



ST JOHN FISHER R.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2021

Our Mission

The school, in partnership with parents and with the parish of St. John Fisher offers to each one of its children a Catholic education centred on Christ, which enables them to develop their talents in accordance with Christian values and principles and which throughout all aspects of school life presents Christ's ministry of love and reconciliation.

Background Information

St John Fisher is a Voluntary Aided Primary School in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is in the trusteeship of the Diocese. The school is managed by its governing body as part of the Catholic Church, in accordance with its Trust Deed and Instrument of Government, and seeks at all times to be a witness to Jesus Christ.

The school exists primarily to serve the Catholic community in particular, the children of Catholic families who live or worship in the parish of St John Fisher. However, the Governing Body welcomes applications, subject to the availability of places, from those of other denominations and faiths who support the religious ethos of the school.

Having consulted with the LA, and other admission authorities, the Governors intend to admit into the reception class, in September 2019 up to 60 pupils¹ without reference to ability or aptitude.

¹ This number will include all children, whether Catholic or not, who have Education HealthCare Plan and are thereby admitted by law.

Admissions Criteria

Children are allocated a place in the school based on the following ranked criteria:

1. Baptised 'looked after'² Catholic³ children or 'looked after' children in the care of Catholic families
2. Baptised practising⁴ Catholic children who are resident in the parish of St John Fisher, Merton.
3. Baptised practising Catholic children from other parishes
4. Other baptised Catholic children
5. Other 'looked after' children.
6. Children who are members of Eastern Christian Churches including Orthodox Churches. Evidence of Baptism will be required.
7. Children of families who are committed members of other Christian denominations. Evidence of Baptism (or dedication) and of religious commitment provided by a priest or minister where the family regularly worship, will be required.
8. Children of other faiths. Evidence of religious commitment provided by a priest, minister or religious leader where the family regularly worship, will be required.
9. Any other children.

² The law requires the school to give priority to the admission of children who are looked after children or who were previously looked after children. (A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see definition in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989). A previously looked after child is a child who was adopted, or subject to a residence order, or special guardianship order, immediately following having been looked after). Catholic children who are looked after children are given first priority and non-Catholic children who are looked after children are admitted after places have been offered to Catholics children but before other children.

³ Catholic means being a baptised member of the Latin Rite (Roman Catholic) Church or of an Oriental Rite Catholic Church in communion with the Holy See. The Oriental Rite Catholic Churches in communion with the Holy See are the Maronite and Italo-Albanian Catholic Churches; the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar Catholic Churches; the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian and Syro-Malankara Catholic Churches; the Melkite, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and Romanian Catholic Churches; the Greek Catholic Church, the Byzantine Catholics in former Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian, Slovak and Hungarian Catholic Churches and the Eastern Catholic Communities (Russian, Belarusian, Georgian and Albanian) without hierarchies.

⁴ Practising Catholic means attending Sunday Mass (which includes Saturday evening) each week for the past two years. This will be verified by the Priest on the Supplementary Form. If this is less than 2 years, a letter from the family's previous Parish Priest will be required for verification. This will be verified by the Priest on the supplementary application form.

Oversubscription Criteria

When applications within any one of the above categories exceed the places available and it is necessary to decide between applications, the provisions below will be applied in the following order:

- I. The attendance of a sibling⁵ at the school at the time of admission
- II. For categories 1, 2, 3 & 4 above, the strength of commitment to the faith as demonstrated by the level of the family's Mass attendance. The evidence must be provided by the parents or guardians and should be endorsed by the priest(s) at the church (es) where the family normally worships. Applications will be ranked in the order shown on the supplementary form, first weekly, fortnightly, monthly and less often. **Please note a new supplementary information form for entry into reception will need to be submitted.**
- III. For categories 6, 7 and 8 above, the strength of evidence of commitment to the faith as demonstrated by the level of the family's attendance at services. This evidence must be provided by the parents or guardians and can be endorsed by a priest or minister from the place where the family normally worships.
- IV. The governing body may give priority to an application within a category where evidence is provided, at the time of application, of an exceptional social, medical or pastoral need of the child which makes the school particularly appropriate for the child in question.⁶
- V. The distance from the child's home to the school gate. This will be measured in a straight line as provided by the LA⁷

⁵ Siblings include blood siblings, adopted children and siblings by marriages (step-brothers/sisters, half brothers/sisters) who reside at the same address. A child who is living as part of the family unit by reason of a court order or a child who has been placed with foster carers as a result of being 'looked after' by the local authority.

⁶ Special circumstances include educational, medical, social and compassionate reasons why the application of one child should be given precedence over others. Other circumstances which may merit special consideration include the children of Crown servants, diplomats or armed forces personnel, those returning or moving to the UK from overseas, refugees and asylum seekers, and other social or family circumstances by which the child is adversely affected. Each application made under the special circumstances category must include at least one letter from a relevant professional (such as a social worker, doctor, priest, primary school head teacher or educational psychologist) which sets out evidence in support of the application. The application will need to demonstrate why a place specifically at St. John Fisher primary school is in the child's best interests. The governors will weigh each application on its individual merits, considering all and only the evidence submitted to them, also taking into consideration the ability of the school to meet individual needs and the overall balance of the school population. On the basis of the case presented to them, the governors will decide whether or not an application is eligible for admission under special circumstances.

⁷ Distance from home to school: when applying admission criteria, distances are measured using the distances provided by the Local Authority, derived from their computerised mapping system with priority being given to those who live nearest the school. Full details can be found in the Local Authority [Admission Arrangements](#). The child's address should be that of the child's permanent residence. You may not give the address of a relative or carer unless they have legal custody of the child. If parents are separated and share custody of the child, the address given should be that of the parent with whom the child spends most of the school week, which will normally be the address where Child Benefit is payable. If the parent making the application lives at a different address from the child, a letter of explanation should be attached. An application can only be made from a single address, and only a single application can be made for each child. It is not acceptable for a family to use a temporarily rented address to secure a place of their preference. In disputed cases, the Governors will make a judgement based on the evidence available to them.

Admissions Procedure

- In addition to the Common Application Form supplied by the LA, the Supplementary Information and Priest's Declaration Form, available from the school, must be completed and sent to the school not later than the closing date published by the LA. Should you live or practise in the Parish of St John Fisher, then the Priest's declaration form may be returned to school where the Parish priest will complete it. You are advised to make two copies of the forms. You should retain one copy and pass the second copy to the school, as indicated on the form itself.
- Children are educated in school with others of their age group. However, parents may request that their child is exceptionally admitted outside their age group. The Local school will decide whether or not the individual child's circumstances make this appropriate, taking into account of the child's individual needs and abilities and considering which year group these needs can best be met.
Such requests will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances. Teachers are skilled at differentiating the curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs.
- Before deciding to apply to submit a request, parents should visit the school(s) they are thinking of applying for. The teachers will be able to explain the provision on offer to children in the year of entry, how it is tailored to meet the needs of all pupils and how the needs of these pupils will continue to be met as they move up through the school. They may also be able to allay any concerns the parent may have.
- Decisions will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parent's views;
 - information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
 - where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional;
 - whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group
 - and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely.
- All requests should include recent professional evidence of the child's circumstances which make education outside the age group necessary. Evidence must be of the individual child's need, rather than general factors which relate to a wider group of children born at a similar time. Views of the preference school(s) will also be taken into account Parents requesting admission to an age group below the child's actual age should submit an application for the child's actual age group before the relevant closing date. The request for later admission should accompany the application. This enables the application to be processed and a school place secured in the child's actual age group if the request is refused by an Admission Authority. Parents will be informed of the outcome of their request prior to offer day.
- Offers of places will be sent to all parents on the common offer date, as notified by the LA.

Appeals

Parents whose applications for places are unsuccessful may appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel set up in accordance with sections 88 and 94 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Appeals must be made in writing and must set out the reasons on which the appeal

is made. Appeals should be made to the Admissions Appeal Clerk at the school address. Applicants have the right to make oral representations to the Appeal Panel.

Waiting Lists

Parents of children who have not been offered a place at the school may ask for their child's name to be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list will be operated using the criteria listed above. Placing a child's name on the waiting list does not guarantee that a place will become available. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

Late Applications

Any late applications will be considered by the Governors' Admissions Committee, in the event of there being any available places using the above criteria. If all places have been filled, parents will be offered the opportunity of placing their child's name on the waiting list. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.

This admissions procedure, although primarily relevant to children for whom a place is sought at the normal age of entry to primary education (Year R), applies also to succeeding years, subject to availability of places.

Nursery

The same criteria as for admission to the main school will also be applied for Nursery places, although a different application form is used which is obtained from and returned to the school by their published cut-off dates. Entry to Nursery will normally be in the term following the child's third birthday. There are a maximum of 52 places in St John Fisher Nursery per academic year group. It must be noted that admission to the school Nursery does not guarantee a place in the main school.

Admission of children to the nursery: exceptional circumstances

- Children are normally offered three terms of Nursery education and are admitted to the Nursery in the September following their third birthday
- Applications are closed on 31st January and the Admission Committee reviews all the Applications for places for children whose fourth birthday will fall between 1 September and 31st August (the next school year).
- The criteria of the Admissions Policy are applied to all of these children and places are offered in accordance with the outcome.
- If the Nursery is oversubscribed, parents are told that their child cannot be offered a place. They may elect to keep the child's name on a waiting list.
- If vacant places remain, late applications from children in the same year-group are accepted without applying the criteria and further offers of places are made.

- If vacant places remain by 31 October the Admission Committee considers offering early places in January to children in the following year-group. These children will have five terms of Nursery education.
- Applications are closed on 31 October and the Admission Committee reviews all the applications for places for children whose third birthday falls before 31 October.
- The criteria of the Admissions Policy are applied to them and places are offered in accordance with the outcome.
- As these places will be exceptional rather than routine offers, only successful applicants are notified.
- If places remain vacant by 30 November, the Admissions Committee reviews all the applications for places for children whose third birthday falls before 31 December.
- Parents may accept offers of early places or may prefer to wait until the usual date of entry. Refusal of an early offer does not affect the normal admission process.