

ADMISSIONS POLICY

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff Responsible	Head
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
Date of Last Review	August 2023
Date of Next Review	August 2024

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

AIMS

- To ensure a clear and transparent admissions process that is equal and fair to everyone
- To outline the requirements for entry to St Mary's School Gerrards Cross
- To provide information on the scholarship and bursary system

WIDER REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2014

RELATED INTERNAL POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- EAL Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Students With Medical Conditions Policy
- Complaints Policy

GENERAL

St Mary's School is an independent day school for girls from ages 3 to 18. Deciding on the right school for your daughter is very important, and we believe that a personal visit is invaluable. We very much hope that you and your daughter will visit our school.

We hold Open Events in the Michaelmas, Lent and Trinity Terms; these events give a general introduction to the School and personal tours can be arranged throughout the year. Details are published on our website.

We are very happy to welcome prospective parents and students throughout the year for a personal tour of the School and to meet key members of staff.

Please contact, our Registrar on 01753 883370 or email registrar@st-marys.bucks.sch.uk to arrange a visit.

Our admissions and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

THE ENTRY PROCEDURE

Our selection process is designed to identify students who are able to benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the School. Selection is based partly upon academic potential. Assessment is through an entrance examination, an interview at the School and references from the candidate's current 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 Sixth Form at 16+. St Mary's students transfer to Senior House at 11+. Students 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.

St Mary's students in Year 6 transfer automatically into Senior House, although occasionally it is appropriate to advise parents to consider other schools for their child's secondary education. All the students sit the entrance examination to Senior House along with external candidates, although for our students this is a qualifying not a competitive process which provides important diagnostic information to inform future provision. Where it is felt that a student in Prep Department 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 St Mary's students in Year 11 will proceed through into the Sixth Form provided they meet the academic criteria.

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 students for today's world. A number of bursaries are offered in order to enable a wide selection of students who meet the School's admission criteria to attend the school.

St Mary's School is a 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 EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

We welcome students with special educational needs and disabilities, providing that our Learning Support Department can offer them the support that they require. We welcome students with physical disabilities provided that our site does not restrict their educational access. However, we advise parents of students with special educational needs or physical disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with the School before they sit the entrance examination so that we can make adequate provision for them for the 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 student if they become a student at the School.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The aim of the process is to identify potential. We are looking for well-rounded students 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 expressive arts, debating, community activities and sport. There are many co-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 Little St Mary's for a visit or to a 'Stay and Play' event, in the course of which staff will observe the student 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 student would thrive and flourish at St Mary's.

ADMISSION TO THE PREPARATORY DEPARTMENT (YEARS 1 TO 6)

Students 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 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 student's current school.

ADMISSION TO THE SENIOR HOUSE

For entry at 11+, students sit an entrance examination in English, Maths and non-verbal reasoning (NVR) 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 (or equivalent), including a minimum Grade 6 in the subjects proposed for study at A Level or can provide evidence that they would succeed in the given subject at A Level standard.

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

Where places are over-subscribed, waiting lists will apply and, in the event of the impossibility of distinguishing between two candidates, the order in which parents registered their child 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 students 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 11+ and 16+. Scholarships in Art, Drama, Music and Sport are offered at 11+ and scholarships in Sport, and Performing and Creative Arts (Art, Dance, Drama 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 a discount ranging between 10% and 30% reduction in the fees.

Scholars enter the relevant scholarship programme for their year group and take part in the challenges and tasks set by the Deputy Head Academic.

Academic Scholarships

Candidates (internal and external) who apply for academic scholarships at 11+, in addition to the entrance examination, sit additional papers to determine their aptitude. 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 student's current school are also taken into account.

Scholarships awarded at 11+ are valid until the end of Year 13 and at 16+ for the duration of a student's time in the Sixth Form. All scholarships are subject to the maintenance of satisfactory conduct, effort and achievement.

Performing and Creative Arts (Music, Drama, Dance and Art), and Sport Scholarships

Music, Drama, Art, Dance and Sports scholarships are awarded to outstanding dramatists, dancers, sports person, artists, or musicians who play any instrument or sing with exceptional ability. Candidates must obtain a specialist reference from their current Drama/Music/Art/Dance/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/dance, and scholars will be expected to make a contribution to the life of the School throughout their time at the School, including performance at Open Day and other Whole School events. The expectation is that students in receipt of these scholarships will study that subject at GCSE.

Music, Drama, Dance, Sport and Art scholarships will only be awarded to students 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.

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 residents 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 students 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 students from all faiths or none and we support the observance of all religious festivals. However, parents should be aware that all students 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 or are available on the School website.