



St Bernard's
Catholic High School
—Part of the Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust—

Admission Policy & Procedures 2026 / 2027



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Mission Statement

St Bernard's Catholic High School is a Catholic community based on the gospel values of love and respect. We aim to provide the children of the Furness area a supportive and caring community in which all can grow in confidence; spiritually and academically to fulfil their true potential, strong in their belief in Christ, fully prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences that await them.

To achieve this, the school will:

- Provide a positive, caring learning environment
- Support pupils in discovering their strengths and achieving their potential
- Provide a varied and balanced curriculum where pupils are given opportunities to develop both inside and outside the classroom



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ADMISSION PROCEDURES

A. The Role of the Governing Body

1. In Catholic schools, the Governing Body is the Admissions Authority for the school and makes decisions on admissions issues. The Governing Body of St Bernard's Catholic High School delegates this responsibility to the Admissions Committee (see APPENDIX A).
2. Admissions Criteria are set by the Governing Body and published in its Admission Policy on an annual basis. In looking to this responsibility the Governing Body is guided by the requirements of law, the advice of the Diocese, their duties to the Catholic character of the school and the Catholic community it serves plus the importance accorded to parish boundaries.
3. The Governing Body approves the Admissions Policy including its Admissions Criteria (categories of children in descending order of priority) to show who is eligible for a place in the school. These criteria are used when the school is over-subscribed to identify which pupils are to be admitted up to the agreed limit. In this process the Governing Body takes into account DfE guidelines to ensure that:
 - admissions criteria are clear, fair and objective
 - arrangements are as simple as possible
 - all parents' preferences are treated on an equal basis
4. If there are changes to the admission arrangements the Governing Body will work with the Local Authority on a consultation process in line with DfE guidelines.
5. Once the Governing Body has determined the admission arrangements, the appropriate bodies will be notified and the admission arrangements will be published on the school website. A copy of their full, determined arrangements, will be sent to the Diocese and to the Local Authority as soon as possible before 1st May.
6. The Governing Body will provide all the information that the Local Authority needs to compile the composite prospectus no later than 8 August, unless agreed otherwise.



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B. The Role of the Local Authority

1. It remains as the body coordinating applications in the normal admissions round ie: applications for September Year 7 place.

In Westmorland and Furness the Local Authorities co-ordinate in-year applications in line with locally agreed protocols. The composite prospectus explains how in-year applications can be made and will be dealt with. Local Authorities must, on request, provide a suitable form for parents to complete

when directly applying for a place for their child at any school for which they are not the Admissions Authority.

2. For applications in the normal admission round, Local Authorities must provide a common application form (CAF) that enables parents to express their preference for a place at any state funded school, with a minimum of 3 preferences in rank order, allowing them to give reasons for their preferences. For applications to Secondary schools in Westmorland and Furness, the CAF is form SA3.

3. In the normal admissions round, offers of Secondary places must be sent by the home Local Authority and schools must not contact parents about the outcome of their applications until after these offers have been received (although they can notify parents of the result of selection tests in advance of offers being made or even formal applications being submitted). Admission Authorities must not provide any guarantees to applicants of the outcome of their application prior to the formal notification of any offers of a place in a suitable school by the home Local Authority

4. For Secondary school applications Local Authorities must ensure that all offers are made on the National Offer Day i.e. 1st March or the next working day.

5. Local Authorities must, by 1st May, publish on their website details of where the determined arrangements for all schools can be viewed, and information on how to refer objections to the Schools Adjudicator by 30th June.

6. Local Authorities must produce an annual report on admissions for all the schools in the area for which they coordinate admissions by 30th June following the admissions round.

7. Local Authorities must publish online – with hard copies available for those who do not have access to the internet – a composite prospectus for parents by 12th September in the offer year, which contains the admissions arrangements and any supplementary information forms for each of the state-funded schools in the Local Authority area to which parents can apply (ie all schools including Academies). They must ensure that this information is kept up to date throughout the period in which it is possible for parents to apply for a place for their child, and that it is written in a way that makes it clear and accessible to parents.

8. The local authority will assist the school with the organisation of Appeals Panel meetings if required.

C. The Role of the Diocese

The role of the Diocese is to set a Policy for Admissions as in Appendix D, to offer guidance to which schools must have regard and to undertake a prescribed role within the consultation process. The latter includes an obligation on Admissions Authorities in diocesan schools to consult with the Diocese when deciding how membership of the Catholic Church is to be demonstrated. Where Governing Bodies have uncertainties about any aspects of admissions the Diocese is more than willing to assist in seeking a resolution to such concerns.

St Bernard's Catholic High School Admissions Policy - Admissions Criteria

1. The planned number of places available for new admissions in Year 7 during the School Year 2026-27 including those pupils to be admitted at times other than September will be 170.

2. As an Academy the Governors are the Admissions Authority. The criteria for admission to the school is outlined below and the Governors will apply the criteria to those pupils making an application.

3. Where the number of applications which meet the criteria in a section takes the total pupil number above the planned admission figure then the Governors will use a straight line distance from the front door of the child's home to the main entrance to the school measured in miles or part thereof to determine which applicants to accept on the criteria of nearest to the school first.

4. Applications to the school should be made using form SA3 which is available from the local authority. Closing date for receipt of applications is the same as that published by the local authority and will be 31st October 2025 admission to the school in September 2026.

5. Pupils who have St. Bernard's Catholic High School on a named statement of SEN or EHC plan will automatically be allocated a place.

6. Order of Priority:

A. Pupils who are in public care or adopted children who were previously in public care.

B. Baptised Roman Catholic pupils who have attended a Roman Catholic primary school.

C. Baptised Roman Catholic pupils who have attended a non-Catholic primary school.

D. Children of Staff who have been employed at St. Bernard's for two or more years, or who have been recruited to fill a particular skills shortage.

E. Non-Catholic pupils who have attended a Roman Catholic primary school.

F. Siblings who at the time of the admission, have a brother or sister attending St Bernard's Catholic High School.*

G. Children from other Christian denominations who attend church and can support their application with evidence of their faith commitment e.g. baptism certificate / letter from minister / reference from current Headteacher.

H. Non-Catholic pupils whose parents wish them to partake in the Christian education offered by St Bernard's and the consequent implication for attendance at religious worship, assemblies and associated Religious Education activities.

I. All remaining applicants.

7. If the Governors refuse to grant an application, parents have the right to appeal to an Appeal Committee in accordance with School Admissions Code 2022, under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Such an appeal should be sent to the Chair of Governors c/o St Bernard's Catholic High School within 20 school days of the date of the letter of refusal. The Appeal should be made in writing and should state clearly why the parents wish their child to be admitted to the school. The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be binding on the Governors and will be communicated to the parents in writing.

8. The school will maintain a waiting list for each year. Admissions for the list will be based on the admission criteria above determining which pupil has priority.

* 'Siblings' includes step-siblings and foster or adopted siblings but no other.

For 'In Year' applications received outside the normal admissions round and if places are available then children qualifying under the published criteria will be admitted. If there are places available but more applicants than places then the published oversubscription criteria will be applied.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ST BERNARD'S PUPIL ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE

Membership

1. The membership of the Committee will consist of two Governors appointed by the Governing Body plus the Head Teacher.
2. The Governing Body will appoint the Chair of the Committee.

Quorum

At least two members of the Committee have to be present and all must be governors.

Terms of Reference

The main functions are:

1. to draft and review the schools Admission Policy :
2. to assume responsibility for the implementation of the policy; and
3. to report to the Governing Body in broad terms all admissions.

Delegated Powers

- a) To consult as appropriate with other Admission Authorities on the schools admission policy. b) To draft the Admission Policy, including criteria, which must be approved annually by the Governing Body.
- c) When details of applications are received from the Local Authority, draw up an admissions list indicating the order in which all applications have been ranked, prioritising these by reference to the over subscription criteria. Admission Authorities of seriously oversubscribed schools need not give individual rankings to applicants in the lowest priority groups for admission, if there is no likelihood of being able to offer them a place even after elimination of multiple offers.
- d) Forward this list to the coordinating Local Authority.

Clerking

The Governing Body must appoint a Clerk to the Committee. This may be the Clerk to Governors or another clerk. The Headteacher is not allowed to act as clerk.

APPENDIX B

DUTIES OF THE CLERK TO THE PUPILS ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE

The duties of the Clerk to the Admissions Committee can be summarised thus:

The Clerk is responsible for collating all information from any supplementary forms and supporting evidence in order to aid the Admissions Committee in making its decision on the order in which applicants are ranked as per the published oversubscription criteria.

The Clerk should record the decisions of the Admissions Committee as follows:

- the order in which applicants are ranked as per the published oversubscription criteria. The Clerk of the Admissions Committee should also:
 - ensure that the Local Authority (as per the co-ordinated admissions scheme) is advised as to the order in which applicants are ranked as per the published oversubscription criteria.
 - retain any notes from the meeting not included in the minutes for twelve months. And ensure that: ●
- Each member of the Committee is provided with a copy of each application, together with copies of the relevant admission policy and criteria and a map of the parish(es) served by the school, where those parish(es) feature within the admissions criteria.

APPENDIX C

DEFINITIONS RELATED TO THE OPERATION OF THE ADMISSIONS POLICY

Baptised Catholics:

In addition to candidates who can give evidence of baptism within the Roman Catholic Church, the definition of baptised Catholic can be extended to children enrolled in or having completed the catechumenate (process of preparation to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church) and those from Oriental Rite Churches in communion with Rome viz:

- ALEXANDRIAN : Coptic, Ethiopian
- ANTIOCH: Malankrese (Sri Lanka), Maronite, Syrian
- ARMENIAN: Armenian
- CHALDEAN (Syro-Oriental): Chaldean, Malabar
- CONSTANTINOPLE (BYZANTINE): Albanian, Byelorussian, Bulgarian, Greek, Melchite, Italo Albanian, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, Ukrainian, Hungarian

Priority to Other Christian Denominations

DfE Equality Guidance specifically confirms that allowing priority in admissions is not confined to members of the school's own faith but allows priority to other faiths. St Bernard's Catholic High School gives a priority at 'Category H' for 'Children from other Christian Denominations who attend church and can support their application with a letter from their minister verifying church attendance'. In such cases, parents will be asked to provide school with the appropriate evidence.

Children of Staff at the School

Priority may be given with the Admissions criteria to children of staff as follows:

- 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 for which there is demonstrable skill shortage

Admission of children for a school place outside their normal age group

Although most children will be admitted to a school within their own age group, from time to time parents seek places outside their normal age group for gifted and talented children, or those who have experienced problems or missed part of a year, for example due to ill health. The Governing Body will make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case. Parents refused an application for a place at the school have a statutory right of appeal, but this does not apply if parents are offered a place other than in the year group for which they applied.

APPENDIX D

DIOCESAN POLICY ON SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

- Each Catholic school is established in the Diocese to form, in partnership with home and parish, an integral part of that local Catholic faith community which bears the mission of the Church to embrace the gospel of Christ, to live by its values, and to proclaim Christ as the light of all peoples. A key role of the school is to assist parents of baptised Catholics to fulfil the responsibilities taken on at their child's baptism. By striving to be a Christ-centred community providing excellent education, the school will also play its part in the witness and mission of the local Church.
- The Admissions Code makes reference to possible tests of faith commitment. The diocesan position is that the agreed test is evidence that the child is accepted as a baptised Catholic. Confirmation of such is reserved to the Governing Body and must not be undertaken by the Local Authority. Clearly there are other ways of measuring faith commitment but these can be difficult to apply as admissions criteria and may not meet the test of objectivity.
- It is the policy of the Diocese to provide a place for every baptised Catholic child within a Catholic Primary and Secondary school. Such provision is based on a parish network and each parish normally has a designated Diocesan Primary and Secondary school which serves it. The principle of providing a place for every baptised Catholic child in a designated Catholic school should be reflected as a key criterion in each individual school's criteria for admissions.
- Catholic schools are established and maintained as part of a dual system of education, in which the Catholic community undertakes a responsibility to provide for the education of Catholic children in denominational schools whose philosophy, recruitment, admission of pupils, delivery of the curriculum and daily life are determined by the distinctive Catholic ethos of their faith community. The financial settlement and legal basis of our schools follow on from this dual provision within the Voluntary Aided sector.
- As part of the diocesan community of parishes and schools, no school should act for its own perceived interests alone. To seek its own gain at the expense of other schools, Catholic or non Catholic, would be to take action directly contrary to its Christ-centred character.
- The four Dioceses in the North West of England (Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford and Shrewsbury) work closely with each other in aligning their guidance on admissions so that their collaborative efforts may best serve the interests of the Catholic community throughout the region.
- Remember too, however, that Catholic schools also contribute to community cohesion by having admission arrangements that are inclusive of other faiths and of all elements of the population within their local area. Diocesan policy is that Catholic schools should seek to match such aspirations in filling those places not taken up by baptised Catholics. Further, they should continue with their long established tradition to engender an understanding and respect for all members of society, reinforcing the foundations for a healthy, inclusive and vibrant society.

If you require this document in another format or another language, please telephone the school office.

