



St Columba's College Admissions Policy

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

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Section 1 Principles

The purpose of the College admissions process is to identify applicants whose academic and other abilities appear to match the curriculum challenges the College provides. It also seeks to assess those personal qualities each child has which will complement its ethos and standards. These elements combined suggest they have the potential to thrive in the school by benefiting from the many opportunities that are offered and contribute actively to promote the educational mission.

As part of the confederation of United States Brothers' of the Sacred Heart schools, the College serves a broad cross section of students and therefore welcomes applications from prospective students irrespective of, for example, their background, race, religion or belief.

St Columba's College is a Roman Catholic, independent day school for boys and girls, aged 4-18. Entry to the College is by a process of selection, primarily on academic grounds. However, other aspects, such as the ability of the College to meet a child's needs appropriately, is taken into account.

The selection process comprises several components, these being academic examination, an interview, reports and a reference from the candidate's feeder schools.

Parents are also required to provide any educational reports, SEN information and reports, diagnosis and behavioural reports, medical history, and in the case of entry to the Sixth Form any subject access details, before a decision on offering a place is taken.

Once an offer has been accepted and information relative to the above is subsequently submitted, effectively post offer, then the College reserves the right to reassess the offer of the place in the light of non-disclosure of such pertinent information and the place may be withdrawn.

The decision to offer a place is made by the Headmaster (for the Senior School) or the Head of Prep (for the Early Years and Prep School). The admissions process is managed by the Admissions Registrar.

The College is open to all prospective students. No applicant is treated less favourably during the application process or during assessment on the grounds of their special educational needs or because of a "protected characteristic" under the Equality Act such as their race, ethnic or national origin, gender reassignment, religious faith or belief, sexual orientation or disability. The College may in exceptional circumstances consider applications for a place from a transgender prospective student who is undergoing gender reassignment; each application is considered on a case by case basis and requires consideration of what adjustments could be made to accommodate them should an offer of a place be made.

Section 2 Overall Philosophy

While the College would expect a child who secures a place in the school, at whatever stage of entry, to stay with us on their educational journey, it must be clearly understood that each phase of education, Prep until Prep 6 (Reception to yr 6), Forms 1-3 (yrs 7-9), GCSE Form 4-5 (yrs 10-11) and Sixth Form (yrs 12-13) offer significant and unique challenges in terms of breadth and depth of study. As such, it is not a given that the College can support each individual through to 18 years old. At each stage, regard will be taken of each child's progress and where

there are concerns regarding suitability to progress to the next stage of learning, staff will involve parents in the strategy to be adopted case by case.

Section 3 Conditions of Admission

It is a condition for admission that: -

- all applicants meet the selection criteria for admission
- any conditions of entry to the College are fulfilled
- the College receives payment of an acceptance deposit
- the applicant is of appropriate age and maturity
- the College can adequately cater for and meet the needs of any disability and/or special educational needs.

If the College is oversubscribed, at any level, a waiting list operated, for those who meet the above admissions conditions

Section 4 Visits and Open Days/Sessions

Many prospective parents visit the College throughout the year and attend Open Sessions (normally in the Michaelmas Term).

When attending on a personal visit and tour, parents and students will tour the site usually with a current student and meet a member of the CLT

In the Prep, a member of the Prep Leadership Team undertakes the tours.

Section 5 Application Information

If parents wish to apply for a place for their child(ren), they must complete an application form, available from the College website or from the School Admissions office. This does not constitute an offer or guarantee of a place at the College but formally begins the process of application.

Where candidates have SEND needs, parents will be required to indicate what access arrangements need to be in place, if any, for their child to be able to respond to the testing procedure on equal terms. This must be backed by evidence within the SEND reports or documents submitted with the applications process.

All applications are confirmed with an application fee. A fee is not levied for Reception application.

All applicants, above the Reception stage, are required to provide a latest school report and a confidential reference will be requested from the current school as part of the application process.

Section 6 Admission Process Testing, Interview and Assessment

6a Prep School. pupils applying for admission between the ages of 4 and 10 are subject to the Prep School procedures which involve a test and interview. Children up to age 6, complete the BPVS (British Picture Vocabulary Scale), and a Mathematics test, followed by a group play session. From the ages of 6 through to 10+ they sit an entrance test in English and Mathematics and an NFER reasoning test.

6b Prep School pupils applying for internal transfer are admitted at 11+ by sitting a 60-minute CEM select entrance assessment. Their place in the College is not dependent upon the results of this test. This test is for information purposes. If any scores are of concern, a meeting will be arranged with parents, a member of PLT and a

member of SLT to determine future provision and other means of support from school and home will be discussed.

6c External students applying at 11+ sit a 60-minute CEM entrance assessment and have an informal interview which includes further questions in Maths and English to assess competency.

6d A limited number of students enter at 13+, sitting a 60-minute CEM entrance assessment and have an informal interview which includes further Maths and English to assess competency.

6e Sixth Form External Applicants. Those successful at the application stage are invited for an interview with the Head of Sixth Form or other senior member of staff. Offers made for places are conditional on GCSE results meeting the general entry criteria established for Sixth Form entry. This will also be determined by the subjects chosen, and availability of places. Places offered will be subject to a time scale indicated in the offer letter, with a date by which acceptance is to be returned, accompanied by the levied deposit to secure the place. Once this timeline has expired, the offer of a place will be withdrawn, and the place offered to another candidate.

6f Occasional Entry: extra-ordinary in year entry
Occasional entrants can be admitted during the school year where a place becomes available. Applicants older than 11 are assessed via a 60-minute CEM entrance assessment and have an informal interview which includes some Maths and English questions. A student would only be placed out of year in exceptional circumstances after consultation with the Headmaster and Governors where appropriate. Most candidates are tested, and places offered according to the standard entry requirements indicated above and according to the published timelines agreed. Occasional entrance time scales and offer of places are determined case by case.

6g Overseas Entrants

Where applications are received from students currently overseas and so unable to attend testing dates and interviews according to those published for UK residents, arrangements will be made, where possible, to provide for testing according to the principles indicated and detailed above. The overall requirements in terms of documentation must be available prior to testing being undertaken.

Section 7 Testing Process Defined

External candidates for placement at 11+ are required to attend the entrance testing procedure on one of the two Saturdays dedicated for this purpose. This involves a CEM entrance assessment. Student and their parents will be greeted by the Headmaster / CLT members and other key members of staff who will facilitate the testing. Every attempt is made to create a relaxed atmosphere conducive to each child performing to their best. Further details of the range and breadth of the testing procedure will be communicated in advance to parents to ensure understanding. The nature of testing can be subject to change given developments which may become available to the College to refine the entry procedure.

When appropriate, extra time is granted to those students who require additional time, for example, owing to a special educational need or disability. Parents must provide formal evidence by way of an official document to the College Admissions Office indicating that extra time / support is required. This must be in possession of the Admissions Office one month before the entrance tests to ensure the College has sufficient time to consider the request and

whether extra time will be provided. Requests beyond this time scale will be regarded but support may not be able to be provided.

The Interview

Individual interviews are offered to each applicant as part of the selection process. None of the interviewers have any prior knowledge of the test results. The timing and nature of the interviews will be communicated as part of the application process. The interview is intended to explore each child's powers of communication, potential, enthusiasm, and range of interests.

Student Profile

The feeder school is asked to provide a student reference for each candidate; this will detail the levels of acquired skills in core subjects and give an opinion as to motivation and potential as well as observations on social adjustment and participation in school life as a whole. A progress report will form part of this requirement also. Any scores from tests measuring raw abilities in verbal or numerical reasoning are also requested.

13+ Entry

The procedures for 13+ entry will mirror those outlined above for 11+, with the likelihood that all other assessments and interviews will take place on the designated testing day.

Section 8 Decisions and offers of a place

Once the testing procedures have taken place and the results of assessment and interview information be accumulated and analysed, including all required reports/ documentation places will be offered.

For 11+ candidates, by the end of the second week of February the College will have come to a decision about each candidate. This will be one of the following: the offer of a place, the offer of a conditional place, a 'waiting list' place or a refusal.

The College is at liberty to operate a waiting list depending upon capacity at any level of the College.

An offer of a place at the College is subject to the College's terms and conditions. Such an offer may be made to those applicants who successfully pass the admissions process. Parents who are offered a place for their child are asked to accept the place by a stated date / deadline. Failure to respond by the date stipulated may result in a termination of the offer. The place then becomes open for other candidates. Any conditions, over and above those generally applicable, of an offer of a place are set out in the offer letter. An offer of a place is not confirmed until all conditions of entry are satisfied.

Section 9 Confirmation of Acceptance

Where an offer of a place is made (including any conditional offers), parents accept a place at the College for their child(ren) by signing and returning the "Confirmation of Acceptance" Form. This sets out the terms and conditions upon which an offer of a place is made. The payment of an acceptance deposit must accompany the acceptance of a place.

The terms affecting the offer include:

- adherence to the Parent Contract.
- adherence to the Code of Conduct.
- agreement to notify absences, acceptance of the sanctions system.
- willingness to comply with all that attending a Roman Catholic school entails regarding religious practices and inclusive attendance at services.
- the terms under which students will be entered for Public Examinations.

- the nature and delivery of the curriculum.
- insurance arrangements and the fee structure.

Section 10 Transition from the Prep School

Notwithstanding the detail of Section 2, “The Overall Philosophy”, all Prep pupils sit the Senior School 11+ CEM select entrance assessment on a normal school day during the Autumn term of Prep 6. The parents of pupils who are unlikely to be offered a place in the Senior School will usually be informed by the Head of the Prep during the course of Prep 5 and this will be confirmed formally in Prep 6. Those who enter the Prep, as an occasional entrant, at Prep 6 level are not guaranteed automatic transfer to the Senior School and will be subject to the criteria for external candidates.

Prep School pupils take the College entrance test so that their performance can be compared to external students and/or to inform scholarship decisions. The test otherwise informs on educational priorities to be determined by the Senior school.

Section 11 Transition into the Sixth Form

To join the Sixth Form, students must achieve at least 6 (six) GCSE pass grades at a minimum of a Level 6. Students must also matriculate in GCSE Mathematics and English at Level 5 or above. Level 6s attained in Maths and English contribute to the 6 (six) x 6 grade benchmark qualification. It is preferable for the grades gained in subjects to be taken at A Level to be at Level 7 or better and in certain subjects the highest levels at GCSE will be required. The Sixth Form Curriculum booklet should be referred to for the full requirements for each A level. The parents of students whose performance is assessed to be falling below this standard and who are potentially not likely to be offered a place in the Sixth Form will be informed by the College in Form 5 (Year 11). The Head of Careers will provide support and guidance for such individuals. It must be noted that should a student’s behavioural profile be a cause for concern then this may also lead to an offer of a place not being made.

Section 12 Scholarships and Bursary Awards

Please see separate policy which details the full nature of the Scholarships and Bursaries available.

Section 13 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The College welcomes all children who can make the most of the opportunities offered and can flourish in its caring environment. The College Admissions Policy aims to eliminate from the admissions process, as far as possible, any substantial disadvantages which may be encountered by applicants with disabilities.

The College treats applications from every SEND student in a fair, open-minded way. However, the College assesses all students for admission on the basis of its standard selection criteria.

The College will do all that is reasonable to comply with the Equality Act 2010 so that it may accommodate the needs of disabled applicants for which, with reasonable adjustments, the College can cater adequately.

The College will do all that is reasonable to ensure the application procedure (and any information about the College) is accessible for SEND applicants and will make such reasonable adjustments where possible.

The College endeavors to ensure that it is able to fully support the needs of all prospective students. Parents of children with SEND or a medical history are advised to indicate their child’s requirements with the College Admissions Registrar at the point of application and before they sit the College’s entrance exam so that adequate provision can be made for them

on the day. Parents are asked to provide a copy of a medical report or educational psychologist's report to support a request, for example, for large print material, extra time, use of laptops or other special arrangements.

Before an offer of a place is made where educational needs are relevant the parents will be informed, and the SEN department will be in contact to advise of the provision to be put in place.

The College will always consider its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Section 14 Non-Disclosure of Information

Should a place be offered to an individual and, subsequent to the offer being accepted and confirmed, assessments and reports of SEND, behavioural, learning needs, medical requirements (and, in the specific case of entrants to the Lower Sixth, subject access needs) be provided which predate the application, the College will exercise its right to review the place given this new information and the place may be withdrawn as a result.

Section 15 Waiting list policy for oversubscribed year groups.

- When a year group is full, a waiting list is created.
- Applicants are not ranked in any way on the waiting list.
- When a potential place becomes available, the waiting list is reviewed, and the most suitable applicant based on the school report and reference provided will be invited to complete our assessment with a view to being offered a place.
- Note: an invite to assess is not a guarantee of a place.

Section 16 Late application policy

- Late applications are applications made after the College's normal application process and deadlines (Prep / 11+ / 13+ / Sixth form) have expired.
- Families will be asked to provide a reason for their late application.
- For late applications received before the final week of the summer term, the standard assessment process will be followed with the assessment taking place on a pre-determined date determined by receipt of all relevant documentary evidence as detailed above defining the terms of the application process.
- For late applications received during the final week of the summer term or in the summer holiday, the appropriate paperwork will be requested and based on this, the College may offer an assessment during the College's summer holiday set assessment date.
- Please note an offer of a place will not be made until the College has received a confidential student reference from the current school. (We must make you aware of that these references are often delayed because of the summer recess when schools are not fully operational).

Section 17 Data and Reports

- All data used to assess the suitability of applicants as part of the entrance test procedure are the property of the College. Such information, therefore, cannot be reported to any party.
- Reports by feeder school and professionals providing information on a student's background will be treated with confidentiality but are understood to have been seen

by parents and guardians before copies are submitted as part of the entrance procedure.

Section 18 Appeals

- The Headmaster's decision is final on whether or not a place on the Senior section of the College is available to a student making application. In the Prep school the decision to award a place rests with the Head of Prep. Where a place is not offered the decision is final.