

ST MARY'S SCHOOL GERRARD'S CROSS



ADMISSIONS POLICY

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School which include: the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form.

GENERAL

St Mary's School is an independent day school for girls from ages 3+ to 18. Deciding on the right school for your child is very important, and we believe that a personal visit is invaluable. We very much hope that you and your child will visit our school. We hold Open Events in the Michaelmas, Lent and Trinity Terms, which give a general introduction to the school and personal tours can be arranged throughout the year. Details are published on our web site. We are also very happy to welcome prospective parents and their children at other times. Please contact, our Registrar on 01753 883370 or email registrar@st-marys.bucks.sch.uk to arrange a visit.

THE ENTRY PROCEDURE

Selection is based upon academic potential, which is assessed through an entrance examination, an interview at the school and references from the candidate's current school. Our selection process is designed to identify pupils who are able to benefit from our balanced and well rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the school.

Entry to the Preparatory Department is into Nursery at 3+ years or Reception at 4+ years. Entry to Senior House is at 11+ and 16+. St Mary's pupils transfer to Senior House at 11+. Girls may enter the school at other stages if places are available. A good academic and character reference is required from the previous school for all candidates entering into Year 1 and above.

SMS pupils in Year 6 transfer automatically into Senior House, although occasionally it is appropriate to advise parents to consider other schools for their daughter's secondary education. All the girls sit the entrance examination to Senior House along with external candidates, although for our girls this is a qualifying not a competitive process which provides important diagnostic information to inform future provision. Where it is felt that a girl in Prep may not cope with the academic environment in Senior House, parents will be consulted in the Lent term of Year 5. The expectation is that SMS pupils in Y11 will proceed through into the Sixth Form.

EQUAL TREATMENT

Our aim is to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. A number of bursaries are offered in order to enable as many as possible who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the school.

St Mary's School is a girls' school committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of a candidate's race, ethnicity, religion or social background. Details of our provision for bursaries can be found below.

SPECIAL NEEDS

We welcome pupils with special educational needs, providing that our Learning Support Department can offer them the support that they require. We welcome pupils with physical disabilities provided that our site can cope with them. However, we advise parents of children with special educational needs or physical disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with the School before she sits the entrance examination so that we can make adequate provision for her for this examination in terms of, for example, extra time or other special arrangements. Parents should provide a copy of a recent Educational Psychologist's report or a medical report to support their request.

We will discuss thoroughly with parents and their medical advisers the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the child if she becomes a pupil at the school.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The aim of the process is to identify potential. We are looking for well-rounded pupils with a genuine interest in education in the broadest sense of the word, with interests that stretch beyond the confines of the academic curriculum. The school places a high value on music, drama, art, debating, community activities and sport. There are many extra-curricular activities, all of which are important in developing a well-balanced, confident individual.

Admission to Early Years (Nursery and Reception)

Parents are invited to bring their daughter into Reception for a visit in the course of which staff will observe the child within the Early Years setting and assess their suitability. A report will be prepared for the Headmistress as a result of which an offer will be made if it is felt that the child would thrive and flourish at St Mary's.

Admission to the Preparatory Department (Years 1 to 6)

Girls wishing to enter the Preparatory Department attend the school for a full school day, during which time teachers assess their competence in literacy, numeracy and verbal/non-verbal reasoning. Social skills are also observed. They also have a meeting with the Head of the Preparatory Department, who again prepares a report, and offers are made by the Headmistress based on her report and that of the child's current school.

Admission to the Senior House

For entry at 11+, girls sit an entrance examination in English, Maths and non-verbal reasoning and have an interview with the Headmistress. No specific preparation for the entrance tests is needed. All candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their academic aptitude. Candidates at other entry points below 16+ sit papers in English, Maths and verbal/non-verbal reasoning, appropriate to their age group. All candidates for entrance into Senior House are interviewed by the Headmistress.

Entry for external candidates at 16+ is conditional upon a candidate achieving a minimum of 5 GCSE grades 9 - 5, including a minimum Grade 6 in the subjects proposed for study at A level or a relevant subject in the case of a subject not studied at GCSE.

We interview all candidates as part of our assessment process for each age group in Senior House.

The dates for the assessment process for the current year are published on our web site, together with the dates that results are posted to families and the closing date for acceptances.

Where places are over-subscribed in the annual Assessment Tests, waiting lists will apply in an academic rank order and, in the event of the impossibility of distinguishing between two candidates, the order in which parents registered their daughters will be taken into account. Where offers are made at other times in the year, subject to a place becoming available (this is likely to occur mid-year for various reasons such as a move out of the area), candidates will be added to the waiting list.

SIBLING POLICY

Most siblings of pupils join us at St Mary's School. However, admission is not automatic, and there may be occasions where we judge that a sibling is likely to thrive better in a different academic environment. A sibling discount of 10% is available for third and subsequent daughters attending the school at the same time.

SCHOLARSHIPS

St Mary's School offers a number of scholarships each year for excellence in academic subjects. Academic scholarships are available at ages 7+, 11+ and 16+. Scholarships in Art, Drama, Music and Sport are offered at 11+ and scholarships in Performing Arts and Music at 16+.

Purpose of Scholarships

Scholarships are designed to reward excellence and to celebrate exceptional talent. In recognition of this achievement, the scholar is offered up to a 30% reduction in the fees.

Candidates at 11+ are invited to sit the academic scholarship examination based on their results in the entrance examination.

Academic Scholarships:

At 7+ candidates (internal and external) who apply for academic scholarships sit St Mary's scholarship papers in English, Maths and verbal reasoning. At 11+, in addition to the entrance examination, they sit papers designed to test their lateral thinking and take part in a group activity. At 16+ candidates sit a General Studies paper and then make a presentation to the Headmistress and the Head of Sixth Form on a subject of their choice. In all cases, reports from a child's current school are also taken into account.

Scholarships awarded at 7+ are valid until the end of Year 6, at 11+ until the end of Year 11 and at 16+ for the duration of a girl's time in the Sixth Form, subject to the maintenance of satisfactory conduct, effort and achievement.

Music Drama Sport and Art Scholarships

Music, Drama, Art and Sports scholarships are awarded to outstanding dramatists, sportswomen or artists, or musicians who play any instrument or sing with exceptional ability. Candidates must obtain a specialist reference from their current drama/music/art/sports teacher in addition to a reference from their Headteacher. Full details are available on our website, but candidates will be expected to demonstrate enthusiasm for and commitment to sport/music/art/drama, and sport and music scholars will be expected to make a contribution to the sporting and musical life of the school throughout their time at the school, including performance at Open Day and other Whole School events. The expectation is that girls in receipt of these scholarships will study that subject at GCSE.

Music, Drama, Sport and Art scholarships will only be awarded to pupils who have passed the School's entrance examination.

BURSARIES

We offer a number of means tested awards annually to new entrants. Bursaries are means-tested in accordance with the Charity Commission's Guidance. Both parents are required to provide proof of their income and assets. The level of support varies according to parental need; but can extend to full fee remission in cases of proven need. Before the offer of a bursary is confirmed, the Bursar will normally arrange a visit to the family at their home.

Bursaries are always offered for 12 months at a time. The family is required to provide fresh information about their circumstances for every year that their child attends the school. Levels of support may vary with fluctuations in income.

Bursaries are only offered to families who are resident in the UK.

Parents are asked to indicate on the registration form whether they wish to apply for a bursary. Details of the arrangements will be sent to all who express an interest.

The School's expectation is that parents who do not choose to apply for a bursary at the time that their child is being assessed, will not require financial support throughout the time that their child attends the school, except in wholly unforeseen circumstances.

Fluency in English

All St Mary's pupils are tested in English Language as part of our entry procedures and they are normally expected to have reached a good level of fluency before being admitted to the school. We offer additional support in English to those who are in need of it. However, specialist tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parents' expense.

Religious Beliefs

Although St Mary's School has Anglican roots, we do not select for entry on the basis of religious belief. We welcome pupils from all faiths or none and we support the observance of all religious festivals. However, parents should be aware that all pupils are expected to attend occasions of collective worship including assemblies and the annual Carol Service.

SCHOOL'S CONTRACTUAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

Copies will be made available to parents as part of the admissions process.

COMPLAINTS

We hope that you and your child do not have any complaints about our admissions process; but copies of the School's complaints procedure can be sent to you on request.

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