

St Mark's Academy Admissions Policy

This document sets out the admission arrangements for St Mark's Academy (the Academy) for the year 2023/2024. The admission arrangements in this policy were determined on 31 January 2022.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain **how parents can apply** for a place for their child at the Academy
- Set out the Academy's **arrangements for allocating places to the pupils** who apply
- Explain **how parents can appeal** against a decision not to offer their child a place

Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):

- [School Admissions Code](#)
- [School Admission Appeals Code](#)

As an academy, the Academy is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).

The admission authority is Anthem Schools Trust (Anthem). Reference in the codes and elsewhere to admission authorities shall be deemed to be references to the Local Governing Body acting on behalf of Anthem. This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

The Academy will participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by the local authority and will adhere to the Local Authority Fair Access Protocol. Local authorities are required to agree Fair Access Protocols in order to make sure that unplaced children, who live in the home local authority, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible. This includes admitting children above the published admissions number to schools that are already full. Students allocated under fair access protocols will take precedence over those on a reserve list or awaiting appeal. Notwithstanding these arrangements, the Secretary of State may direct the Academy to admit a named student on application from the local authority. Before doing so the Secretary of State will consult the Academy.

Christian ethos

St Marks Academy is an all-inclusive Church of England Academy built on the foundations of Love, Hope and Trust. The Academy has a distinctive Christian ethos which is at the heart of this Academy and provides an inclusive, caring and supportive environment where children learn and flourish in a setting shaped by Christian values. We welcome applications from all members of the community and we ask all parents to respect the Christian ethos of our Academy and its importance to our community. We are committed to developing an inclusive academy that reflects the diversity of the local community. We welcome children and families of all faiths and of no faith.

How to apply

For applications in the normal admissions round parents should use the co-ordinated admission application process arranged by their home local authority (regardless of which local authority the Academy is in). Parents can use this process to express their preference for a minimum of three state-funded schools, in rank order.

Parents will receive an offer for an Academy place directly from their local authority.

For applications outside of the normal admissions round, please see the section entitled 'In-Year admissions' below.

Consideration of applications

The Academy will consider all applications for places. The Academy has an agreed admission number of 180 (the Published Admission Number – PAN) pupils for entry in 7. Where fewer than 180 applications are received, the Academy will offer places to all those who have applied. We reserve the right to check any address and other information provided so we can apply the oversubscription criteria accurately and fairly. As an admission authority we have the right to investigate any concerns we may have about your application and to withdraw the offer of a place if we consider there is evidence that you have made a fraudulent claim or provided misleading information, for example if a false address was given which denied a place to a child with a stronger claim. If a place is withdrawn, the application will be considered afresh and you will be advised of your right of appeal if a place is refused

. Before setting a PAN higher than its agreed admission number, the Academy will inform the local authority and reference this change on the Academy's website. Students will not be admitted above the PAN unless exceptional circumstances apply, and such circumstances shall be reported to the Secretary of State.

Procedures where the Academy is oversubscribed

A: Foundation places

The Governing Body has designated 60 places to be offered to pupils whose parent/carer is a faithful and regular worshipper in an Anglican or other Christian Church¹. If there are more than 60 applicants who qualify for a foundation place, after the admission of pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) where the Academy is named in the EHCP, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below, in order:

¹ Written evidence of the parent/carer's commitment to their place of worship will be required at the time of application which must be returned to the Academy on the Supplementary Information Form at Annex 1; this evidence must be endorsed by your religious leader. A Christian Church is one that is a full member of a local Churches Together Group, Churches Together in England, The Evangelical Alliance, or Affinity or FIEC. Faithful and regular worshipper is defined as attendance of the parent/carer at worship, virtually or in-person, at least fortnightly for at least two years prior to application. In exceptional cases a parent/carer for whom unavoidable circumstances (which includes the coronavirus pandemic) have prevented his/her attendance at worship at least fortnightly for at least two years prior to application may be considered to be a faithful and regular worshipper; the relevant religious leader will determine whether, or not, there were unavoidable circumstances. Higher preference is not given to families where two parents worship. It is not a requirement that the child applying for a place has attended the place of worship with the parent/carer.

- Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children², including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
 - Children whose parent/carer is a regular and faithful worshipper in an Anglican or Christian Church (see footnote 1), with a Sibling³ attending the Academy at the time of application. In the event of there being more siblings than there are remaining places in a year, it is possible that a sibling under these circumstances would not be offered a place.
- Children of a parent/carer who is a regular and faithful worshipper in an Anglican or Christian Church (see footnote 1 above) and also staff at the Academy, in either of the following circumstances:
 - a) The member of any member of staff has been employed at the Academy for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the Academy is made, or
 - b) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
- Children whose parent/carer is a regular and faithful worshipper in an Anglican or Christian Church (see footnote 1 above).

If there are fewer than 60 qualified applicants for foundation places, any unfilled places will become additional open places. Unsuccessful qualified applicants for foundation places will be considered for any open places remaining.

B: Open places

The Academy has designated 120 places each year as open places, to be offered to pupils who do not qualify for a foundation place, but whose parents have chosen the Academy for the type of education it provides. Parents applying for an open place do so knowing that the Academy aims to provide an education based on Christian principles and, therefore, hopes that all pupils will take part in the Christian worship of the Academy and attend religious education lessons.

If there are more than 120 applicants, after the admission of pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) where the Academy is named in the EHCP, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below, in order:

² 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 the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school. A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society. Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order). This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children's Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders). Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by Section 12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order. Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

³ 'Sibling' is defined in these arrangements as half, full, step, adoptive or foster brother or sister living predominantly in the same home as the child at the time of application and/or at the time of admission.

- Looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. The definitions here will be the same as set out above for Foundation Places.
- Children with a Sibling attending the Academy at the time of application. ‘Sibling’ is defined as set out above.
- Children of any member of staff at the Academy, in either of the following circumstances:
 - a) The member of staff has been employed at the Academy for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the Academy is made, or
 - b) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
- Other children by distance from the Academy, with priority for admission given to children who live nearest to the Academy. Distance will be measured in a straight line from the Post Office Address Point of the home to the Post Office Address Point of the Academy, calculated electronically to three figures after the decimal point (e.g. 1.543 miles). The home address is considered as the address where the child lives for the majority of term time with a parent (as defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996) who has parental responsibility for the child (as defined in the Children Act 1989). Where a child lives normally during the school week with more than one parent at different addresses, the home address accepted for the purposes of school admissions will be the one where the child spends the majority of term time. If a parent can show that their child spends an equal amount of time at two addresses during school term time with a parent, they can choose which address to use on the application. If a parent has more than one home, we will accept the address where the parent and child normally live for the majority of the school term time as the home address.

Tie-break

The oversubscription criteria for both foundation and open places are listed in the order we apply them. If it is necessary to distinguish between more than one applicant in any criteria, the next criteria will be applied until the tie-breaker is used. In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the Academy will use random allocation as a tie breaker to decide between applicants. This process will be independently verified by someone who does not work at the Academy or the local authority.

Multiple births and siblings in the same year

If Siblings (as defined above) in the same year group are split by operation of the oversubscription criteria, the Academy will go above its published admission number, where applicable, to accommodate all Siblings unless this would make the class too large and prejudice the education of the other children.

Children of UK Service Personnel (UK Armed Forces)

In order to support the military covenant aimed at removing disadvantage for UK service personnel (UK Armed Forces), and Crown Servants returning from abroad the following arrangements will apply;

- If an application is supported by an official letter declaring a posting and a relocation date then an intention to move to a confirmed address or quartering within the UK will be accepted for a child for the purposes of implementing the oversubscription criteria.

- Where an application is not supported by an official letter declaring a posting and relocation date, or is not being made due to a new posting then the child's current address will be used to examine the application against the oversubscription criteria until the child is formally resident in the new address.
- Proof of intended occupation of the residential address such as mortgage statement, exchange of contracts or signed tenancy agreement will be required. For applicants participating in the Future Accommodation Model trial, a letter accepting an address under the scheme will be accepted if a signed tenancy agreement cannot be provided.
- An offer may be withdrawn if a child does not reside at the address listed on the application form if the Academy is oversubscribed and use of an incorrect address has resulted in a place being denied to another child who would otherwise have been offered the place.
- If a family have provided the required proof of posting, a unit postal address will be accepted for the purposes of operating the oversubscription criteria if parents are unable to provide an address or prefer to use the unit address. This unit will be the base to which the parent has been posted.
- In all cases where an applicant is considered after national offer day of the admitting year and parents can demonstrate that the child is a child of a crown servant returning from abroad or is a child of a serving member of the armed forces, the Academy will consider whether to offer a place at a Academy even if the Academy has reached its official PAN. When making the decision whether to offer over PAN the Academy will consider the circumstances of each case including:
 - If the applicant would have been offered a place had they applied on time in the admissions round of the year of entry.
 - Whether there is any child on the reserve list with higher priority under the oversubscription criteria.
 - Whether admission of a further student would prejudice the efficient education and efficient use of resources and this prejudice would be excessive.

The Academy has discretion to admit above the admission number in these circumstances but they are not obliged to do so. If a place is refused, parents will be informed of their right of appeal.

Sixth forms

The PAN for Year 12 is 25. This PAN is the minimum number of places for external students. The entry criteria and courses on offer can be found in the Sixth Form Prospectus and on the Academy website. The entry criteria for sixth form is the same for internal and external applicants.

Where the sixth form is oversubscribed, priority for admission will be given to those students meeting the entry criteria in the following order, after the admission of pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) where the Academy is named in the EHCP:

- Looked after children and all previously looked after children, including those children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. The definitions here will be the same as set out above.

- Children with a Sibling attending the Academy at the time of application⁴. In the event of there being more siblings than there are remaining places in a year group, it is possible that a sibling under these circumstances would not be offered a place. Where siblings exceed the remaining places in a year group, places will be allocated by the drawing of lots.
- Children of any member of staff at the Academy, in either of the following circumstances:
 - a) The member of staff has been employed at the Academy for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the Academy is made, or
 - b) The member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
- Students with the highest average points score across all GCSE subjects taken by the applicant with priority given to students with the highest average score first.
- Other students by distance from the Academy, with priority for admission given to students who live nearest to the Academy. Distance will be measured in a straight line from the Post Office Address Point of the home to the Post Office Address Point of the Academy, calculated electronically to three figures after the decimal point (e.g. 1.543 miles). The home address is considered as the address where the student lives for the majority of term time. This may be with a parent (as defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996). Where a student lives normally during the Academy week with more than one parent at different addresses, the home address accepted for the purposes of Academy admissions will be the one where the child spends the majority of term time. If a student can show that they spend an equal amount of time at two addresses during Academy term time with a parent, they can choose which address to use on the application. If a student has more than one home, we will accept the address where the student normally lives for the majority of the Academy term time as the home address.

The rules above on tie-break, multiple births and UK service personnel also apply to entry at sixth form. Any meetings held to discuss options or courses will not form part of the decision process as to whether to offer a place. The parent or young person can appeal for a place if the application is refused as per the processes set out in this policy.

Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. It is important for parents to note that they will have the opportunity and responsibility to provide whatever evidence they wish to support their request. Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. In accordance with the Academy Admissions Code, this will include taking account of:

- Parents' 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

⁴ 'Sibling' as defined above.

- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The Headteacher's views

If applying during the normal admissions round, parents must apply for a place in the child's normal age group at the usual time. At the same time, parents may make their application for admission out of the normal age group. Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group.

Parents will be informed of the Academy's decision before April 16 and will always be informed of the reasons for any decision on the year group a child should be admitted to. Once informed of the Academy's decision, parents may withdraw their application for the normal age group if their application for deferment is agreed or decide to accept the offer of the normal age range if they are refused. Alternatively, they could refuse this offer and make an in-year application (see below). Parents do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the Academy but it is not in their preferred age group.

Operation of waiting lists

Where years 7 to 10 the Academy receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will operate. There will be one list for Foundation places and one for Open places. This will be maintained by the Academy and it will be open to any parent to ask for his or her child's name to be placed on the waiting list, following an unsuccessful application. No waiting list is held for Year 11 as admissions into this year are coordinated by the local authority.

Children's position on the waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria set out above. Where places become vacant, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. The waiting list for admissions will be ranked again every time a child is added, in line with the published oversubscription criteria. For the intake year the list is held until the end of August. After this the Academy admissions code requires that schools keep the reserve list until the end of the autumn term.

In-year applications

Parents can apply for a place for their child at any time outside the normal admissions round. Applications for in-year admissions should be sent to the Merton local authority admission team. As is the case in the normal admissions round, all children whose EHCP names the Academy will be admitted. If admission would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources, it may be necessary to refuse a place.

If there are no spaces available at the time of the application, the child's name may on request be added to the waiting list for the relevant year group. Please see above for how the waiting list is operated.

Further information about in-year applications is available on our Academy website.

Appeals

If an application for a place at the Academy is unsuccessful (whether made during the normal admissions round or in-year), parents will be informed why admission was refused and given information about the process for hearing appeals. If parents wish to appeal, they must set out the grounds for the appeal and send it in writing to the Academy or to the following email address:

school@stmarksacademy.org.uk

Monitoring of this policy

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Anthem every year.

Whenever relevant changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the agreed admission number), the Academy will publicly consult on these changes in accordance with the Admissions Code.