
St Mary's Church of England Academy Walkley

Free Early Learning (FEL) Admissions Policy & Procedure



***“I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.”***

John 10:10

Reviewed: Spring 2021

Approved by Governors: Summer 2021

Date of next review: Summer 2023



FEL Policy and Procedure

Introduction

At St Mary's Church of England Academy, we aim to provide a caring environment where every child can thrive and is supported to achieve their unique & amazing potential as a child of God.

St Mary's Church of England Academy, Walkley is a Church of England School in the Diocese of Sheffield. It is part of The Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust.

The school provides a distinctively Christian education for children aged 3 to 11 years. Whilst we are a Church of England school, we welcome children of all faiths and children of no faith.

Policy Statement

1.1 This policy aims to ensure best practice for admission into St Mary's CE Academy, Walkley Nursery School to enable a maximum number of children to access their free early learning place and to support parents to access employment or training.

1.2 St Mary's Nursery will ensure that children are admitted to its nursery provision in a fair and consistent manner and in accordance with the published policy and procedure.

2 Equal Opportunities / Inclusion

2.1 All children (regardless of race, gender, religious belief or affiliation, intellectual or physical ability, social or cultural background) will have equal access to places at St Mary's Nursery. Where oversubscription occurs, places will be allocated in accordance with the oversubscription criteria detailed in section 5.2 below.

2.2 St Mary's Nursery implements equality and inclusion policies relating to the following key legislation:

- Race Relations Act (1976)
- Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995, updated 2005)
- Disability and Equality Act (2010)
- Sex Discrimination Act (1975)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Schools Standards and Framework Act (1998)
- Children Act (2004)
- Childcare Act (2006) 3 Early Years Foundation Stage

3.1 St Mary's Nursery works within the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which came into effect on 1 September 2012. The EYFS provides a quality framework for the integration of care and education for children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday.

3.2 When a child is admitted to St Mary's Nursery that previously attended another early years setting, we will ask for documentation of the child's progress within the EYFS from the previous provider or parent \ legal guardian. If St Mary's Nursery is the child's first provider, an initial assessment will be carried out by gathering information from the parent \ legal guardian.

3.3 St Mary's Nursery will work in partnership with other settings the child attends to identify and support their individual play, care and learning needs. Partnership working will also include working together with parents and professionals from other agencies to share information about children's progress and to identify specific needs at an early stage.

3.4 If a child accesses their 15 or 30 hour free early learning at two settings or attends another setting not funded by the free early learning, St Mary's Nursery will share record keeping and assessments as appropriate. This will ensure good continuity of care and education for the child as well as effective communication with parents.

4. Free Early Learning Places

4.1 All children are entitled to fifteen hours Free Early Learning (FEL) per week, during term time. Since September 2017 many working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are eligible for Extended FEL, which is 30 hours of Free Early Learning per week in term time.

Please visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to find out what support you are eligible. Children are eligible for a FEL place according to their date of birth as outlined on the table below:

A child born on or before	Will become eligible for a free place from	Eligible Term
1 April and 31 August	1 September following their 3rd birthday	Autumn
1 September and 31 December	1 January following their 3rd birthday	Spring
1 January and 31 March	1 April following their 3rd birthday	Summer

A child born 'on or before' will become eligible for a free place from the next term after their third birthday.

4.2 Children can access 15 hours FEL per week (and if eligible an additional 15 hours extended Free Early Learning) based on parental choice and what Nursery can accommodate within its pattern of delivery (see section 6 below).

4.3 The pattern of attendance must fit in with St Mary's Nursery's pattern of delivery (see section 6 below), unless the Nursery feels that the number of hours that a child attends nursery needs to be built up gradually to help the child settle in.

4.4 We will ask you to sign a Parental Agreement Form each term to confirm how many FEL hours per week and weeks of the term you intend to claim at St Mary's Nursery and if you are claiming any hours at another setting.

4.5 Additional hours over and above the 15 hours or 30 hours free early learning will be

charged by St Mary's Nursery at £12.50 per afternoon. 4 weeks' notice must be given for cancellation of both paid for and FEL sessions. (Please see section 7 – Summary of Additional Charges).

5. Allocation of Free Early Learning Places

5.1 Criteria

- a. A child has the right to attend St Mary's Nursery from any part of the city.
- b. Once admitted to the provision, children may stay until they transfer to a primary or infant school, or the child reaches statutory school age. A place would not normally be removed from a child unless the parent decides they no longer need it.
- c. If, at the application deadline date, there are more places available than there are applications, then all children will be offered a place. Subsequent applicants will be offered places until the provision is full. Once full, applicants will be placed on a waiting list and places will be allocated in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.

5.2 Oversubscription Criteria

Where there are more applications for admission than the published admission number, the Governing Body/Admissions Committee will apply the following criteria in strict order of priority:

1. Children in Care/Looked After Children and Children who were previously in Care/Looked After (see definition 5- Looked after Children).
2. Children with special medical or social circumstances where these needs can only be met at this school. This is not about educational needs. Professional supporting evidence must be provided if admission is to be made under this criterion. A professionally qualified person such as a medical doctor, psychologist or social worker must set out the particular reasons why this school is the suitable one for the child and the difficulties which would be caused if the child had to attend another school.
3. Children who have an elder brother/sister attending St Mary's CE Academy, Walkley at the time at the time of anticipated admission.
4. Children of parents/carers who reside in the parishes of St Mary's Walkley or the former parish St Bartholomew's Walkley, now The Vine, and regularly attend* the parish churches of St Mary's Walkley or The Vine.
5. Children who reside in the parishes of St Mary's Walkley or The Vine, and regularly attend* the parish churches of St Mary's Walkley or The Vine.
6. Children of parents /carers who reside in the parishes of St Mary's Walkley or The Vine, and regularly attend* a Christian denomination participating in 'Churches Together in England'.
7. Children who reside in the parishes of St Mary's Walkley and The Vine and regularly

attend* a Christian denomination participating in 'Churches Together in England'.

8. Children who reside outside the parishes of St Mary's Walkley and The Vine and regularly attend* a Christian denomination participating in 'Churches Together in England'.
9. Children who are resident in the parishes of St Mary's Walkley and The Vine.
10. Children of staff of the school.
11. All other children.

Should the admission number be reached mid-category, applications in that category will be prioritised on the shortest distance measured in a straight line from the front door of the child's home address (including flats) to the main entrance of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving higher priority.

Tie Break:

In the event of two or more children living equidistant from the school, the place will be decided by drawing lots. The first name drawn will be offered the place.

** In the event that during the period specified for attendance at worship the 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 church or alternative premises have been available for public worship.*

6. Pattern of Delivery

6.1 Session Times

Nursery is open from 8:40am to 3.30pm every weekday in term time, excluding Bank Holidays and Staff Training Days.

The standard 15 hour sessions we offer parents are based on 3 hours per morning, 5 days per week. Children must attend all morning sessions.

For Extended FEL (30 hours) we also include 3 hours per afternoon.

If you do not receive 30 hour FEL but wish for your child to attend for the full school day, you can pay for afternoon sessions at £12.50 per afternoon. You would also need to pay for a school dinner or provide a packed lunch.

If you wish to leave nursery and/or change provider midway through the term, you will be asked to give 4 weeks' notice. Within this notice period you will not be able to claim FEL at another provider and you will be liable for any paid for sessions.

7. Summary of Additional Charges

7.1 Additional Sessions taken over FEL

Afternoon sessions are charged at £12.50 per afternoon if you are not eligible for Extended FEL (30 hours). These additional charges are invoiced in advance on a four

weekly basis and are payable within 14 days. A four week notice period is required in order to change/cancel additional sessions.

7.2 Hot Lunches

Hot Lunches are provided by Taylor Shaw at a cost of £2 per day. The menu runs on a three weekly timetable and parents can choose between a meat or vegetarian option. Children with allergies can access a Special Diet Menu on provision of a medical letter from the GP or Hospital which states the nature of the allergy in detail. Alternatively, parents can provide a packed lunch (please note we are unable to warm up food).

7.3 Changes in additional charges

Occasionally we may need to increase or decrease the amount charged for afternoon session or hot dinners. We will give you 6 weeks notice prior to price changes.

8. Appendix

8.1 Definitions for the purpose of this policy

- Nursery School School providing pre-school education for 3 and 4 year old children only
- Waiting List List of applications maintained by the eligible provider in the event of oversubscription. The waiting list is maintained in order of admission criteria
- Autumn Term The school term beginning in September and ending in December
- Spring Term The school term beginning in January and ending at Easter
- Summer Term The school term beginning in April and ending in July
- Brother/Sister Sibling refers to brother or sister, half brother or sister, adopted brother or sister, step brother or sister, or the child of the parent/carer's partner, and in every case, the child should be living in the same family unit at the same address
- Parent/Carer A parent/carer is any person who has parental responsibility or care of the child. Where admission arrangements refer to 'parent's attendance at church' it is sufficient for just one parent to attend. 'Family members' include only parents and siblings
- Regular Church Attendance Regular attendance by parents/carers is defined as attendance at a Church of England church or another Christian denomination participating in 'Churches Together in England' for at least once a month over the last 12 months.
- Regular attendance by children is defined as attendance at a Church of England church or another Christian denomination participating in Churches Together in England' at least once a month over the past 6 months
- Parents/carers whose application is based on attendance at a church of Christian denomination should submit the Minister of Religion Reference Form available with the Common Application Form
- Churches Together in England Ref: www.churches-together.org.uk Please refer to the website for an up to date list*
- Looked after children- A looked after child is in the care of a local authority, or being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22 (1) of the Children's Act 1989) at the time an application for admission to the school is made and who the local authority has confirmed will still be looked after at the time when he/she is admitted to the school. A previously looked after child is a child who was adopted or became subject to a residence or special guardianship order immediately following having been looked after
- Children of staff at school Children of staff

- 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 a demonstrable skill shortage
- Place of residence - The child's ordinary place of residence will normally be a residential property at which the parent or person or persons with parental responsibility for the child resides at the closing date for receiving applications for admission to the school.
- Where parental responsibility is held by more than one person and those persons reside in separate properties, the child's ordinary place of residence will normally be the property at which the child resides with the parent or person or persons with parental responsibility, for the greater part of the week.

8.2 Contacts for Advice and Support

Childcare Planning Team (0114) 2813785

Pupils' Admissions Primary Admissions (0114) 2735766

9. Free Early Learning (FEL) Admissions Procedure

9.1 Parents\carers may apply at any time for a place for their child. The school will set a deadline date by which applications should be received each term in order to be considered in line with all other applications. All parents\carers applying for a place will be given a copy of the admissions policy and procedure in force at that time, asked to complete a standard application form and informed of the deadline for submission of the application.

9.2 The admissions policy and procedure and application form will be distributed to parents\carers, on request. Application forms from parents\carers should be submitted to St Marys CE Academy, Walkley.

9.3 Where there are more applications than places, all applications received by the deadline will be considered using the oversubscription criteria only.

9.4 All information given by the parent\carer must be regarded as confidential, but must be made available to those considering the application. If a place does not become available, the application will be considered at the deadline for the following term.

9.5 Attendance at St Mary's Nursery does not guarantee a place at any specific primary or infant school.

9.6 All applications for places at St Mary's Nursery will be considered in the week after the half term, of the term before entry. Children are eligible for the free early learning provision from the term after their third birthday. Therefore children can be admitted at the beginning or during any of the three terms (autumn\spring\ summer) subject to the availability of a place.

9.7 The governing body will delegate the admissions procedure to the Head of School and the School Admin Officer. This group will liaise with other bodies (e.g. Local Authority, Health, Social Services, Pre-schools etc.) as appropriate to secure more information about the child's individual play\care\learning needs.

9.8 Parents may apply for between 3 hours and the total number of hours the setting is open per week (within the operational constraints of the setting). Up to 15 hours of this can be claimed as free early learning and, if eligible 15 hours of extended free early learning. Subsequent hours will be charged in line with this policy which has been agreed by the Governing Body.

9.9 When applying, parents will indicate their preferred times of attendance in line with the options offered by the individual provider. Allocation will be at the discretion of the provider and providers should attempt to minimise vacant sessions whilst maximising the number of children accessing their free early learning.

9.10 If a child attends more than one provider and is claiming for more than 15 hours free early learning will resolve the funding dispute with the parent\carer and the other setting and inform the local authority of the outcome.

9.11 If a parent\carer chooses to reduce their child's hours (either FEL or paid for hours) at St Mary's Nursery then a 4 week notice period is required for the change to take effect.

9.12 If a child transfers to a different eligible provider during the term, the funding will be split accordingly, so long as an appropriate notice period of 4 weeks has been observed by the parent\carer. 'The Code of Practice for Delivery of Free Early Learning (FEL) for Three & Four Year Olds – Provider Agreement' outlines the arrangements to cover the financial implications of children transferring between providers.

9.13 Parents will be informed as soon as possible after their application has been considered, but no later than 2 weeks after half term, of the term before entry to St Mary' Nursery.

9.14 All children due to start in any particular term, will be given a common starting date. Where there are large numbers of children due to start in the same term, they may be phased in over a two week period.