



ST MARY'S CE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL, SAFFRON WALDEN

Our motto is: 'Let your light shine... as you grow', (inspired by Matthew 5: 15-16)

Our vision is: 'We nurture our pupils to be the best they can be in every way - in an inclusive and supportive environment, rooted in Christian teachings.'

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2026-2027

St. Mary's School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School within the Diocese of Chelmsford. Essex County Council (ECC) operates an agreed coordinated admissions scheme in line with government legislation. ECC will coordinate the process on behalf of the school according to the scheme published each year. The Governing Body, as the Admission Authority, will allocate the available places in line with this policy however offers will then be made to families by the Essex Local Authority (LA). This is for the age group at which pupils are or will normally be admitted to the school e.g. reception, (in accordance with the School Admissions Code, September 2021).

The published admission number for Reception each year is 30 and the total capacity of the school is 210. We provide a full-time place (see page 2 for **admission of children outside their normal age group**, in accordance with section 2.17c of the School Admission Code, September 2021) for children from the September following their fourth birthday. This means that children born on and between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 will normally be admitted into Reception in the academic year beginning September 2026 (during which they will become 5 years of age). All children will normally be admitted through a phased entry during September 2026. Children are admitted without reference to ability or aptitude. For delayed entry into reception please see below.

The governors have a duty to admit any pupil with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), previously a final statement of special educational needs, names the School. Where possible such children will be admitted within the PAN. During the Summer term of 2026, parents and children who have been offered a 2026 2027 Reception class place will be invited to the school to discuss admission arrangements and begin settling in.

Application Procedures

The Local Authority (LA) co-ordinates admissions arrangements for all primary schools within Essex. (Parents of three or four-year-old children will receive a notification regarding applications directly from the LA in November 2025). Applications are encouraged to be made online and parents can apply for up to four schools in ranked preference order. For full details see www.essex.gov.uk/admissions. The closing date for applications to be received by ECC is 15th January 2026. Parents/carers of children not living in Essex must make an application to their home local authority. The LA (Essex) administers the allocation of places for Reception children and written offers of places will be issued by them during the Spring Term 2026.

Parents/carers applying for a place at St Mary's who meet the requirements of categories 2 and 7 of the Oversubscription Criteria below should also complete our Supplementary Information Form (SIF) and return it to the school office by the closing date of 15th January 2026. If a SIF is not completed, the Governing Body will apply their admission arrangements using the information submitted on the ECC form only, which may result in your application being given a lower priority. It is essential that parents wishing their children to attend St. Mary's CE (A) Primary School, should register their preferences by the published closing date.

The school's published admission number (PAN) is 30. If the school receives fewer applications than the number of available places, all applicants will be offered a place.

If a child is admitted after the initial allocation of places due to a procedural error by the admission authority or local authority, or following a successful appeal to an independent appeals panel, the admission will be honoured even if this results in the PAN being exceeded.

Additionally, if one child from a set of twins or multiple births is allocated a place, the Governing Body will also offer places to the other sibling(s), even if doing so causes the school to exceed its PAN.

The school provides for the admission of all successful applicants who have reached their 4th birthday by the end of August 2026.

Admission authorities must provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. The authority must make it clear in their arrangements that where they have offered a child a place at a school:

- a) that child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday;
- b) the child's parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which it was made; and
- c) where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

Please note:

a. Section 324 of the Education Act 1996 requires the Governing Bodies of all maintained schools to admit a child with an Education Health and Care Plan that names the school.

b. The Governing Body co-operates with the ECC's Fair Access protocol for children who are hard to place. Children admitted under this protocol will be prioritised over any children on the school's waiting list and can, if necessary, be admitted even if the year group is full and the PAN has already been reached.

c. If the school is not oversubscribed, it will admit all children of the correct age who apply to join the Reception year. If the school receives more applications than places available, the oversubscription criteria set out in the below will be used to allocate all available places.

d. a child can attend on a part-time basis or on a time-limited reduced timetable, until the child reaches compulsory school age or if the school feels this is in the best interests of the child. This must be agreed before the child starts the school in September 2026.

Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may request a place for their child outside of their normal age group. For example, parents/carers of Summer born children (1 April – 31 August) may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request instead that the child is admitted into Reception rather than Year 1.

A request for a place outside of normal age group should be made to the Governing Body's Chair of Admissions Committee, providing reasons for the request with supporting evidence from relevant professionals working with the child and family. The decision is made by the Admissions Committee on a case by case basis considering the best interests of the child and the views of the headteacher. The request should be made in the September prior to the normal entry in the following September, (but no later than October 1st), to give sufficient time for the case to be considered by the Admissions Committee prior to the normal application process deadline.

If the request is refused, parents could still apply for admission to reception to the child's normal age group by the usual closing date. Parents who are refused a place for which they have applied have the right of appeal to an independent admission panel who will examine if the admission criteria have been properly applied. Parents do not have this right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the year group they would like.

Educating a child out of their chronological year group

Parents/carers may seek a place at a school outside of a child's normal age group, for example if the child has experienced problems such as ill health. Any such request must be made in writing with an application clearly setting out the reasons, with any supporting evidence from relevant professionals such as teachers or doctors. Each such case will be considered by St Mary's Primary School on an individual basis – external advice may be sought. The Headteacher's views will also be sought.

Such applications will be considered by the Governing Body on a case by case basis. Each case will be judged on its individual merits and in the best interests of the child but to admit out of year group would require exceptional and extenuating circumstances and professional evidence explaining why the child's needs cannot be met in the chronological year group. There is no guarantee that a request for a place outside of a child's normal age group will be agreed but the school will reach its decision based on the best interests of the child.

Over-subscription Criteria (see definitions in notes below)

Where applications expressing a preference for St Mary's CE (A) Primary School exceed the number of places available, the order of priority for admission to the school will be as follows:

Criterion 1: Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC), (*3).
Criterion 2: Faith-based Oversubscription Criteria Children whose parent or carer is a regular worshipper at any Anglican Church in the parochial area of the Saffron Walden team ministry. Regular worshipper means that the parent or carer has attended public worship on average at least once a month for at least a year prior to the date of application. (*6).
Criterion 3: Siblings Children who have siblings (*4) in any year group of the school except the final year at the time of application.
Criterion 4: Catchment Area Children residing in the catchment area;(*2)
Criterion 5: Children of Staff Children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances: where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. (*5).
Criterion 6: Exceptional Medical Circumstances Those who would benefit from attendance at this school in exceptional medical circumstances based on evidence provided by medical professionals to support the application.
Criterion 7: Other Faiths Children of parents who are members of other faiths but who express a desire for a church school education (*6)
Criterion 8: Any Other Children Any other applicants.

In the event of oversubscription, within any of the above criteria, priority will be determined by straight line distance (calculated electronically by the LA) from home to school with those living closest being given the highest priority. Random allocation will be used as a tie-break to decide who has highest priority for admission if the distance between two children's homes and the school is the same. This process will be independently verified.

Notes

1 – **Distance:** If any category is oversubscribed the available places will be allocated to those applicants whose home address is closest to the school, using ECC's straight-line distance measurement system. Distances are measured using a computerised mapping system to two decimal places. The measurement is taken from the address point of the child's home to the address point of the school using google maps. When there is a need for a tie break because two addresses are the same distance from the school (e.g. a block of flats) the applicant with the lower door number would be classed as nearest and offered a place because they are likely to be closer to the ground floor and, therefore, the school. Every child entered on the ECC admissions database has an individual number assigned, between 1 and 1 million, against each preference school. When there is a need for a final tie-break the random number is used to allocate the place, with the lowest number given priority.

2.- **Home Address:** The address provided on the application form 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 at the time of application, 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. 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 Essex County Council's Shared Anti-Fraud Service.

It is for the Governing Body (as the admission authority) to determine the address to be used for admission purposes.

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, neither will be processed until the address issue is reconciled.

Applications made as part of the main Reception admissions round are processed by Essex County Council ("ECC") on behalf of the Governing Body, in accordance with ECC's published coordinated admission schemes. Mid-year applications are processed by the school (the Admission's Authority) in accordance with the ECC published coordinated admission's schemes.

If ECC receives two different applications 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.

3. – Looked after and previously looked after children: A child looked after 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 function (section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Children in the process of being placed for adoption are classified by law as children looked after providing there is a Placement Order and the application would be prioritised under Criterion 1. Children who were not looked after immediately before being adopted, or made the subject of a child arrangements order or a special guardianship order, will not be prioritised under Criterion 1.

A 'child arrangements order' is an order setting out the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live with.

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.

Governors will seek advice from the Virtual School Head when considering applications for children adopted from state care outside England.

4 – Siblings under category (3): A sibling is defined as the brother, sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, child of the parent/carer or partner or a child looked after or previously looked after and in every case the child must be living permanently in a placement within the home as part of the family household from Monday to Friday. A sibling link will not be recognised for children living temporarily in the same house, for example a child who usually lives with one parent but has temporarily moved or a looked after child in a respite or very short-term or bridging foster placement. The sibling must be on the roll of the school at the time of application (or have been offered and have accepted a place) and be expected to still be on roll at the time the applicant is admitted.

5 – Children of staff under category (5): The staff member must have a permanent contract and be the child's parent by blood or adoption or have legal parental responsibility for that child. Children of the partners of staff will also be included if the child has been living permanently at the same address as the member of staff (at least Monday to Friday) as a single-family unit for at least one year at the time of application.

6 – Applications under church category (2): At least one of the child's parents/carers must meet the attendance requirement. Applications under this criterion must be supported by a completed SIF, signed by the relevant minister. In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the Christian church has been closed for

public worship and has not provided alternative premises for that worship, the requirements of these admissions arrangements in relation to attendance will only apply to the period when the Christian church or alternative premises have been available for public worship.

“Christian Church” means a church which is a member of Churches Together in England, the Evangelical Alliance or Affinity.

7 - Definition of “parent” for school admissions

A “parent” includes:

- All biological (natural) parents — whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has **parental responsibility** for the child or young person: for example an adoptive parent, a legal guardian, or a step-parent / civil partner who has acquired that status.
- Any person who has **care** of the child — that is, someone with whom the child lives, and who looks after them, even if that person does not have parental responsibility or a legal relationship to the child (e.g. a foster carer or relative with whom the child resides).

Mid Year Admissions

Parents can make an online in year application via the school website <https://www.stmaryssw.org.uk/admission-arrangements/>. A SIF is required for applications under categories 2 and 7. If a SIF is not completed, the Governing Body will apply the school’s admission arrangements using only the information supplied on the local authority’s form, which may result in the application being given a lower priority.

Waiting List (WL)

In the event of more applications than available places, the school (Admission Authority) will maintain a Waiting List. A child’s position on the WL will be determined by the admissions criteria and may change as other children join or leave the list. If a place at the school becomes available it will be offered to the child that best meets the published admission rules. The WL will be kept for every year group until the end of the Autumn term of the following academic year (31st December). To retain a WL application after this time, parents/carers must confirm they are still interested in a place by completing an 2026-2027 Mid-Year application form.

Appeals

Parents/carers who have not been allocated a place for their child in the reception class have the right of appeal to an independent panel. Parents wishing to appeal who applied through ECC’s online system should log on to their online application and follow the link <https://www.essex.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/admissions/after-your-school-offer/appeals>. Out of County residents and paper applicants should email statutoryappeals@essex.gov.uk or call Essex County Council on 0345 603 2200 for support. For Mid-year applications, ECC will write to applicants with the outcome of the application.

Applications from parents with shared responsibility:

Parents must nominate one address for the child’s domicile. Only one application can be made on behalf of the child to the local authority. For further information please refer to: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/admissions> (Primary School places, Primary School admission booklet, Shared parental responsibility).

Withdrawal of offer of placement:

The school reserves the right to withdraw an offer of placement when:

1. The offer has been made in error.
2. The placement was obtained through fraudulent or an intentionally misleading application.
3. Where the parent or guardian has failed to respond to an offer of placement and has subsequently failed to respond to further communication from the school and has exceeded a specified date set by the school.

Other Information

A map of the catchment area is available for inspection at the school office and on our school website <https://www.stmaryssw.org.uk/attachments/documents.asp?id=1259> (*4)

Policy ratified by Full Governing Body in November 2024

Please note: this policy is reviewed annually in November by the St Mary's Admissions Committee and ratified in the Full Governing Body meeting in November of each year. When changes are made, this policy will be shared with the Diocese of Chelmsford, before it is formally published.