



Policy for Admissions 2023/2024

All Academy Policies should be read in conjunction with the Academy's Equality Plan

Introduction

This paper is mainly an administrative one which explains the procedures for applying for a place and the way the academy prioritises applicants when it is over subscribed. For details about the school itself please visit our web site at www.stmarysfolkestone.com or ring 01303 251390 to make an appointment to visit the academy.

St Mary's has a Church of England Christian foundation and this is reflected in our policy.

We would like to emphasise that we welcome applicants from families of all religious faith and those who have no belief. We do however regard religious education as a very important subject which is used to inform the children about the various faiths, particularly Christianity - so that our children are well informed when they become adults and equipped to reflect on the wider and deeper aspects of life.

Our assemblies always include Christian worship and we use this to help children learn core values for wider life such as caring for others and a sense of social responsibility.

In the school year 2023/2024, our planned admission number is 60.

Prospective parents are advised to read this section very carefully, as the school is heavily oversubscribed and the Governing Body regrets that it is often unable to offer places to all applicants.

As an academy St Mary's is operationally independent of KCC but as a provider of state education it works in collaboration with KCC because the latter is responsible for the strategic planning of services including school places. Reference to KCC in this policy must be understood in the context of this working relationship.

By law, children are required to attend school from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday, but in order to provide a full year of the foundation curriculum, we offer places for all children during the academic year following their fourth birthday. All children in this age group are offered full time schooling from September. In a few instances, parents prefer their young children to start later in the year and we are happy to accommodate their wishes. Parents have the right to defer entry or to take up the place part time until their child reaches compulsory school age. Please see Appendix 1 for details of parental right to defer entry. Some parents may feel that their summer born children are not ready to being school before they reach compulsory school age but do not wish for their child to miss Reception year – please see Appendix 2 for information on Summer Born Children and Admission Outside of expected year group.

The size of the school building restricts the number of children the school is able to admit and the Governors are unable to offer more than 60 places (our standard number) in the reception year group.

1. How to apply for a place

All parents who wish their children to attend St. Mary's during the academic year 2023-24 should contact the school office and register their child as soon as possible and by the dates published by the local authority to comply with the county wide admissions policy procedure. We work closely with KCC and other schools to provide smooth and co-ordinated admission arrangements across the area.

The number of applications usually exceeds the places available and the Governors' Admissions Committee, when it meets (usually at the end of the Spring Term) has to use the admissions policy to decide which pupils will receive the available places.

The admissions policy does not take account of how long a child has been registered, but it provides the criteria to enable applications received by the date published by the LA to be placed in an order of priority. This date from the LA will be published by January 2023.

The Academy's waiting list is ranked in line with the published subscription criteria every time a child is added.

Before the application of oversubscription criteria, children with a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan, which names the school, will be admitted. As a result of this, the published admissions number will be reduced accordingly.

Health and Special Access Reasons - Medical, health, social and special access reasons will be applied in accordance with the school's legal obligations, in particular those under the Equality Act 2010. Priority will be given to those children whose mental or physical impairment, or that of their parent(s), means they have a demonstrable and significant need to attend a particular school. Such claims will need to be supported by written evidence from a suitably qualified medical or other practitioner who can demonstrate a special connection between these needs and the particular school.

Subject as above, the criteria for prioritising admissions are as follows:

1. Children in Local Authority Care or Previously in Local Authority Care or adopted from State Care outside of England

A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, 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). Give priority to children adopted from state care outside of England.

2. Vulnerable Children

I. Children of families with confirmed refugee status

II. Children from families associated with Military Services and eligible for the Service Premium. Evidence of eligibility may be requested.

3. Sibling/Current Family Association

Children with brothers or sisters in the school at the time of entry.

4. Proximity to the school

Other applicants will be prioritised according to **nearness of children's homes to school** - County use the distance between the child's permanent home address and the school, measured in a straight line using the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) address point data. Distances are measured from a point defined as within the child's home to a point defined as within the school as specified by NLPG. The same address point on the school site is used for everybody.

2. Definitions and Interpretations

The Governors agreed upon the following definitions and interpretations:

- (i) In this context, brother or sister means children who live as brother or sister in the same house, including natural brothers and sisters, adopted siblings, step brothers or sisters and foster brothers and sisters.
- (ii) A pupil's home address is considered to be a residential property that is the **child's only or main residence** and not an address at which your child might sometimes stay or sleep due to your own domestic or special arrangements. The address must be the pupil's home address on the day you completed your application form and which is either:

owned by the child's parent, parents or guardian, OR

leased to or rented by the child's parent, parents or guardian under a lease or written rental agreement.

If you live separately from your partner, but share responsibility for your child and the child lives at two different addresses during the week, we will regard the home address as the one at which the child sleeps for the majority of weekdays.

A block of flats has a single address point reference, so applicants living in the same block will be regarded as living the same distance away from the school. In the unlikely event that two or more children live in the same block and in all other ways have equal eligibility for the last available place at the school, the names will be issued a number and drawn randomly to decide which child should be given the place.

Children in the care of the local authority are defined by the Governors as a child under the age of 18 years from whom the Local Authority provides accommodation by agreement with their parents/carers (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989) or who is subject of a care order under Part IV of the Act.

Please refer to the 'Pre-School' section of the school prospectus for details of the activities and information available to parents of children who will be attending St. Mary's.

3. Successful Applicants

Successful applicants are informed early in the Summer Term and sent details of pre-school visits and other activities to help prepare each child for school.

4. Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants are notified in writing and may lodge an appeal under the relevant legislation through the school, who will provide all relevant information. Unsuccessful applicants who wish to appeal should therefore contact the school where they will be advised of the next steps they should take in order to lodge an appeal.

Any applications that the Governors receive after the places have been allocated are put on a waiting list and considered according to the same criteria when a place becomes available.

5. Further Points

Prospective applicants are advised to study the map on our school website, which indicates the geographical area in which our pupils live. This will help individuals to decide if their child is likely to gain a place under the proximity of residence criteria.

After a place has been offered, the school reserves the right to withdraw the place in the following circumstances:

1. When a parent has failed to respond to an offer within a reasonable time; or
2. When a parent has failed to notify the school of important changes to the application information; or
3. The admission authority offered the place on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application from a parent.

Appendix 1

Parental Right to Defer Entry

Every child is entitled to a full time place in the September following their fourth birthday. Parents have the right to request that their child defers entry into Reception year (until the term following their fifth birthday, but not beyond the beginning of the final term). Parents also have the right to request that the child starts part time (until the term following their fifth birthday). Schools are obliged to facilitate this.

The only restriction is that children must secure the offered place by starting school on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day), but not beyond the beginning of the final term. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

This means that children born between the 1 April and 31 August (also known as “summer born”) must start school at the beginning of the April term if they wish to keep their offer. Where parents wish for their summer born child to defer entry until the start of Year 1, they must refuse their offered place, which may be offered to a different child, and then reapply through the In Year process. These applications should be made during the last month of Reception Year.

If a parent chooses to defer their child’s entry to school, the child remains entitled to a funded early education place of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year until they are admitted to school.

Appendix 2

Summer Born Children and Admission Outside of Expected Year Group

As detailed in Appendix 1, children born between 1 April and 31 August (summer born children) are not legally required to start school until the beginning of Year 1. While the vast majority of summer born children will start at some point in their expected year group, flexibilities exist for children whose parents do not feel they are ready to begin school before they reach compulsory school age and also do not wish for their child to miss Reception year.

There is no legal barrier to children being admitted out of their normal age group, but parents do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular year. Parents must gain agreement from the admission authorities of all preferred schools before an application can be made. Admissions authorities and parents must be clear that this agreement is only in relation to a child to applying for a place in a different year group. There is no guarantee that once a parent has secured agreement from a school or schools to be considered for admission in that year group, that they will actually be offered a place for their child. All offers are made in accordance with a school's oversubscription criteria, which will not prioritise or penalise a child because of their age.

Schools should meet with parents as early possible to explain how their child will be supported should they start school at the normal time. Teachers are skilled at differentiating the curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs. They may also be able to allay any concerns the parent may have about their child's readiness for school.

Admissions authorities must take into account the child's individual needs and abilities and cannot have a blanket policy to refuse all out of year group applications. While the admissions authority of the school is responsible for the decision, the guidance states that the views of the Principal should be an important part of this consideration.

Parents do not have to provide evidence to support their application, however, admissions authorities may struggle to agree where evidence is absent. There should be no expectation on parents, however, to obtain professional evidence that they do not already have. Any evidence should be specific to the child, not research into the performance of summer born children in general.

Parents should be reminded that this process will need to be repeated each time the child changes school. While the guidance prompts schools to be mindful of the age group a child has previously been taught in, they are under no obligation to agree and continue to teach a child out of year.

Once the child has started school, it is for the Principal to decide how best to educate them. Any future decision to move a child to a different age group should be based on sound educational reasons in conjunction with the parents.

Parents do not have a right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the year group they would like. However, they may make a complaint about an admission authority's decision not to admit their child outside the normal age group through the school or authority's complaints procedure.

Summary of Process for handling out of year applications:

- Parents should make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time, in case their request is not agreed. At the same time, parents should approach the admission authority of each school to request the right to apply outside of the normal age group. Parents are not expected to provide evidence to support their request to defer their application, however where provided it must be specific to the child in question. This might include medical or Educational Psychologist reports. There is no legal requirement for this medical or educational evidence to be secured from an appropriate professional, however, failure to provide this may impede a school's ability to agree to deferral.
- Admissions authorities should ensure that parents receive a response to their request in writing before national offer day.
- If their request is agreed, their application for the normal age group should be withdrawn.
- Parents should then make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year. Parents must apply using a paper application sent directly to the LA and include a copy of the agreement from each named school. Deferred applications will be processed in the same way as all applications for the cohort in the following admissions round, and offers will be made in accordance with each school's oversubscription criteria.