

Admissions Policy

St. Mary's School has been from its foundation a Church of England School which has always been open to children of all faiths or of no faith; and has responsibility for its own admissions. As a Free School, we commit to the adoption of practices and arrangements that are consistent or in accordance with the School Admissions Code and Appeals Code¹. The school participates in the coordinated admission arrangements operated by Herefordshire Council.

Reception age children

The school has an admission number of 12 pupils in each year group. For admission of reception age children and in the eventuality of an over subscription of places, decisions will be taken by governors in February each year (or as soon after admission applications have been received from the local authority, in addition to those directly received). If the number of pupils who apply is equal to or fewer than the pupil admission number, they will all be admitted. If not, then over subscription criteria will be applied to determine who is admitted.

Children become of compulsory school age on the first prescribed day following their 5th birthday: 31 August, 31 December or 31 March, or on that day if any of these are the child's birthday. Children are eligible for entry to Reception in the September following their 4th birthday.

Applications must be made through Herefordshire Council **and** with the school directly by early January. Where a child is offered a place at this school:

- a) The child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday;
- b) the child's parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school

¹ 'Free schools admissions models'; DfEducation, June 2014; 'Free School Admissions Guidance'; DfE; Dec.2014, School Admissions Code 2021

age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which it was made; and

- c) where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

In addition, the parents of a summer born child² may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group - to Reception rather than Year 1.

Over Subscription Criteria

All children whose education, health and care (EHC) plan³ or statement of special educational needs (SEN)⁴ names the school will be admitted before any other places are allocated.

If the school is not oversubscribed, all applicants will be offered a place.

If the school receives more applications than the number of available places, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order of priority until all places are filled:

1. Looked after children and previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school⁵. (LAC/PLAC criterion)

² Summer born children are those born from 1 April to 31 August. They reach compulsory school age on 31 August following their fifth birthday (or **on** their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August). It is likely that most requests for summer born children to be admitted out of their normal age group will come from parents of children born in the later summer months or those born prematurely.

³ An Education, Health and Care Plan is a plan made by the local authority under Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014 specifying the special education provision required for that child.

⁴ A Statement of Special Educational Need is a statement made by the local authority under section 324 of the Education Act 1996 specifying the special educational provision required for that child.

⁵ Looked after children are those in the care of a local authority. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order). Previously looked after children, include those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

2. The presence of older siblings⁶ in the school at the time of application and admission. (Sibling criterion)
3. Children living within the civil parish of Dilwyn. (Parish Criterion) ranked by:
 - a. Children in families who are committed to Christian based education (Christian criterion)⁷
 - b. Other children.
4. Children who live outside the civil parish of Dilwyn nearest to the school by the shortest distance by road (Distance criterion) ranked by:
 - a. Children in families who are committed to Christian based education (Christian criterion)
 - b. Other children.

In Year Admissions

Additional pupils may be admitted in year, if the overall capacity of the school has not been met and depending on the size of the individual year groups.

The School does not participate in the Herefordshire Council co-ordinated approach to in-year admissions. Therefore applications should be made directly to the School; the application form and the supplementary information form should be obtained from the School Office.

In-year applications will be determined by the Principal in consultation with the appropriate lead teacher and the Chair of Governors.

Parents / carers will be notified of the outcome of their in-year application in writing within 15 school days, detailing any reason for refusal and information about the right to appeal.

⁶ 'Sibling' is a natural or half-brother/sister, a legally adopted brother/sister(or half-brother/sister), a step brother or sister, or other child living in the same household who, will be living with them at the same address at the date of their entry to the school.

⁷ When requesting a place based on "Christian criterion", applicants could be asked to provide any supporting information.

The Principal will respond to Herefordshire Council of spare capacity by year group within 2 school days of a request for such information.

The School will participate in the Herefordshire Council Fair Access Protocol to ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children⁸ and those who have difficulty securing a school place in-year are found and offered an appropriate school place as quickly as possible.

The School can refuse an in-year application for admission on the basis of challenging behaviour if there is already a particularly high proportion of either children with challenging behaviour or previously excluded pupils compared with other local schools and it is considered that the admission of another child with challenging behaviour would prejudice the provision of education or efficient use of resources. Such behaviour is defined as that which significantly interferes with the pupil's or other pupils' education or jeopardises the right of staff and pupils to a safe and orderly environment. Challenging behaviour is that which is unlikely to respond to the usual range of interventions to address pupil misbehaviour, as detailed in the School's Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy, or is likely to be of such a severity, frequency and duration beyond the normal range that the School can tolerate.

Service Children and Children of Crown Servants

⁸Fair Access Protocols may only be used to place the following groups of vulnerable and/or hard to place children, where they are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, and it can be demonstrated that reasonable measures have been taken to secure a place through the usual in-year admission procedures:

- a) children either subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan or having had a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan within 12 months at the point of being referred to the Protocol;
- b) children living in a refuge or in other Relevant Accommodation at the point of being referred to the Protocol;
- c) children from the criminal justice system;
- d) children in alternative provision who need to be reintegrated into mainstream education or who have been permanently excluded but are deemed suitable for mainstream education;
- e) children with special educational needs (but without an Education, Health and Care plan), disabilities or medical conditions;
- f) children who are carers;
- g) children who are homeless;
- h) children in formal kinship care arrangements

The School recognises the educational disadvantage sometimes experienced by the children of armed forces personnel and crown servants who are obliged to move frequently between postings. The School will allocate a place to a service child before the family moves if the application is accompanied by an official letter with a relocation date, provided there is spare capacity in the cohort. When applying the over subscription criteria to applications from Service families for a place in reception the School will require evidence of the parents' intended address.

Home/School Agreement

Prior to admission, parents/carers will be required to enter into a 'Home/School Agreement' that defines the expectations of all concerned.

Waiting list

The school will operate a waiting list for each year group and if a place becomes available, the over subscription criteria will apply. Where in any year more applications for places are made than there are places available, a waiting list will operate until the end of the school year. This will be maintained by the school and it will be open to any parent to ask for his or her child's name to be placed on the waiting list, following an unsuccessful application.

Appeals

All applicants refused a place have a right of appeal to an independent appeal panel constituted and operated in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code. Appeals should be made in writing by the parents, giving reasons, within 25 school days from the date of notification that their application was unsuccessful. Those wishing to appeal should contact the school for more details on the process.

Setting admission arrangements

These admission arrangements are determined (formally agreed) and published by the **28th February** every year, for admissions that September - even where no changes have been made and no consultation undertaken. The St Mary's C.E. Academy Trustees/governors are responsible for admissions. The governing body will be quorate and decide on the proposed final arrangements. The final admission arrangements are then published on the school website for parents to see and also sent to the Diocesan Education Board and Herefordshire Council, by the **15th of March for admissions later that year**. Any objections are referred to the Schools Adjudicator by the 15th of May. The school will provide information about the school to the Council before **8 August** for inclusion in the local admissions prospectus. The School will consult on its admission arrangements whenever it proposes a change or every 7 years if no change is proposed (see the Admissions Code for procedures and timelines).

Admissions and the local authority

Where a local authority considers that an Academy will best meet the needs of any child, it can ask the Academy to admit that child but has no power to direct it to do so. The local authority and the Academy will usually come to an agreement, but if the Academy refuses to admit the child, the local authority can ask the Secretary of State to intervene. The Secretary of State has the power under an Academy's Funding Agreement to direct the Academy to admit a child and can seek advice from the Schools Adjudicator in reaching a decision. (School Admissions Code 2021, section 3.29)

Date Implemented: February 2023

Approved by Chair of Governors

Responsibility: Governing body and Principal

Review Date: Feb 2024

Next Consultation due, subject to changes in legislation: Autumn 2026