ST. MARY’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, WILLIAMSTOWN
ENROLMENT POLICY

Preamble
St. Mary’s Primary School, Williamstown was established in 1842 and is the oldest continuously operating primary school in Victoria. Since opening, St. Mary’s Parish has offered a Catholic education to the Catholic children in the parish.

St. Mary’s Primary School is a co-educational Catholic school community that strives to provide its students with an holistic education in an environment formed by the Gospel and imbued with the values of St. Mary MacKillop. At St. Mary’s we believe that once a child becomes a member of the Catholic Church through Baptism, they should be given the opportunity to be educated as a Catholic. Where possible, this formation is given through Catholic schooling, in partnership with parents and based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Enrolment Policy Foundations
The St. Mary’s Primary School enrolment policy is founded on the principle that all Catholic children in St. Mary’s Parish of Williamstown should be given the opportunity to be educated at our parish school. While this is the driving goal of the school, the changing demographics of the Parish have seen an increase in the number of applications for enrolment. The interaction of this increase in demand for enrolment with the physical limitations placed on the school to expand, require the school to adopt an order of priority for enrolment.

Enrolment Policy Principles
In Policy 2.4 Enrolment for Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) provides guidance on the enrolment policy for Catholic primary schools in Melbourne. In formulating the enrolment policy for St. Mary’s Primary School, Williamstown, the school has adopted the CEOM principles and procedures as the basis for its enrolment policy, subject to some changes required to accommodate local circumstances.

Policy 2.4 sets out the following guiding principles for Catholic school enrolments, which have been adopted by St. Mary’s:

Inclusiveness
Catholic schools have been established primarily for Catholic children and Catholic schools should strive to be open and welcoming to all Catholic students, regardless of their background and needs and do everything possible to accommodate a student’s individual needs. Schools should extend particular assistance to children who are poor or disadvantaged or considered most at risk.
**Partnership between parents and school**

Parents, as the first educators of their children, enter into a partnership with the Catholic school to promote and support their child’s education, in particular their education in faith. While the school promotes access to a Catholic education through the local school enrolment policy, parents should also assume a responsibility for maintaining this partnership by supporting the school in furthering the spiritual and academic life of their children.

**Exercise of pastoral discretion in enrolment decisions**

Local pastoral discretion is an important element of the decision-making with regard to enrolment in a Catholic school. Therefore, while bearing in mind that the first priority is to Catholic parents, parish priests and principals of Catholic schools should be able to exercise some flexibility with respect to enrolment decisions where pastoral discretion may be deemed necessary.

In order to protect parents’ privacy, the reasons for exercising pastoral discretion will remain confidential to the Parish Priest and Principal.

The final decision for acceptance of an enrolment application rests with the Parish Priest. The Principal acts on his behalf in the enrolment process.

**Relevant Legislation**

This policy complies with the following legislation that is relevant to enrolment at a Catholic school:

- The Victorian Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
- Equal Opportunity Act 1996 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Cth)

**St. Mary’s Primary School Enrolment Priorities**

**Order of priority**

1. Catholic children who are residents of the parish*.
2. Catholic children who do not reside in the parish but are recognised as parishioners by the Parish Priest.
3. Catholic children from other parishes (for pastoral reasons).
4. Children from non Catholic Eastern churches who reside in the parish.
5. Other Christian children who reside in the parish.
6. Children from non Catholic Eastern churches who reside outside the parish
7. Other Christian children who reside outside the parish.

*See Appendix A for a map showing St. Mary’s Parish, Williamstown boundaries.*
It has been a longstanding practice of the school to embody the Church’s special preference for the poor and disadvantaged. Accordingly, no Baptised Catholic child will be denied the right to be enrolled at St. Mary’s Primary School owing to their parents’ genuine inability to pay the full fees.

**Overriding Principles**

1. In accordance with the CEOM Enrolment Policy, the St. Mary’s Parish Priest and School Principal have the authority to exercise flexibility with respect to enrolment decisions where pastoral discretion is deemed necessary.

2. In sequentially applying each of the above priority categories, siblings of currently enrolled students will be given a priority. For example, in Category 1, siblings of currently enrolled Catholic children who are residents of the parish will receive a priority over Catholic children who are residents in the parish but do not have a sibling at the school.

3. If, in sequentially applying the order of priority, a point comes where the number of remaining applications exceeds the number of remaining places available, the Parish Priest and School Principal will determine the remaining offers based on an analysis of the applicants ‘proximity to the school’ balanced by the proximity of the alternatives available to the family, together with any other factors that the Parish Priest and School Principal deem relevant.

**Note:** For clarity, where a child is enrolled in St. Mary’s and the family subsequently moves outside the St. Mary’s Parish boundary, future siblings seeking enrolment at the school will qualify as a Category 2 or Category 3 priority. Accordingly, if all available spaces are filled by Category 1 priority applicants, these siblings may not be offered a place.

**Alternative Schools**

In the event of St. Mary’s Primary School being unable to offer a place to all Baptised Catholic children resident in the Parish, contact will be made with neighbouring parishes to ascertain if there are vacancies in their local school. The decision to act on this information is left to the parents.

**Breach of Enrolment**

If it can be demonstrated that a parent or guardian has knowingly withheld information relevant to the application/enrolment process, especially in relation to the student’s individual needs, medical conditions, health care requirements and/or Parenting Orders, then the enrolment may be refused or terminated on this ground. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are expected to provide accurate information when completing an ‘Application for Enrolment’ form and to supply the school with copies of all requested documentation.

The provision of an inaccurate residential address for the applicant will also be treated as a breach of enrolment.
**Procedures for Enrolment**

The enrolment process is undertaken annually in the year before a child is due to start school.

Applications for enrolment will be advertised in March of each year via the School Newsletter, Parish Newsletter and all local kindergartens.

‘Application for Enrolment’ forms can be collected from the school office between the hours of 9:00am and 3:30pm. Application for Enrolment forms should be accompanied by:

i. Birth Certificate;
ii. Baptismal Certificate and certificates from other Sacraments received by the child;
iii. Immunisation Certificate;
iv. Proof of family’s residential address (telephone, electricity bill, etc.)

Round 1 applications typically close in April of the year prior to attendance. Interviews with the Principal take place during Term 1 and 2.

A ‘walk and talk’ tour of the school at the time of interview will be conducted by the principal prior to ‘Letters of acceptance/non-acceptance’ being sent.

Families will be notified via a letter of their acceptance/non-acceptance after the interview with the Principal.

Families are requested to accept the offer, in writing, as soon as possible after receiving the letter and pay a non-refundable acceptance of enrolment fee of $100.00.

Applications received after the closing date will be processed after first round offers have been made in August.

**Process for enrolment when a vacancy occurs**

If and when a vacancy occurs, families on the waiting list will be contacted and interviews will be conducted with each family. An offer will be given to those families according to the criteria for enrolment.

**Enrolment under minimum school entry age**

The minimum starting age for a child to be enrolled in a Victorian school is four years and eight months i.e. a child must turn five by 30 April in the year of starting school. St. Mary’s will make an assessment of a child’s readiness for school when considering the enrolment of a child under the minimum age, but in principle the school strongly opposes it.

In the rare situations where,

i. a parent seeks enrolment of a child under the minimum starting age; and
ii. the Principal supports the enrolment of a child in the school if approval were granted,
the approval of the Director of Catholic Education is required, before enrolment under the minimum starting age can occur. Approval for early age enrolment will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

St. Mary’s Primary School will ensure that the enrolment of a child below the minimum age will not exclude the enrolment of a child of the approved age.

**Enrolment of children with additional learning needs**
St. Mary’s Primary School welcomes parents who wish to enrol a child with additional learning needs and will do everything possible to accommodate the child’s needs. The process for enrolling students with special needs is the same as for enrolling any student, and will conform to the CEOM’s recommended enrolment process outlined in its enrolment policy 2.4.

**Enrolment of students from interstate**
When enrolling students whose previous school was interstate, St. Mary’s Primary School will use the protocols of the Interstate Student Data Transfer Note (ISDTN). It is the responsibility of the enrolling school to initiate and manage the process, and to be sensitive to parent consent requirements for the provision of information. All relevant documents and information are available at the MCEETYA website [www.mceetya.edu.au/transfernote](http://www.mceetya.edu.au/transfernote).

**Related Documents**

**Related School Policies**
- School Fees
- Information Privacy Policy
- Parents as Partners in Catholic Education

**Enrolment Policy Accessibility**
Current and prospective parents can access a copy of the school’s Enrolment Policy via the school’s website, or a copy will be provided upon request from the school office.

**Authorisation and review**
This policy was adopted by St. Mary’s Primary School at a meeting of the Advisory Board in March 2011. This policy shall be reviewed annually, or earlier if required.