

St Bernard's Primary School Nursery Unit
Elmfield Road
Newtownabbey
BT36 6DW

Maintained Nursery Unit
Admissions No: 52 (Part-time)
Session Times – Morning Session: 9:00am – 11:30am
Afternoon Session: 12:30pm – 3pm

Principal: Mr Sean Kavanagh BSc PGCE PQH
Head of Nursery Unit: Mrs Clare Lawlor BEd
Chair of Board of Governors: Very Rev Fr Patrick Sheehan

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RESPECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND PRINCIPAL IN RELATION TO ADMISSIONS

The Board of Governors will determine the Admissions Criteria. The criteria will be applied by the Principal and a sub-committee of the Board of Governors.

The Principal will consider the acceptance of each child to the school within the confines of the published criteria for admission, but any decisions will be subject to the ultimate approval of the Board of Governors. St. Bernard's Primary School and Nursery Unit is in the parish of St. Mary's on the Hill.

The following criteria have been established and will be implemented by the Principal and the Board of Governors Admissions Panel.

When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on or attached to the application form. Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's Admissions Criteria is stated clearly on the application form.

Admissions Criteria

A timetable of pre-school admissions procedures setting out the dates by which an application is to be submitted is available at www.eani.org.uk/admissions under 'Pre-School Admissions'. During the admissions procedure when applying the criteria punctual applications will be considered before late applications are considered.

The application procedure opens on 07 January 2026 at 12noon (GMT) and an application submitted by the closing date of 21 January 2026 at 12noon (GMT) will be treated as a punctual application. An application received after 12noon (GMT) on 21 January 2026 will be treated as a late application.

As the pre-school admissions procedure is in two stages the timetable also specifies the relevant dates at Stage 2 which will determine if an application is to be considered as punctual or late.

Children resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission to nursery school will be considered before children who are not normally resident in Northern Ireland at the time of proposed admission.

Statutory Criteria

1. Children from socially disadvantaged circumstances in their final pre-school year who reside within the parish of St. Mary's on the Hill who were born:
 - On or between 2nd July 2022 and 1st July 2023 (inclusive) and whose parents have not exercised their right to defer their child's entry to primary school; or,
 - On or between 1st April 2022 and 1st July 2022 (inclusive) or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and,
 - Have not attended or are not currently attending a funded pre-school setting under the Pre-School Education Programme as a target aged child; and,
 - Where that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting Primary 1.
2. Children from socially disadvantaged circumstances in their final pre-school year who reside outside the parish of St. Mary's on the Hill who were born:
 - On or between 2nd July 2022 and 1st July 2023 (inclusive) and whose parents have not exercised their right to defer their child's entry to primary school; or,
 - On or between 1st April 2022 and 1st July 2022 (inclusive) or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and,
 - Have not attended or are not currently attending a funded pre-school setting under the Pre-School Education Programme as a target aged child; and,
 - Where that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting P1.

Note: Children from 'socially disadvantaged circumstances' means a child whose parent has an entitlement to (i) Income Support, or (ii) Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or (iii) Income related Employment and Support Allowance, or (iv) Universal Credit. When parents apply for places for their child on this basis they must provide Benefit Verification to confirm that they have an entitlement. The application procedure for Pre-School will outline how Benefit Verification can be submitted.

3. Children who are not from socially disadvantaged circumstances who reside in the parish of St. Mary's on the Hill who were born:
 - On or between 2nd July 2022 and 1st July 2023 (inclusive) and whose parents have not exercised their right to defer their child's entry to primary school; or,
 - On or between 1st April 2022 and 1st July 2022 (inclusive) or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and,
 - Have not attended or are not currently attending a funded pre-school setting under the Pre-School Education Programme as a target aged child; and,
 - Where that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting Primary 1.
4. Children who are not from socially disadvantaged circumstances who reside outside the parish of St. Mary's on the Hill who were born:
 - On or between 2nd July 2022 and 1st July 2023 (inclusive) and whose parents have not exercised their right to defer their child's entry to primary school; or,
 - On or between 1st April 2022 and 1st July 2022 (inclusive) or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and,
 - Have not attended or are not currently attending a funded pre-school setting under the Pre-School Education Programme as a target aged child; and,
 - Where that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting Primary 1.

Sub-Criteria

In the event of over-subscription the following criteria will be applied:

1. Children who are a 'Child Looked After' as defined by the Children NI Order 1995 as children who are in the care of a Trust or who are provided with accommodation by the Trust.
2. Preference will be given to those applicants who nominate St Bernard's Nursery Unit as their first preference.
3. Children who have siblings i.e. defined as 'a child of the family' (see below) enrolled in St. Bernard's Primary School at time of application (i.e. any year group from Nursery to Primary 7 inclusive).
4. Children whose parent or guardian is a permanent employee of St Bernard's Primary School / Nursery Unit.
5. Children will be selected for admission on the basis of the initial letter of their surname (as entered on the birth certificate) in the order set out below:

W V S Q D G B E J F T M c U C I O Z P N R X K M H A Y M a c L

This order was determined by a randomised selection of letters carried out in the school. By Governors on 10/11/25. In the event of surnames beginning with the same initial letter the subsequent letters of the surname will be used in alphabetical order. In the event of two identical surnames the alphabetical order of the letters of the forenames will be used to determine selection. The first name will be used in the case of a double-barrelled surname. Surname must be as entered on the birth certificate.

6. If it is still not possible to distinguish between applicants, places will be allocated by a computerised randomised selection. (Audits will be kept)

Note: Siblings/A child of the family includes brothers, sisters, half-brothers, half-sisters, children who are adopted, fostered and children of either party from a previous marriage/relationship.

Non-Statutory Criteria

- 5 Children who were born:
 - On or between 1st April 2022 – 1st July 2022 (inclusive), or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and have attended or are currently attending a funded pre-school setting under the Pre-School Education Programme as a target aged (not penultimate aged) child; and, that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting Primary 1: or,

- On or between 2nd July 2023 and 1st July 2024 (inclusive); or,
- On or between 1st April 2023 and 1st July 2023 (inclusive) or were due to be born on or between those dates but were born earlier; and that child's parent has completed a request to defer their child starting P1 until September 2028.

Tie Breaker: Non-Statutory Criteria

Children within Criteria 5 will be selected in Chronological Order of Age – eldest child first. In the event of two or more children having the same DOB the above random selection of letters will be used.

When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on the online application. Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's admissions criteria is stated on the online application. An example of such information includes whether the child has siblings at the school.

Please note, applications for pre-school places should be completed online through the Education Authority's admissions portal. The portal will open for parents to complete an online application on Wednesday 07 January 2026 at 12noon. The closing date for the receipt of punctual applications is 12noon (GMT) on Wednesday 21 January 2026. Documentation submitted in support of your application e.g. your child's birth certificate, address verification, benefit verification, provided with your application on or before 4pm on Monday 26 January 2026. Applications indicating a preference for morning or afternoon places will be considered, however there is no guarantee that the desired session will be allocated.

Duty to Verify

The Board of Governors reserves the right to require such supplementary evidence as it may determine to support or verify information on any online application.

If the requested evidence is not provided to the Board of Governors by the deadline given, this will result in the withdrawal of an offer of a place. Similarly, if information is supplied which appears to be false or misleading in any material way, the offer of a place will be withdrawn.

Original documents are required to be submitted with your application. Applications received in January must submit their documents no later than 4pm on Monday 26 January 2026.

Waiting List Policy

The Open Enrolment Procedure concludes on Tuesday 19 May 2026. If a vacancy arises after this date, all applications for admission to Nursery which were initially refused, late applications, applications where new information has been provided and new applications received will be treated equally and the published criteria applied. The Waiting List will be in place for the duration of the 2025/26 school year. The school will contact you in writing if your child gains a place by this method. Your child's name will be added automatically to the list. Parents must contact the school if they wish to have their child's name removed from the list.

Applications and Admissions to Pre-School

Year	Total Applications	Total Admissions
2025/2026*	61	52

****The Total Admissions for year 2025/2026 includes all pre-school children admitted to the pre-school including those who have a statement of special educational needs and/or may be attending SPiMS.***

(SPiMS = Specialist Provision in Mainstream School)