic faith as demonstrated by the level and the length of time of the parents' Mass attendance at the vigil Mass on Saturday or Mass on Sundays will increase the priority of an application within each category. Those attending Mass on a weekly basis for three years or more will be given higher priority. Applications will only be considered where this evidence is provided in a reference from the parish priest at the church where the family have regularly worshipped for the last three years. If the family have regularly worshipped in more than one Parish in the last three years then (an) additional reference(s) should be provided from the Parish Priest in their previous Parish(s).
- iii. The Governing Body may increase the priority of an application within a category where evidence is provided, at the time of application, of an exceptional social, medical or pastoral need of the child which clearly renders this school as especially suitable for the child in question.
- iv. Proximity of the child's home to the school, with those living nearer the school receiving the higher priority. Evidence of residence is required. Where the last remaining place is to be allocated and two or more children are deemed to live at the same distance from the school the place will be decided by the drawing of lots
- v. Baptised Catholic children whose parents cannot demonstrate that attendance at mass has been sustained over the last three years.

NOTES: 'Looked after' children has the same meaning as in Section 22 of the Children's Act 1989, and means any child in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by them. (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 e.g. children with foster parents (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989). This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders).

Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by s.12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order.

See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians). *The following notes form part of the oversubscription criteria*

- a. In the context of school admissions, Catholic children are defined as children who are baptised or received into the Catholic Church. Catholics include Latin Rite Catholics (Roman Catholics) and Oriental Rite Catholics in communion with the See of Rome: the Maronite Catholic Churches; the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian and Syro-Malankaro Catholic Churches; the Melkite, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and Romanian Catholic Churches; the Greek Catholic Church, the Byzantine Catholics in former Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian, Slovak and Hungarian Catholic Churches and the Eastern Catholic Communities (Russian, Belarusian, Georgian and Albanian) without hierarchies. Baptised children of parents who are members of the Ordinariate established under The Apostolic Constitutions *Anulicorum Boetivus Anlicanorum Coetivus* of November 4th 2009.
- b. Reference to other Christian denominations refers to other denominations that are full members of Churches Together in England. A list can be found on the 'Churches Together in England' web site. https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/234772/Home/Contacts/Member_Churches_list/Member_Churches_list.aspx
- c. By 'committed practising members of the Catholic Church' we mean at least one parent/carer and the child/ children attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Within criteria 2, 3, and 4 above places will be allocated to those who have attended Mass for at least three years and firstly to those who attend Mass weekly, secondly to those who attend Mass once, twice or three times a month, thirdly to those who attend Mass monthly or only occasionally (see ii above) and fourthly those who have sustained attendance at mass for less than three years (see iii above). The Governors will ensure that those where it is not possible to prove three years of previous practice (e.g. refugees, those who have been catechumens in the last three years) are not disadvantaged by this element of the criteria.
- d. A sibling is defined as children living at the same address as brother or sister, including natural brothers and sisters (full or half brothers and sisters), adopted siblings, stepbrothers or sisters and foster brothers or sisters. It would not include other relatives e.g. cousins. Evidence of the relationship may be required.
- e. 'Nearer the school' will be measured as the distance from the child's home address to the school (as measured by the safest, shortest walking route from the applicant's home address to the school's main pupil gate) using the Local Authority Mapping system. Proof of address of the parent/carer and child is required. Applications are considered from the child's home address only.
- f. The child's 'home address' refers to the permanent home address at which the child lives for the majority of their time and with the parent who is in receipt of child benefit. Evidence will be required e.g. current Council Tax notification or current driving licence.
- g. To demonstrate an exceptional social, medical or pastoral need of the child which can be most appropriately met at this school, the Governing Body will require formal written evidence at the time of application from an appropriate professional such as a social worker, doctor or priest.

Admission Procedure

To apply for a place at this school, you should complete the **Common Application Form** available from the local authority where you live. This form **must** be returned to the local authority where you live by the specified closing date. Alternately you may apply 'on-line' using the web-site of the local authority where you live.

In addition, a **Supplementary Information Form** is available from the school, which includes the **Priest's Declaration Form**. The Supplementary Information Form is not mandatory; however, if one is not received the governors will not be able to apply their admission criteria and the application will be considered under the 'any other children' category. The supplementary information form must be returned to the school by the specified closing date.

Note: The specified closing date for these two forms is determined by the deadline for the local authority form and is included on both forms. You are advised to make a copy of these forms for your records. You will be advised of the outcome of your application by the common offer date specified by the local authority. If your

application forms are not received by the closing date for applications, it will be considered as a late application (see also below).

If you are unsuccessful you may ask the school for clarification based on the admissions criteria. You also have the right of appeal to an independent appeal panel.

Late Applications

The Governors Admission Committee will consider all the applications and Supplementary Information Forms that were received by the closing date for applications before any late applications. If places are available, the governors will use the admissions criteria listed above to rank the applications. In the event of the governors deciding that a place cannot be offered, parents will be offered the opportunity of placing their child's name on the waiting list. Applicants on the waiting list will be ranked using the admissions criteria.

This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

Waiting Lists

Parents of children who have not been offered a place at the school may make a request, in writing, to the school asking for their child's name to be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list will be operated using the admissions criteria listed above. The child's name will remain on the waiting list from the date the request to join the waiting list was received until the beginning of the September of the following academic year. If a place becomes available, the governors will use the admissions criteria to offer a place to a child on the waiting list. Placing your child's name on the waiting list does not guarantee that a place will become available. It is possible that when a child is directed under the local authority's fair access protocol they will take precedence over those children already on the list.

This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

In-year (casual) admissions

Applications for a place at the school in-year must be made using the Common Application Form of the Local Authority where your child resides. This form must be returned to the same Local Authority. The school's Supplementary Information Form should also be completed to enable the governors to rank the application in the event of there being more than one application for a place. The governors will use the admissions criteria to rank the in-year application and, if a place is available, all applications, including the in year application and those on the waiting list, will be considered for this place. The offer of a place at the school will be made by the Local Authority on behalf of the Governors. In the event of the governors deciding that a place cannot be offered parents will be offered the opportunity of placing their child's name on the waiting list. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

Appeals

Parents whose applications for places are unsuccessful may appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel set up in accordance with Section 94 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Appeals must be made in writing and must set out the reasons on which the appeal is made. Appeals should be made to the Admissions Appeals Clerk at the school address. Parents/Carers have the right to make oral representations to the Appeal Panel. Details are available from the school office.

Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan The admissions of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or with an EHC Plan are dealt with by a completely separate procedure. The procedure is integral to the making and maintaining of statements and EHC plans by the pupil's home local authority. Details of this separate procedure are set out in the Local Authority's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) code of practice. Pupils with a statement or EHC plan naming the school will be admitted without reference to the school's admissions criteria.

Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents who are seeking a place for their child outside their normal age group, e.g., the child has experienced problems such as ill health or the parents of a summer born child choosing not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday, may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group

– to reception rather than Year 1. Governors will make decisions on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parents' views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional, whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group, and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. The governors should also take into account the views of the school's Headteacher.

When informing a parent of the decision which group the child should be admitted to, the governors will set out clearly the reasons for their decision. Where the governors agree to a parent's request for their child to be admitted out of their normal age group and, as a consequence of that decision, the child will be admitted the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school, the local authority will process the application as part of the main admissions round, (unless the parental request is made too late for this to be possible) and on the basis of the determined admission arrangements, including the application of oversubscription criteria where applicable. Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied. This right does not apply if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.