



St Mary's School
Gerrards Cross

Welcoming boys into our school – same values, new era ...

From September 2027, St Mary's School will begin welcoming boys through phased entry into all Prep school year groups, and into Senior School Years 7 and 12. We will open our doors to boys in our Little St Mary's Nursery from January 2027. Our exceptional academic results, excellent pastoral care, rich co-curriculum programme, individual attention, small class sizes and commitment to personal excellence will remain at the heart of the school. Our current pupils will remain central to our planning as we move forward into the school's exciting next chapter.

Contents

● Our Vision	2
● Timing and Phased Introduction	6
● Current Pupils and Families	7
● Teaching & Learning and Class Sizes	9
● Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and School Culture	10
● Curriculum, Sport and Co-curricular	11
● Admissions	13
● Uniform, Facilities and Site Changes	14
● The Sixth Form	15
● The Nursery	16
● A message from the Head	17

Our Vision

1. Why has St Mary's decided to become co-educational?

Grounded in ensuring our students receive a first-class education which befits today's world, our research shows that parents choose St Mary's principally for its excellent academic outcomes, its caring and nurturing environment, small classes, co-curricular opportunities and location. We are proud to be such a strong part of our local community. In today's world co-ed is becoming increasingly what families prefer and the trend in the independent sector is moving in the direction of co-education. Evidence increasingly shows that girls and boys educated together now perform at their best. Whilst traditionally girls educated separately performed better in GCSE and A level exams, this gap is now closing, and indeed boys performed marginally better than girls nationally in this year's A Levels. We receive regular enquiries from local families seeking places for boys. By becoming co-educational we can extend the benefits of a St Mary's education to more local children and enable families to educate sons and daughters together in our outstanding all-through school.

2. Is this decision a response to financial pressure?

St Mary's is in a strong financial position, and the decision to move to co-education is the result of long-term planning. For several years, the Governors and Senior Leadership Team have been carefully considering how best to position the school for generations to come. Whilst undoubtedly the present government's decision to add VAT to school fees has impacted on the independent school sector, this is a strategic decision rooted in our school's future, informed by parental and pupil feedback and a clear local demand, and to allow us to thrive in the modern educational landscape. Like all responsible independent schools, at St Mary's we plan meticulously to ensure not only our sustainability but to enable the school to grow, invest in its resources and site, be progressive in our educational offering and embrace our changing world.

Our Vision

3. Has St Mary's considered other options such as a merger?

We believe that St Mary's is unique in the wider Gerrards Cross area in terms of its academic success and caring culture. Whilst we explored all options for a co-ed offering, we believe that preserving our own leading and outstanding academic offering combined with our excellent pastoral care best serves the local community and the future success of the school.

4. What did the parental surveys show?

In our recent surveys, parents told us that their strongest reasons for choosing St Mary's include: its caring and nurturing environment, small classes, co-curricular provision and location. A single-sex school was much less significant to these decisions. Indeed, Prep and Sixth Form feedback indicated a strong preference for co-ed, with this being the main reason for some pupils leaving after Year 11. We place huge value on our parents' voice and these findings support a change that preserves what pupils and parents value most in our school while widening access and choice and evolving our school to match our changing world.

5. Will St Mary's identity change?

No. We are proud of our long history of over 154 years as a successful girls' school but being a girls' school is by no means the entirety of our identity. St Mary's is so much more, and it is our culture of nurturing and instilling excellence, our excellent teaching, outstanding pastoral care and the fact that every child is known, which creates our success. Those characteristics will remain and we are excited to build on everything St Mary's currently offers. Our guiding commitment to providing '*An aspirational learning journey towards personal excellence beyond expectations*' will continue to underpin the education of every pupil.

Our Vision

6. As a successful girls' school then, why change?

Successful schools remain at the forefront of education because they evolve with thoughtfulness and care so that the education they offer remains at its very best, whilst also being relevant and accessible. No-one at St Mary's takes such decisions lightly and without extensive research, expertise, consultation and planning. St Mary's has some of the best academic outcomes in Buckinghamshire and enjoys national recognition in areas including in our careers programme and sporting achievement. Opening that experience to boys as well as girls is consistent with our commitment to serve local families and provide an inclusive, ambitious education for all whilst best supporting our girls on their journey through their school life and beyond.

7. Will the School change its name?

We are proud of the St Mary's name and whilst we are confident that all that is associated with it in our communities will remain, we recognise that to be a fully inclusive co-ed school, our school will necessarily go through a journey of transformation. This will include a change to our uniform, branding and ultimately our name. We are keen to engage all our stakeholder groups and ensure that the school represents wider views and as such we will be embarking on a series of communications and consultations before any of these changes are finalised.

Our Vision

8. Will there be opportunities for consultation as well as sharing feedback?

At St Mary's we believe in the close collaboration with all of our parents and have therefore recently conducted a comprehensive survey which reaffirmed our long-term strategic planning to transition to co-education. Going forward, we will be holding small regular 'Meet the Head' parent meetings the timings of which will be shared with all shortly. We encourage you to attend these meetings to ask questions, share feedback and suggest ideas to influence the next stage of the school's journey. In addition, we will involve the current student cohort in a comprehensive consultation so that they are able to help shape their future school.

9. How will families be kept informed?

The school will provide regular updates as detailed plans progress. Information will be shared through parent communications and meetings. An events programme will be shared, and we encourage your active engagement using these opportunities to share your feedback and ideas.

Timing and Phased Introduction

- 1. When will St Mary's become co-educational?**

The transition will begin in our Nursery in January 2027, and from September 2027 into our Prep and Senior Schools. Prior to this we will consult with parents, students and teachers, and ensure any adjustments that are required have taken place with minimal disruption to our existing community.
- 2. Which year groups will admit boys in September 2027 and why?**

Boys will be eligible to join all year groups in the Prep School, and Years 7 and 12 from September 2027. Entry will be subject to the school's normal admissions policy and availability of places. We believe that boys will join seamlessly into the Prep school. We believe a phased entry for boys into the Senior School enables a measured approach which will allow our staff to support the transition to a fully co-ed school by 2031 when all year groups will welcome girls and boys.
- 3. Why go earlier with Nursery?**

We are welcoming boys into our new all-year round Nursery from January 2027 to respond to the growing need of our families and to enable a phased response into our Prep School which is going fully co-ed in the September.
- 4. What happens after September 2027 in future academic years?**

The first mixed Year 7 cohort of boys and girls will move up through the Senior School year by year. This means Year 8 will become co-educational in September 2028, Year 9 in September 2029, and so on. Year 12 will admit boys from September 2027 and the Sixth Form will therefore be fully co-educational from 2028. The Prep School will admit boys across all year groups from 2027, and Nursery from January 2027.
- 5. Will any boys be admitted directly into Years 8-11 in September 2027?**

At this point in time the planned Senior School entry points for boys in September 2027 are Years 7 and 12. The phased approach is designed to give current pupils continuity while allowing the new provision to develop carefully. However, if there are any significant changes in terms of demand we may reconsider in the future but for now this is the planning that is being undertaken.

Current Pupils and Families

1. What will this mean for my daughter who is already at St Mary's?

The education, care and opportunities on offer for every St Mary's student remain our absolute priority. The phased approach means current Senior School pupils will not experience any change in their year group. We will ensure detailed planning relating to the pastoral care we offer as well as any changes we require to the co-curriculum programme and the PSHCEE curriculum, but the quality and breadth of our education will be maintained at its highest level. We are particularly committed to delivering and building on the huge academic success we have seen at both GCSE and A levels this academic year. We will be looking across our curriculum, including in the sports and creative subjects, and any additions to our timetable will enrich opportunities for all our students, boys and girls alike.

2. Will current girls have less attention or fewer opportunities?

No, the opposite. The purpose of the change is to widen opportunities. We are proud at St Mary's to be able to offer our older students an extensive range of leadership roles and play an active part in the life of the school. We believe that evolving our school to welcome boys will enhance these opportunities to the benefit of the entire student body. Our innovative approach to teaching and learning, leadership openings, sporting opportunities, participation in productions, clubs, music and trips, and our pastoral provision will be planned so that girls continue to be seen, heard and encouraged to achieve their very best whilst all our students will be supported to develop resilience, curiosity and success in all they do.

Current Pupils and Families

3. My daughter joined because this was a girls' school. The school has changed the basis on which we enrolled?

We understand that some families deliberately chose a single-sex education and may feel uncertain about the change to admit boys or disappointed with this decision and we respect and understand these concerns. The transition will be phased, giving current Senior School pupils continuity, and the school will continue to deliver the qualities promised to all our families at their point of admission. In a sector where single-sex education is increasingly changing and to build on St Mary's superb academic success we believe this is the time to evolve to this next chapter. We will never lose sight of the fact that we remain a nurturing environment where small class sizes and a strong emphasis on pastoral care means every student is known and supported individually through their academic journey. However, we recognise some families will have questions, and we encourage you to attend the 'Meet the Head' parent meetings to share feedback and ask questions.

4. Will current pupils be consulted as plans develop?

Yes. Pupil voice is always important, and we will be consulting with staff, pupils and parents to shape a successful transition. The school will create age-appropriate opportunities for pupils to ask questions, express concerns and contribute to practical areas such as induction, activities, community life, uniform and the school's new name.

5. Will girls still have leadership roles?

Absolutely. We believe that this change will open up even more opportunities for girls as well as boys to step up to leadership within the school. We will work to enable team building and team working opportunities to more accurately mirror the world that both girls and boys will move into beyond their school life.

Teaching and Learning and Class Sizes

1. Will class sizes increase?

There have always been minor fluctuations in class sizes depending on pupil roll, subject uptake and timetable restrictions. However, St Mary's remains committed to small classes in which teachers know pupils well and can provide individual attention. Therefore, our ethos of small classes continues to be a cornerstone of our approach, ensuring every pupil is heard and supported to achieve success.

2. Will teaching be different for boys and girls?

The school will continue to use evidence-based teaching and learning methods and respond to pupils as individuals. The senior leadership team and subject heads continually monitor and analyse our data to ensure that optimum results are achieved through our excellent teaching methods. Staff development is at its heart, and this will include teaching methods specific to boys and to girls. Our commitment to the individual teaching of every pupil remains the same.

3. Will admissions standards be changed?

No. St Mary's remains committed to strong academic progress, outstanding value-added and personal excellence. Admissions arrangements will be applied fairly to all applicants, with decisions based on the school's published admissions policy, space and the school's suitability to meet a student's needs.

4. Will subject choices change?

The school will continue to offer a broad and ambitious curriculum. Subject choices will be driven by educational value, relevance, pupil demand, staffing and viable group sizes - not by gender-based assumptions. If anything, we would expect this change to enable the school to broaden its subject choices for everyone over time.

Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and School Culture

1. How will the school maintain its caring and nurturing environment?

This is one of the features families value most and it will remain central to our commitment. Form tutors, Heads of Year, pastoral leaders, safeguarding staff and the wider staff team will continue to know pupils individually and cultivate an environment of belonging and inclusivity for every student. Induction, mentoring and transition activities will help new and existing pupils build respectful relationships and a shared sense of belonging and this will be built into all aspects of our curriculum across all year groups.

2. How will behaviour and respectful relationships be managed?

The same high standards of behaviour, conduct and respectful relationships that characterise St Mary's today will continue to apply to all pupils. We will review policies, practices and staff training to ensure expectations are clear and consistently upheld, while promoting a culture of inclusivity, kindness, mutual respect and consideration for others – these values will remain non-negotiable. Beyond the curriculum, PSHCEE, sport, the creative arts and enrichment programmes will provide further opportunities to develop understanding, strengthen relationships and embed the values that underpin our school community.

The SMS TAKECARE values of Teamwork, Adventure, Kindness, Enthusiasm, Curiosity, Ambition, Resilience and Excellence remain at the heart of all we do. We will always operate an open-door policy and nurture relationships with students to ensure everyone has a say and their voice is heard.

3. How will boys be helped to join a school with a long girls' school tradition?

Boys will join as valued members of St Mary's, with clear induction into the school's ethos and expectations. The aim is not to create separate cultures, but a shared community in which all pupils respect the school's history and play a full and equal role in helping to shape its next chapter. We will develop a comprehensive induction programme and we will continue to consult and invite feedback.

Curriculum, Sport and Co-curricular

1. Will the curriculum remain the same?

The core curriculum and commitment to breadth, aspiration and individual progress will remain. The usual review of our academic curriculum will continue so that the provision meets the needs and interests of all our pupils and prepares them well for examinations, higher education, careers and life beyond school. We will strive to include sport and co-curricular subjects and activities which excite all our students and this next chapter will see opportunities to increase our sporting offering and allow our students to enjoy both single sex and mixed sporting opportunities. We will strive, as we do now, to broaden our partnerships across local community sports groups and providers to ensure the needs and interest of all our students can be met.

2. What will happen to sport?

St Mary's has recently been commended in the Independent School of the Year Award for sporting achievement, thus reflecting the outstanding and varied provision we are already offering. Sport will remain a high priority for all year groups and the school will continue to provide ambitious and inclusive sporting opportunities. We will build on our existing sports programme and in recent years have included the addition of our climbing wall, our MUGA pitch and the development of new partnerships outside of the school. We remain dedicated to broadening and enhancing our sporting curriculum for all students. Teams, fixtures and competition structures will remain available to all year groups and will be run through our PE team, which will be expanded over time to meet the needs of our boys and girls.

Curriculum, Sport and Co-curricular

3. What about drama, music, trips, clubs and societies?

These will remain central to school life and will be open on a fully inclusive basis. We are excited to be able to evolve this area of the school and offer an even broader range of opportunities for music groups, productions, clubs, academic enrichment, trips and leadership roles.

4. Will careers education remain a strength?

Yes. St Mary's is nationally recognised for careers reflecting our commitment to helping every pupil understand their strengths and future options. Co-education will broaden the reach of this work while the school continues to challenge stereotypes and encourage ambitious choices for all.

Admissions

- 1. When can families apply for boys?**

The school will publish the timetable and assessment arrangements through its Admissions team. Families interested in September 2027 entry are encouraged to attend the upcoming Open Days and register their interest early. Contact can be made via our registrar, Mrs Szczerbiak: admissions@stmarysgx.co.uk.
- 2. Will boys and girls follow the same admissions process?**

Yes. Admissions will be fair, transparent and consistent with the school's published policy for everyone applying to join the school.
- 3. Will current families receive priority for sons?**

The detailed admissions policy, including any sibling priority, will be confirmed and published by the school. Families should contact the Registrar to register interest.
- 4. Will there be a specific ratio of boys to girls?**

We recognise that it may take some time to achieve parity between numbers of boys and girls. However, the school's priority will be a strong educational and pastoral experience, not an artificial numerical quota. The school will monitor cohort size and carefully manage admissions in the best interests of pupils.
- 5. Will fees or sibling discounts change?**

The move to co-education does not alter the school's policy on admissions including on sibling discounts, scholarships and bursaries and we direct you to the relevant policies on our website.

Uniform, Facilities and Site Changes

1. What uniform will boys wear?

As part of our consultation process, we will consider all elements of the school identity including our uniform. Whilst we are mindful of the cost of changes to the existing uniform for our families, we will work towards establishing a uniform befitting of our new school and adapted for boys and girls. We will ensure a phasing in of any changes for existing families.

2. Are the School's buildings suitable for boys?

A review of changing, toilet, sports, medical, pastoral and other facilities has already been part of our planning. There will, inevitably, be some modifications or alterations to some facilities but we will do our best to ensure any work needed takes place with minimum disruption outside the school term. The school will share details of these changes as soon as work is scheduled.

3. Will staffing change?

The school will plan staffing in line with pupil numbers, curriculum needs and pastoral provision. Staff will receive training and guidance for the transition. Recruitment will continue to focus on professional excellence and alignment with the school's ethos.

4. How will safeguarding policies change?

Safeguarding remains the highest priority. Policies and staff training will be reviewed fully in a co-educational context and updated in line with statutory guidance and best practice before boys join.

Sixth Form

1. Why will the Sixth Form become co-educational immediately?

Sixth Form is an important bridge between school and adult life. By welcoming boys into Year 12 from September 2027, we will create a learning environment that better reflects the universities, workplaces and communities our students will enter. At the same time, students will continue to benefit from the personalised teaching, strong pastoral support and high academic expectations that are central to the St Mary's experience.

2. Could a larger Sixth Form affect small-group teaching?

It is important that students in sixth form are stretched to achieve academic success as well as academic independence. We are committed to providing small class sizes in our sixth form which enables teachers to direct their teaching to individual students but at the same time have classes which promote debate and independent thinking.

3. Will the Sixth Form culture change?

The admission of boys will enable the culture to develop and to be more akin to the world outside of school. But the key areas of focus will not change: academic achievement, independence, leadership, critical thinking, excellent pastoral support and preparation for life beyond school.

4. Will there be vocational subjects on offer?

Whilst our subject choices will continue to be reviewed yearly, we envisage that a co-educational sixth form will enable the school to look at a broader range of opportunities. We will continue to listen to the views of our students and families.

5. Can my son join the sixth form if he doesn't already have a sister in the school?

Yes. We are delighted to welcome external candidates, including boys and girls, into Year 12. We have a long history of successfully supporting external candidates into our sixth form through an established, highly regarded and enjoyable sixth form induction programme.

Nursery

1. What changes are being made to the Nursery?

From January 2027 we are offering an all-year-round Nursery excluding only Bank Holidays. Children will be able to stay in the Nursery daily from the hours of 7.30am-6.00pm. We recognise the needs of our families to be able to access all year-round childcare of the highest standards with the convenience of being on the same school site. We believe Little St Mary's presents a wonderful opportunity to pre-school age children enjoying the benefit of all our facilities including Forest School and the all-weather sports facilities, and to choose from a wealth of opportunities in sport, music, drama and dance as well as enjoying being part of our wider school community within the Prep School.

2. How old does my child have to be before we can join the Nursery?

We are now pleased to offer the highest level of childcare through our Nursery from age 2 and welcome all enquiries. Our year-round nursery places are competitively priced within Gerrards Cross and offer all children full access to our range of facilities and resources. Click [here](#) for more detailed information.

3. Do I have to have a child in the school already to be able to join the Nursery? Or do I need to commit to a future school place?

No. There is no requirement to have any children in the school. Whilst we would love to welcome your Nursery children into the Prep school, this is not a requirement for entry into Nursery.



“

We are delighted to be able to extend the St Mary's experience and we look forward to welcoming our first boys and to the contribution they will make to our community, alongside our existing pupils.

Ultimately, our commitment is to every pupil - to provide an aspirational learning journey towards personal excellence beyond expectations. St Mary's made that promise to girls 152 years ago when the school opened its doors for the first time and we make that promise now to every boy and girl as we enter this new era.

”

Mr Lars Fox, Head