

Admissions Policy



ST
COLUMBA'S
SCHOOL

Policy owner	Head of DMA
Authorised by	Rector & Bursar
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Admissions Policy

St Columba's School is a co-educational, non-denominational HMC independent day school. Our values of aspiration, compassion and integrity as well as our aims, are set out on our website and in the prospectus, which is sent to all prospective parents.

St Columba's prides itself on its diversity and warmly encourages applications from all parents regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender and disability.

Overview of this Policy

St Columba's School is a member of the Heads' Conference (HMC), a professional association of heads of the world's leading independent schools. This policy has been written using the guidance provided in HMC's Cross Association Code of Practice for Schools and takes into account both the guidance offered by the Association and the requirements and nature of St Columba's School.

Please note that this policy is subject to change. As a parent or guardian applying for a place at St Columba's School, you will always be provided with the most up-to-date version of this policy prior to making an application.

The correct version of this Policy will always be available on the Admissions section of the School website.

The Policy applies to all families seeking a place/places at St Columba's School.

Admissions Registrar

Any general questions or queries about admission to St Columba's School should be directed to our Admissions Registrar who helps guide parents through the admissions process and who will be delighted to assist you.

admissions@st-columbas.org

(direct dial): 01505 872238

Applying for Admission

Application Requirements

Applications for admission are made by:

- completing our Application Form
- providing a copy of the photograph page of the child's passport
- paying the requisite fee (£24)

Availability of Places

In accordance with the HMC's Cross Association Code of Practice for Schools, our Admissions Registrar will always notify families if space is or is not available in a particular year group prior to application.

Application Timeline

Applications for Admission can be made at any time in the calendar year and pupils can take up a place at St Columba's at any point in the academic year. Where we are operating a waiting list for a specific year group, you will be notified prior to application.

Applications for Senior IV

We do not encourage applications for Senior IV as this is a key stage at National 5 level (halfway through the course).

Applying to St Columba's Early Years

St Columba's School is partnered with Inverclyde Council allowing us to offer 1140 hours of free Early Years Childcare per annum, per child (3 and 4 year olds). In applying for a place through this scheme, parents understand and adhere to this Policy. Please note that the 1140 hours initiative is only available to residents in participating council areas (including Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and North Ayrshire).

Important Notes on Early Years Funding

- Funding will be available from the term after the child's 3rd birthday. Parents can either pay the difference or delay the start date to coincide with the funding being available.

- Children turning 3 in March will not receive funding until August.
- Funding for a second year of Early Years Prep is available to families where the child is not due to turn 5 on or before the start of the academic year.

Please note that applications for admission to St Columba's Early Years are sent to Inverclyde Council who administer the funding. Their deadline for applications is mid-January. There may be a delay if applications are submitted late.

More information can be found here: <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/education-and-learning/early-years/3-5-yr-old-places>.

Application & Admissions Fees

The Best Possible Start for Your Child

Our aim is to make your child's time at school as beneficial and as rewarding as possible. In order to tailor your child's experience and help them reach their full potential, we must be made aware of the following (also detailed in the Admissions Requirements section of this policy):

- health difficulties
- disabilities
- additional support needs
- other issues which might impact on your child's mental and physical wellbeing.

St Columba's School is happy to receive applications from students with any of the above (disabilities, health difficulties and additional support needs). A copy of our Accessibility Policy is available on request.

Decisions about whether we can support these pupils adequately are made on an individual basis, but we undertake to make all reasonable adjustments.

As a school, we foster an environment of equality and inclusion, and as such, the School undertakes to treat every application in a fair and equal way.

Application Fee

The cost of application is £24 per child from Early Years to Senior VI. This fee is non-refundable.

Entrance Assessments

We hold entrance assessments in January each year for entry to Early Years, Junior School, Transitus and Senior School.

For assessments taking place in January, we normally inform parents of the outcome of applications on a date agreed with other West of Scotland independent schools (usually the first Thursday in February). You then have around a fortnight to accept the offer and by doing so, secure your child's place.

Year-Round Assessments

Where an application is made outwith the period stipulated above, the entrance assessment date will be agreed by the School and the parent.

Entrance assessments can be sent to a pupil's current school to administer if the applicant is unable to travel to school (e.g. families overseas). Entrance assessment papers will be marked by St Columba's staff within a few days and the decision conveyed to the parent.

Where a pupil is applying for entry for the start of the next session in August, the earliest that a place can be offered is the first Thursday in February.

Early Years Observed Play Sessions

Early Years children (3 and 4 year olds) will be invited to attend for a play session. When following the 'linear' process, these sessions will take place in January and offers will be made the same month. We will observe the child at play and as they participate in a number of small, set activities. At the same time, parents will be invited to complete the funding application form.

Assessment Components

Junior School

The components for assessment change depending on the stage of entry. Please find the specific details for the Junior School here below:

Early Years (age 3 & 4)

An observed play session, which is aimed at identifying a child's social and emotional skills, motor skills and readiness for learning.

Junior 1

An observed play session, which is aimed at identifying a child's readiness for School and assessing the child's social and emotional skills; this is a crucial element of the assessment. There will be some formal one-to-one scored activities undertaken with the child to assess the child's developing reading and mathematical skills, as well as fine and gross motor control.

NB Entrance to Junior 1 applies to all new pupils as well as those progressing from St Columba's Early Years.

Junior 2 to 6

The assessment will be made up of a selection of the following:

- A standardised reading comprehension assessment
- A standardised or baseline mathematics assessment
- A Non-Verbal Reasoning Quotient (NVRQ) test (for entry to J4 - J6)
- A standardised spelling assessment.
- A piece of free writing to a given theme (J3 - J6).

The child's social and emotional skills are also a crucial part of the assessment.

Senior School

The arrangements for Senior School assessments are dependent on the stage of entry. The Admissions Registrar will invigilate most Senior School assessments.

Transitus - Senior III

Prospective pupils will complete all the assessments in approximately two hours.

The following components of the assessment are sat online and the tests are adaptive. This means that the difficulty of the subsequent question will be based on the answer given for the preceding one.

- Maths
- English
- Non-Verbal Reasoning
- The following tests are completed with paper and by pen/pencil:
- Maths (set by our Head of Faculty)
- English (set by our Head of Faculty)

Senior V and Senior VI

Where a pupil is applying for a place in Senior V, the offer of a place is made conditional upon the applicant achieving at least four grade A passes at National 5 or the equivalent. We also ask Senior V applicants to attempt a Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation paper as Higher English is a compulsory subject at St Columba's School. This does not form part of a formal assessment but is used for the purpose of placing, especially if the applicant is not currently attending a Scottish school.

Prospective pupils who wish to sit Higher Maths in Senior V or VI will be asked to sit a NAT 5 Maths Prelim Paper.

For entry to Senior VI, applicants must have achieved at least four grade B passes at Higher Grade or the equivalent so that the applicant can follow a curriculum which includes studies at Advanced Higher grade.

References

The School will seek a reference and/or report from the child's current school before making an offer of a place. No candidate who is at a school affiliated to the Independent Schools' Council or HMC will be tested or interviewed without first contacting that school.

Making a Decision

Places are offered on the understanding that parents/guardians and children seeking admission:

- are aware of and accept the School's Behaviour Policy (Senior School).
- respect the aims, values and ethos of the School as laid out in the Behaviour Policy and on the Admissions Portal.

The School is not obliged to offer a place to every candidate who meets the minimum academic requirements as other factors may apply (see below), in particular a shortage of pupil places.

The School will give consideration to the following factors when spaces are limited by applying its policy on class size and when several applications are being considered at the same time (in no particular order):

- academic potential as perceived by the School
- particular talents of the applicant as perceived by the School, for instance in music, sport or individual subjects
- personal attributes as perceived by the School through interview
- the date of receipt of the application
- the applicant is a sibling of a pupil who is or has been at St Columba's School
- one or more of the parents is a Former Pupil of St Columba's School

Offers

No Offer

Where a pupil is not offered a place based on the outcome of their entrance assessment, the Rector or Depute Rector: Junior School will provide an explanation for this decision.

The Rector and Depute Rector: Junior School reserve the right not to offer a place where the family does not comply with this policy.

Furthermore, the Rector and Depute Rector: Junior School must give due regard to the interests of the school and its stakeholders when offering a place and reserve the right not to offer in certain circumstances.

Conditional Offer

In some circumstances, the Rector and Depute Rector: Junior School may make a conditional offer. This offer is based on the outcome of your child's entrance assessment. In these instances, potential is clearly demonstrated but the child's score indicates that they may struggle in class. The conditions usually involve deferred entry (if a place is sought imminently) and then a subsequent entrance assessment will be organised to test the areas causing concern. In the intervening period, remedial work is likely to be suggested, including lessons with a tutor.

The Rector and Depute Rector: Junior School will explain their concerns to parents/guardians and a suggested time frame for re-assessment. The outcome of the re-assessment will determine whether or not an offer will be made.

Confirmation/Acceptance of Offer

In order to confirm acceptance of an offer of a place, those with parental rights will be required to sign an Enrolment Contract with the School.

Deposit

Once an offer has been accepted, a deposit of £350 per child becomes payable. The deposit applies to places from Early Years to Senior VI.

- The deposit will be repaid, on written application, when the child leaves St Columba's School.
- On leaving St Columba's School, any monies owed to the School will be reclaimed via the deposit.

The School is required to ensure that the child is entitled to reside in the UK and as such, requires either a photocopy of the child's passport (information page, bearing photograph) or birth certificate. This identification must be sent to the Admissions Registrar along with the signed Enrolment Contract document. It should be noted that we also request this information at application stage.

The Governors and Rector of St Columba's School are required to inform parents (of applicants from Junior 1 to Senior VI) that deposits will be reimbursed if the pupil enrolls but ultimately does not take up the place at the school.

Parents/guardians accepting a place at St Columba's School are expected to ensure they understand and commit to uphold the School's Pupil Code of Conduct, Behaviour Policy: A

Parents' Guide, and Parental Code of Conduct. Copies of these documents are available online (Admissions Portal and Firefly).

Transfer of Information Between Schools - Pupil Information

In order to ensure a smooth transition from one school to another, we must contact your child's current/previous school (the school your child attends/attended prior to admission to St Columba's) for a variety of reasons:

- We will inform the Head of your child's school that we have received an application.
- We will ask your child's school for information relevant to your application.
- You should notify your child's current/previous school of the outcome of an application to St Columba's as soon as possible.
- We will request that your child's child protection file (if any) is transferred to us as soon as possible, but transferred separately from the main pupil file. The transfer of the child protection file is a statutory obligation and, as such, all schools must comply with this duty.

Schools must ensure any data that is processed is done so in line with the principles of the UKGDPR i.e. securely and confidentially.

Transfer of Information Between Schools - Financial Accounts

Most independent schools require a full term's written notice of termination. If your child attends/attended an independent school prior to St Columba's, fees in lieu of notice are likely to be payable (unless requisite written notice has been given). We are therefore obliged to contact the child's current/previous school to establish that financial obligations have been met.

Failing to Take Up An Accepted Place

The Governors and Rector of St Columba's School are required to inform parents that deposits will be reimbursed if the pupil enrolls but ultimately does not take up the place at the school.

One term's notice must be given if you choose to withdraw your child from St Columba's School (more information is provided in the Enrolment Contract). In cases where the Enrolment Contract document has been completed and returned to us, but you subsequently decide not to take up the accepted place, one term's fees will be due.

Contact

Questions relating to this policy:

- Rector: rectorspa@st-columbas.org
- Depute Rector: Junior School: juniorsecretary@st-columbas.org

Information about fees and financial assistance is available on the Admissions Portal to which you will be sent a link by the Admissions Registrar.

Questions relating to financial matters:

- Bursar: finance@st-columbas.org.