

7 September 2020

Dear Colleague,

School Admissions Arrangements – 2021 Intake

The application process for families seeking school places in Reception and Y7 for 2021 is now starting. As with many other aspects of life, COVID19 has raised some potential challenges with regard to the practical processes regarding admissions.

Last month the DfE issued some guidance with particular reference to admissions authorities for which their oversubscription criteria were impacted by the lockdown; with reference to church schools this was most relevant to admissions authorities that include church attendance as part of their faith criteria.

This is not as great a challenge to our schools as it may be to other admissions authorities as all of our schools operate on the basis that the sole determinant of admission under faith criteria is baptism; church attendance is not a consideration. However, it may well still be that some families consider that they have been unable to have their children baptised due to temporary church closures during 2020.

This is not particularly likely to disadvantage children seeking a Y7 place given their age and probable attendance at a Catholic primary school. While it is more likely to be argued that it disadvantages children seeking a reception class place (as families have had fewer years in which to have their child baptised), the deadline for submission of primary school applications is 15 January 2021 (as things stand) so there is not an immediate deadline, offering time to seek baptism prior to the application for a school place. We recommend that you remind parents or others from whom you anticipate an application for a place at your school of the need for baptism prior to application and to take prompt action if baptism has not already taken place. Information will also be added to our website on the admissions page.

For those children of other faiths seeking a place in a Catholic school there is no requirement for evidence of attendance; a baptism certificate or confirmation in writing that the applicant is a member of their faith community from an appropriate minister of religion is the requirement in this circumstance.



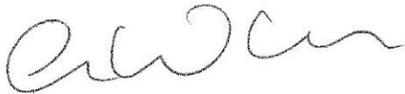
We have conveyed the following requests in correspondence to Parish Priests, asking them to:

- Continue to schedule and confirm baptisms with parents in accordance with the safe operation of their church;
- Be mindful of the deadlines for school applications in considering the preparation for and act of baptism;
- Make access to baptism certificates as easy as possible for those families seeking school places, and;
- Keep a record of scheduled baptisms than, should they then need to be cancelled, there is at least a paper trail should appeals be required.

As I write I am yet to receive a single piece of correspondence from a family concerned about the impact of the lockdown on their ability to successfully obtain a place at a Catholic school. However, if you have any local information to the contrary please do let me know.

I trust that this is of use. If you have any questions or need further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Chris Williams
Deputy Director of Education

