



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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Part of the St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust Determined Admissions Arrangements for 2026-2027

St Mary's is a Catholic School founded by the Catholic Church to meet the educational needs of Catholic children aged 11-18. It is a comprehensive school with six forms of entry. It is an all ability school and children will be admitted without reference to their aptitude or ability. As a Catholic school, we aim to provide a Catholic education for all our pupils. At a Catholic school, Catholic doctrine and practice permeate every aspect of the school's activity. It is essential that the Catholic character of the school's education be fully supported by all families in the school. All applicants are therefore expected to give their full, unreserved and positive support for the aims and ethos of the school.

St Mary's is part of the St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust. The academy company is the admission authority and has responsibility for admissions to this school. The local authority undertakes the co-ordination of admission arrangements during the normal admission round. The admission authority has set the school's Published Admissions Number (PAN) at 186 to year 7 in the school year which begins in September 2026.

For the academic year 2024/25 the admission authority was pleased to offer places to criteria 11 of the policy in place at the time.

Application Procedure:

All applicants **must** complete an online application form which is available online from the local authority website in which the family is resident. Paper forms also known as the Common Application Form (CAF) may also be obtained from the local authority. In addition, applicants should complete **St Mary's Supplementary Information Form (SIF)** which can be found on the website www.stmarys.net. The online or paper local authority form must be completed and submitted to the local authority by 31st October 2025. The Supplementary Information Form (SIF) should be completed and returned to the school by the 31st October 2025. If you do not complete both the online or paper form and the SIF and return them by the closing date, the admission authority may be unable to consider your application against the oversubscription criteria and this may affect your child's chance of being offered a place. Late applications will be considered after the initial allocation process has been completed. Hertfordshire's admission website can be found at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions.

Applications for criterion 1 must be accompanied by written proof of the child's status from the appropriate authority. Those wishing to be considered under criterion 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 should also provide the School with a copy of the child's baptismal certificate. If the certificate is not available, applicants should indicate in writing the reasons for this being the case.

Your local authority will contact you on behalf of the governing body with the outcome of your application on Monday 2nd March 2026 and the information will also be available on line. You should indicate your acceptance of the place as soon as possible.

Tie Break: In cases where there are more applicants in any criterion than there are places available, the places will be offered to those living nearest the school, as measured using the home-school measurement system used by Hertfordshire County Council as outlined in the County's admission arrangements and application literature for 2026 (see note h), subject to the proportional distribution in Criterion 4 among the three designated areas. If one sibling from a multiple birth gains a place, the other(s) will be admitted automatically, even if this means the published admission number will be exceeded. Similarly if two children were eligible for the last place and they lived the same distance from the school, both would be admitted. In the case of a number of addresses in a block with the same geographical reference, priority will be given to those nearest to the main entrance of the block.

Where the Supplementary Information Form is not completed by the applicant, or where the required documentation is not provided, the application will be dealt with under the lowest criterion.

All procedures must be completed within the published time limits. Late applications will be processed using the procedures published by Hertfordshire County Council in its published information. The admissions authority cannot be held responsible for any delays in submitting applications or responding to the offer of a place. The admissions authority may withdraw the offer of a place in any of the following circumstances:

- the place is not accepted within the prescribed time scale;
- in the case of fraud or the deliberate supply of misleading information;
- supporting documentation is not supplied within the prescribed time scale.

*Kindly read the **notes** that are integral with the criteria (they are printed after them).*

You are hereby advised that in the event that you do not gain admission, you have the right of appeal under the School Standards & Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the Education Act 2002). If you wish to exercise that right, you should contact your local authority. Information concerning the Appeals Procedure will be sent out to those who are unsuccessful in obtaining a place. The school maintains a continuing interest list, ranked according to the published criteria, and places will be offered as and when vacancies occur. The continuing interest list will remain open for twelve months following the normal date of admission. If you wish your child's name to stay on the continuing interest list beyond that date you must apply to the school in writing before the twelve month period expires. We will write to you with the outcome of your application and if you have been unsuccessful, the county council will write to you with registration details to enable you to log in and appeal online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals

Criteria (order of Priority in the event of oversubscription)

When the number of applicants exceeds the admission number, offers of places are made using the following criteria in order of priority.

- 1 Catholic Looked After Children and children who have been in care outside of England, Catholic children who have been adopted (or made subject to child arrangements orders, or special guardianship orders) immediately following having been looked after.**
- 2 Baptised Catholic applicants who have provided a Certificate of Catholic Baptism or of reception into the Catholic Church and who have a sibling who attends the school at the time of application.**
- 3 Baptised Catholic children of staff who have been in employment at the school for 2 years at the time of application, or 1 year if there is a demonstrable and acknowledged skill shortage. The child must live at the same address as the member of staff.**
- 4 A Baptised Catholic child with no sibling connection, in the following proportions:**
 - 45% of the remaining places to those living in the Catholic Parish of Bishop's Stortford which consists of the six Civil Parishes of Bishop's Stortford, Thorley, Little Hadham, Much Hadham, Sawbridgeworth, and High Wych.**
 - 40% of the remaining places to those living in other parts of the Lea Valley Deanery**
 - 15% of the remaining places to those living in the Catholic parishes that are based in Dunmow, Bardfield and Thaxted, Saffron Walden and Stansted.**

These areas are defined in the maps which accompany these criteria. They can be found at <http://www.stmarys.net/admissions/> If any of the three designated areas is under-subscribed, the places will be redistributed among the designated areas in the relative proportions above, before any offers are made to applicants in Criterion 5.
- 5 Any other Baptised Catholic applicant.**
- 6 Any other 'Looked After' Children, children who have been in care outside of England, and non-Catholic children who have been adopted (or made subject to child arrangements orders, or special guardianship orders) immediately following having been looked after.**
- 7 Any applicant who is a catechumen or a baptised member of an Eastern Christian Church.**
- 8 Any non-Catholic children of staff who have been in employment at the school for 2 years at the time of application, or 1 year if there is a demonstrable and acknowledged skill shortage. The child must live at the same address as the member of staff.**
- 9 Any other non-Catholic applicant with a sibling who attends the school.**
- 10 Any applicant who is a Christian of another Christian denomination. Evidence of belonging is simply provided either by a certificate of baptism or by a signed letter from the relevant Minister confirming the child belongs to that church.**
- 11 Any other applicant.**

NOTES:

- (a) **Catholic** means a member of a Church in full communion with the See of Rome. This includes the Eastern Catholic Churches. This will normally be evidenced by a certificate of baptism in a Catholic Church. For the purposes

of this Policy it also includes a “looked after” child who is in the process of adoption by a Catholic family. Family is defined as those who live at the residential address of the parent or legal guardians who are submitting an application for a place on behalf of a child.

‘Catechumen’ means a child who is a member of the catechumenate of a Catholic Church. This will normally be evidenced by a Certificate of Reception into the Order of Catechumens. **‘Eastern Christian Church’** includes Orthodox Churches, and is normally evidenced by a Certificate of Baptism or Reception from the authorities of that Church. **‘Christian’** for the purposes of this policy, means a member of one of the Churches affiliated to ‘Churches Together in Britain and Ireland’.

- (b) **Certificate of Baptism** means a certificate of Baptism in a Catholic church (or if the applicant was baptised in another Christian church and has been received into full communion with the Catholic Church, the certificate of Reception or a letter from a Catholic priest giving evidence of reception into full communion).
- (c) To qualify as a Sibling, the child needs to be a brother or sister which includes step brothers and step sisters, half brothers and sisters, or adopted brothers and sisters, who live at the same home as the child at the time of application. “At the time of application” means that the sibling must actually be on the roll of St Mary’s Catholic School at the school, or have been offered a place but not yet started at the school. Residential address is defined as where the child lives for the majority of time.
- (d) The admission of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan is dealt with by a completely separate procedure. This procedure is integral to the making and maintaining of the plans by the pupil’s home Local Education Authority. Details of this separate procedure are set out in the *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. ‘Under the Education Act 1996 the admission authority are obliged by law to admit any child with an Educational and Health Care Plan where this school is named in the Plan.’
- (e) This Admissions Policy applies only to admissions in the academic year beginning in September 2026 and ending in July 2027. Admissions policies are subject to annual review by the governing body. Consequently no assurance is given or implied that this policy will continue wholly or in part beyond July 2027.
- (f) In addition to their right of appeal, unsuccessful applicants will be offered the opportunity to be placed on a continuing interest list. This list will be maintained by the admission authority; the list will follow the order of the oversubscription criteria set out above and *not* the order in which applications are received or added to the list.
- (h) Distance measuring is carried out using the home-school measurement system used by Hertfordshire County Council as outlined in the County’s admission arrangements and application literature for the year of application: Home to school distances for admission allocation purposes will be measured along a straight line between a child’s address and the relevant school or academy. Distances are measured using a computerised mapping system to two decimal places. The measurement is taken from the AddressBase Premium address point of your child’s house to the address point of the school. AddressBase Premium data is a nationally recognised method of identifying the location of schools and individual residences. This is an objective method of measuring home to school distances consistently when applying admission rules. It does not take into account the actual or expected route a child will travel to school. A different method of measurement, using roads and pathways, is used for considering home to school transport entitlement. Where there is a need for a tiebreak where two different addresses measure the same distance from a school, in the case of a block of flats for example, the lower door number will be deemed nearest as logically this will be on the ground floor and therefore closer. If there are two identical distance measurements for different addresses of separate applicants not within the same block (which is dealt with above), the tiebreak will be random allocation. Further details can be found on www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions
- (i) An incomplete application is one where sections of the admission form have not been completed and/or the requested supporting documentation has not been provided.
- (j) A late application is one where the Common Application Form (CAF) fails to be submitted to the applicant’s Local Authority by 31/10/25. The Supplementary Information Form (SIF) should be submitted by the same date(s). If the SIF is not submitted to the school until after the allocation of places has begun, then the application will fall into criterion 11. Applications received after 31/10/25 will be dealt with after all initial offers have been made.
- (k) Fair Access Protocols: The school is committed to taking its fair share of children who are vulnerable and/or hard to place, as set out in locally agreed protocols. Accordingly, outside the normal admissions round the admission authority is empowered to give absolute priority to a child where admission is requested under any local protocol that has been agreed by both the Diocese and the Local Authority for the current school year. This means that these children will be admitted above those on the school’s continuing interest list. The admission authority has this power even when admitting the child would mean exceeding the published admission number.
- (l) In-Year Admissions: Applications for In-Year admissions are made directly to the school. If a place is available and there is no continuing interest list, the child will be admitted. If more applications are received than there are places available then applications will be ranked by the governing body in accordance with the oversubscription criteria above. If a place cannot be offered at this time then you may ask us for the reasons and you will be informed of your right of appeal. You will be offered the opportunity of being placed on the continuing interest list. This continuing interest list will be maintained by the governing body in the order of the oversubscription criteria and not in the order in which the applications are received. Names are removed from the list at the end of each academic year. When a place becomes available the governing body will re-rank the list and make an offer (see above). Once you have received written notification from the school with its decision to refuse admission, you will receive log in details from the Local Authority’s Admissions and Transport team to allow you to

access the online appeals portal at <https://schoolappeals.hertfordshire.gov.uk/home>. An independent appeal committee will consider your case to see if the particular circumstances of your case are sufficiently exceptional to override the consideration of the school and justify the admission of your child.

- (m) 'Looked after child' has the same meaning as in Section 22 of the Children Act 1989, and means any child in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by them (e.g. children with foster parents at the time of making an application to the school). Children previously looked after abroad and subsequently adopted will be prioritized if the child's previously looked after status and adoption is confirmed by Hertfordshire's "Virtual School". The child's previously looked after status will be decided in accordance with the definition outlined in The Children & Social Work Act 2017.
- i. to have been in state care in a place outside England and Wales because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately, and
 - ii. to have ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted.
- A child is in "state care" if he or she is in the care of, or accommodated by –
- (a) a public authority,
 - (b) a religious organisation, or
 - (c) any other organisation the sole or main purpose of which is to benefit society
- (n) 'Adopted': An adopted child is any child who has been formally adopted and whose parent/guardian can give proof of adoption.
- (o) 'Child Arrangements Order'. A Child Arrangements order is an order under the terms of the Children Act 1989 s.8 settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live. Children 'looked after' immediately before the order is made qualify in this category
- (p) 'Special Guardianship Order': A special guardianship order is an order under the terms of the Children Act 1989 s.14A appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian(s). Children who were 'looked after' immediately before the special guardianship order was made qualify for this category.
- (q) The address provided must be the child's current permanent address at the time of application

- At the time of application" means the closing date for applications
- "Permanent" means that the child has lived at that address for at least a year

Where a family has not lived at an address for a year, they must be able to demonstrate that they own the property or have a tenancy agreement for a minimum of 12* months and the child must be resident in the property at the time of application.

The application can only be processed using one address. If a child lives at more than one address (for example due to a separation) the address used will be the one where the child lives for the majority of the time. If a child lives at two addresses equally, parents/carers should make a single joint application naming one address.

If a child's permanent residence is disputed, parents/carers should provide court documentation to evidence the address that should be used for admission allocation purposes. If two applications are received, with different addresses and/or different preferences, neither will be processed until the address issue is reconciled.

It is for a child's home Local Authority to determine address. If two applications, with different addresses are received from the same Local Authority, it will be for that Local Authority to determine permanent address. If two applications are received from two different Local Authorities, the above process will be used

If two different applications are received for the same child from the same address, e.g., containing different preferences, parents/carers will be invited to submit a joint application or provide court documentation to evidence the preferences that should be used for the admission process. Until the preference issue is reconciled neither application will be processed.

For the transfer application rounds, if the initial differing applications (one or both) were received "on-time", an amended joint application will also be considered "on-time" if received before the "late deadline". If the amended joint application is received after the late date, it will be treated as "late". The late deadline for the 2026/27 transfer application process is 2nd December 2025 for secondary and upper applications. If these dates change, amendments will be published on the admissions web pages at the start of the 2026/27 application process in September 2025.

** If, because of the nature of the agreement, it is not possible to provide a 12-month tenancy agreement, alternative proof of address will be requested and verified as necessary with the Shared Anti-Fraud Service.*

- (r) Hertfordshire parents can access the codes needed to set up an appeals account via their Admissions account (<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/school-admissions/school-admissions-and-transport.aspx>). The codes are on the allocation page. Parents who live out-of-county or who applied on paper

will need to contact our Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 4043 in order to obtain their registration details to gain access. These they will be sent via automated email.

- (s) The admission authority will determine whether there is a national demonstrable skills shortage for posts by applying the criteria that, for a post the same as or similar to that for the member of staff in question, there was just one appointable candidate at the final interview stage, or the post had been previously and unsuccessfully advertised for.
- (t) **“Children of another Christian denomination”** means: children who belong to other churches and ecclesial communities which, acknowledging God’s revelation in Christ, confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and, in obedience to God’s will and in the power of the Holy Spirit commit themselves: to seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another in the Church, which is his body; and to fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel by common witness and service in the world to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. An ecclesial community which on principle has no credal statements in its tradition, is included if it manifests faith in Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and is committed to working in the spirit of the above. All members of Churches Together in England and of CYTŪN are deemed to be included in the above definition, as are all other churches and ecclesial communities that are in membership of any local Churches Together Group (by whatever title) on the above basis.

PUPILS WITH AN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN (EHC)

The admission of pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC) is dealt with by a completely separate procedure. Details of this separate procedure are set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. If your child has an EHC plan you must contact your local authority SEN officer. Children with this school named in their EHC Plan will be admitted to the school.

Change of details

If any of the details on your form change between the date of application and the receipt of the letter of offer or refusal, you must inform the School immediately. If purposely misleading &/or fraudulent information is given or allowed to remain on the form, governors reserve the right to withdraw the place, even if the child has already started at the School.

Children educated outside their chronological age group

Parents who wish their child to be educated outside his/her chronological age group should write a letter, addressed to the Chair of Governors, at the time of application, giving reasons for their request.

Applicant(s)

This refers to the parents and or legal guardians submitting an application for a place on behalf of a child. Or a young person of 16 years of over submitting their own application.

The families of children who are seeking admission to St Mary’s, should be fully aware of the aims of the school in seeking to implement the Catholic Church’s mission in Catholic Education and are expected to be fully supportive of the Christian ethos of the school.