



## 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.

Policy owner: Head  
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Ratify by: CLT

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## **Section 1 Principles**

The purpose of the College admissions process is to identify students who will benefit from the curriculum 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 College 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. 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, are 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 behavioral reports, medical history, and in the case of entry to the Sixth Form any academic references, 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the right to reassess the offer in the light of non-disclosure of pertinent information and the subsequent place may be withdrawn.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; 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 Sixth Form. 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.

## **Section 4 Visits and Open Days/Sessions**

Many prospective parents visit the College throughout the year and attend Open Sessions. When attending 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. 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 must indicate what access arrangements need to be in place, if any, for their child to respond to the testing procedure on equal terms. This must be backed by evidence within the SEND reports or documents submitted with the application process.

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

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. 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 If there are any concerns about the transfer of a Prep School pupil, 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 Quest entrance assessment and have an informal interview designed to look at holistic suitability.
- 6d A limited number of students enter at 13+, sitting a Quest entrance assessment and have an informal interview designed to look at holistic suitability.
- 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 members 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 when a place becomes available. Applicants older than 11 are assessed via a Quest entrance assessment and have an informal interview. 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+ attend the entrance testing procedure on one of the two Saturdays dedicated for this purpose. This involves an online 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.

### **The Interview**

Individual interviews are offered to each applicant as part of the selection process. The interviewers do not have 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. 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 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 in line with HMC guidelines.

The College can operate a waiting list depending on 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 offered a place for their child are asked to accept it by a stated date/deadline. Failure to respond by the date stipulated may result in termination of the offer. The place then becomes open for other candidates. Any conditions, over and above those 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+ 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 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 the grades required to study their chosen subjects and qualifications for A Levels/ AAQs. Further details are in the Sixth Form Prospectus. 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 Pros 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 based on its standard selection criteria.

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 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 16 Appeals**

The Headmaster's decision is final on whether a place on the Senior section of the College is available to a student making an 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.