



Admissions Policy

Applies to	Whole School
Responsibility	Director of Admissions, Marketing and Enterprises
Approving Body	Development Committee
Date reviewed	Michaelmas 2025
Next review	Michaelmas 2026

Wells Cathedral School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for pupils aged 2–18. This policy sets out the principles and procedures by which pupils are admitted to the School. It ensures that admissions are carried out in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner, in keeping with the School's values and ethos. This policy is published on the School's website and is available to parents and prospective parents on request, in compliance with Part 6 of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2014, as amended).

Regulatory Compliance

This policy has been written to meet the requirements of:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Student Sponsor Guidance (where applicable)
Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school based provision
(DfE, November 2024)
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (DfE, September 2022)

This policy has regard to the following guidance:

- Children Missing in Education (DfE, August 2024)
- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2025)
- Technical Guidance for School in England (EHRC, July 2024)

This policy should be read alongside the School's:

- Attendance Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- EAL Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Allergy Policy
- Parent Contract (Terms & Conditions)

1. General

Wells Cathedral School ("Wells" / "School" / "We" / "Our" / "Us") is a co-educational, independent, day and boarding school for pupils from age 2 to 18.

This is the admissions policy of the School. Its aims are to:

- Set out the particulars of the School's policy on, and arrangements for, admission to the

School.

- Describe how the School identifies and admits children who will benefit from the education and other opportunities available at the School and who will contribute to and benefit from the ethos and activities of Our School community.
- Ensure compliance with the School's charitable purposes.
- Ensure compliance with the School's responsibility under the Equality Act 2010.

The School is committed to equal treatment of all applicants, regardless of race, religion or belief, sex, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Applications for admission are considered without discrimination. The School will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are not disadvantaged in the admissions process.

In order for prospective parents and pupils to meet us, we hold a number of Open Events throughout the year which give a general introduction to the School. Details are published on our website, in the local press, across our social media channels and are available upon request. We also welcome prospective parents and pupils at other times for individual visits and tours and ask all families to arrange such a visit.

Please contact the Admissions Office on 01749 834213, or email admissions@wells-cathedral-school.com to arrange an individual tour or visit.

2. Entry Procedure

Registration and assessment

Our selection process is designed to identify pupils who are able to benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the School.

Registration and the payment of the non-refundable registration fee is the first formal part of the admissions journey. Supporting documents (birth certificate, reports, exam results if applicable) must also be provided.

On receipt, the Admissions team will contact the family to commence the assessments. Admission to Wells is subject to a baseline entry assessment (CAT4), a review of a recent school report (if appropriate) and an interview at the School (or an online interview), a taster day for entry to the Prep School. Where appropriate, candidates may also be required to take an EAL test, or provide equivalent evidence, in order to demonstrate their level of English.

Entry points

In the Senior School (NC Years 7-13) the usual points of entry are at the beginning of the academic year in September into Year 7 (11+), Year 9 (13+) and Year 10 (14+) and Lower Sixth (16+). Entry is also possible at other points, both at the beginning of the academic year and once it has commenced - please contact the Admissions team for details. In the Prep School (Nursery to Year 6) pupils join at all age groups, again, normally at the beginning of the academic year, but also sometimes once it has commenced.

Little Wellies Nursery (age 2+)

Pupils may enter the Nursery in the Term following their second birthday. There is no entrance test. Parents can choose the number of sessions (morning and/or afternoon) they wish to have, subject to availability of places. Parents should be aware that funding received may influence the number of sessions that must be taken. Please see our Little Wellies admissions policy for more information.

Pre-Prep: Reception and Years 1-2 (ages 4 to 6+)

Entry is normally to the Reception Class at the start of the Michaelmas Term in the September after the fourth birthday. There are sometimes vacancies in other terms and year groups - please contact the Admissions team for details. There is no entrance assessment or test. Registrations are placed in order of receipt and parents are informed when a place is available. Parents are encouraged to visit the School; the Head of the Prep School and the Head of the Pre-Prep are available for appointments both during and outside regular school hours - please contact the Admissions team for details.

Prep School: Years 3-6 (ages 7+ to 10+)

Entry is normally at the start of the Michaelmas Term although there are sometimes vacancies in other terms - please contact the Admissions Department for details. Baseline assessments (including CAT4 tests) are typically taken as part of a taster day for entry in the following September, although these can be sat at other times if entry at a different point is envisaged. The assessments are of a standardised type and therefore no specific preparation is needed; all candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their academic aptitude and extra-curricular skills. It is important that, where possible, we would encourage all children to have an opportunity to see the School before coming to sit the assessments.

Senior School: Years 7-11 (ages 11 to 15+)

Entry is normally at the start of the Michaelmas Term although there are sometimes vacancies in other terms - please contact the Admissions Department for details. Admission is assessed through a baseline entry assessment (CAT4), review of a recent school report, a reference from the candidate's previous school(s), (if permission has been received), an interview at the School (or online interview). Our selection process is designed to identify pupils who are able to benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the School.

No specific preparation for the entrance assessments is needed; all candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their aptitude.

Year 9 candidates who are taking the Common Entrance examination may sit this at their preparatory school but this is not an entry requirement of Wells as all Year 9 candidates take our own baseline assessment, either online or at our Scholarship Day. A reference from the Head of the candidate's current school will also be required.

It is possible for pupils to enter Year 10 at 14+ to begin the two-year GCSE courses. Candidates will usually be interviewed by the Head Master and/or the Deputy Head Academic/Pastoral and will need a reference from the Head of their current school. They will also need to take our entrance test, either online or at our Scholarship Day. We do not normally recommend entry to Year 11, being the second year of the two-year GCSE courses, however we can admit pupils who

have been taking GCSEs with the same exam boards, and where a satisfactory reference can be provided. All such cases are considered in detail on an individual basis.

Sixth Form - Lower & Upper Sixth (ages 16+ to 17+)

Entry is normally at the start of the Michaelmas Term although there are sometimes vacancies in other terms - please contact the Admissions department for details. Admission is assessed through a baseline entry assessment (CAT4), a review of a recent school report, a reference from the candidate's previous school(s), including predicted GCSE grades if applicable, as appropriate (if permission has been received), an interview at the School (or online interview). Our admissions process is designed to identify pupils who are able to benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the School.

No specific preparation for the entrance assessments is needed; all candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their aptitude.

Pupils enter the Sixth Form at the end of two-year GCSE courses or equivalent. Candidates new to the School will usually be interviewed by the Head Master and/or the Deputy Head Academic/Pastoral and will need a reference from the Head of their current school showing a capacity to cope both with the academic demands of studying A levels, and with the demands of a busy co-educational school. They will normally be expected to secure at least six grade 5 passes at GCSE level, with grade 7 or above in the subjects to be studied at A level, where applicable. All internal candidates will be expected to secure the same GCSE qualifications as external candidates, although individual cases are always considered on their own merits.

Registration Deadline

Registration may take place at any time, however applicants are strongly advised to register by 1 December in the year preceding entry in order to guarantee being considered for a place. The completion of the registration form does not guarantee a place. Registrations submitted after 1 December will be considered if places remain available.

Musicians

If musicians are interested in joining our Specialist pathways it is necessary to complete the registration form and to undergo the admissions assessments as detailed above. The main auditions take place three times a year (please see our website for dates and further details). The main audition programme is typically sent in advance which will include precise details of the timing of the auditions. A non-refundable audition fee is payable upon acceptance of an invitation to the main auditions. The Director of Music is always happy to discuss specialist music entries further.

Candidates will then be offered a Specialist or Special Provision Music place having successfully completed the admissions assessments and the audition. Some latitude in academic entry requirements may be allowed in the case of exceptionally gifted and talented Specialist Musicians.

Choristers: Boys and Girls - Years 3-9 (ages 7+ to 13+)

Chorister voice auditions, or trials, for both boys and girls are normally held in November for entry the following September, following a successful pre-audition. Depending on availability, late applicants may also be considered - please contact the Admissions Department for details. A

voice trial is typically held in the morning with academic baseline assessments in the afternoon. The results are normally conveyed to parents within five business days and we hope that parents and successful trialists will be sufficiently committed to accept the offer of a place straight away.

The chorister trial programme is sent on application, typically following a successful choral pre-audition, and precise details of the timing of the trials are sent a week before the date of the trials. The Head of the Prep School (for entrants into Years 3 to 6) and the Head Master (for entrants into Years 7, 8 and 9) are always happy to discuss chorister entry. There is no charge for pre-auditions but a non-refundable main audition fee is payable upon acceptance of an invitation to the voice trials.

There are several scholarships and bursaries - some administered and awarded by the School, and some by third parties - that are only available to choristers. All choristers automatically benefit from a 25% discount on tuition fees and a 50% discount on boarding fees, and may also be considered for further bursaries and financial assistance. On average, choristers receive around 50% off their School fees, with some receiving considerably more than this, depending on financial circumstances. Please contact the Admissions Department for more information.

In addition, once pupils have finished their time in the Choir, they receive a discount worth 5% of their school fees for each year they were in the Choir, worth up to 20%, for the rest of their time at the School.

3. Assessment Process

The aim of the assessment process is to identify potential. We are looking for pupils who will flourish at Wells with an emphasis on the development of confidence, independence, friendships, curiosity, creativity and teamwork. The School has strong traditions in choral singing, music, drama, art, debating, community activities and sport. There are many co-curricular activities, all of which are important in developing a well-balanced, confident individual.

Offers

All offers are made following successful completion of the admissions assessments - if these are not completed the offer will be conditional until such assessments are completed or, if appropriate, the necessary GCSE required grades are confirmed. Offers are made in writing and accompanied by a contractual acceptance form.

All offers of places at Wells are conditional upon the School being satisfied that it can meet the educational, pastoral, and welfare needs of the pupil, taking into account any special educational needs, disabilities, or medical conditions that have been disclosed by parents disclosing all relevant information at the application stage. In the case of international pupils, all offers are also subject to the candidate meeting UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Student route requirements where applicable.

Acceptance of a place

A place is confirmed on receipt of the signed contractual acceptance form and payment of the acceptance deposit and the School requests that this is done within three weeks of the date of the

offer. The School may withdraw offers that are not accepted within this timeframe.

Professional Standards & HMC Compliance

As a member of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC), Wells Cathedral School is committed to following the HMC Code of Practice on Admissions. This ensures that all admissions processes are conducted in a fair, transparent, and professional manner. The School's admissions procedures and timelines are designed to comply fully with these expectations.

For the 2025–26 admissions cycle, we particularly note the following changes to Clause 4.6 of the Code of Practice:

Key dates for 11+, 13+ and 16+ admissions

Entrance testing for 13+ admissions may only take place up to eight and a half terms before entry if the candidate is sitting Common Entrance.

The first working weekday in March is the earliest date on which schools can require acceptance of offers for senior school places, and this applies equally to 11+ and 13+ (non-Common Entrance) candidates.

Timing of Scholarship Awards

Scholarship assessments may take place throughout the academic year and at different points of entry, but awards should not be made on an ad hoc basis outside of published scholarship rounds.

Boarding Suitability

Wells Cathedral School is a member of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) and is committed to meeting, and where possible exceeding, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Admissions decisions for boarding places consider the pupil's ability to thrive in a boarding environment.

The School assesses a candidate's suitability to board with reference to:

- **Safeguarding & Welfare:** Confidence that the pupil's welfare can be safeguarded in line with statutory requirements.
- **Educational Guardianship:** All international pupils must have a suitable UK-based educational guardian, in line with AEGIS and BSA guidance.
- **Health & Well-being:** Disclosure of medical, dietary, or mental health needs to ensure appropriate provision and to ensure that the pupil's needs can be met by the School.
- **Pastoral Readiness:** Evidence of readiness to participate positively in the boarding community.
- **Language & Integration:** English language ability sufficient for successful integration, with additional support provided where necessary.

4. Equal Treatment

Wells is committed to equal treatment for all and recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to those with protected characteristics.

Our aim is to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as

possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. Means-tested awards and bursaries are offered to endeavor to make it possible for as many as possible who meet our admission criteria to attend the School irrespective of their parents' financial circumstances. Our provision for bursaries is described below.

5. Special Needs

We welcome pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, provided that we are able to offer them the support that they require, through reasonable adjustments or alternative arrangements. We welcome pupils with physical disabilities provided that our complex site can cope with them. However, we advise parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with Us before they sit the assessments so that We can make suitable provision for them.

Where an applicant has a clear need, we would typically ask for a copy of a recent assessment (within the past 3 years), either done in their current school or by an appropriate expert (for example an Educational Psychologist or a Psychiatrist). Parents should notify the Registrar at the earliest opportunity and when completing the School's registration form, or they become aware subsequently, if they are aware or suspect that their child has an educational need. Where this is unavailable a basic assessment would be carried out by a member of the Learning Support staff at the School, and a specific report would be required from their previous school. In cases where there is any uncertainty about the level of support required by an applicant, the School reserves the right to request an expert report before offering a place.

We will discuss thoroughly with parents and their medical advisers the adjustments that can reasonably and practicably be made for the child if they become a pupil at the School.

6. Sibling Policy

Priority is given to siblings of pupils at the School at the proposed time of entry. However, admission is not automatic and the candidate must meet the admissions criteria.

7. Scholarship Awards

Scholarship assessments are held annually at the School in November for Lower Sixth and in January for Years 7, 9 and 10 (entry into Year 10 is for external pupils only). Pupils undergo an assessment or interview in their chosen area and they are also interviewed by a member of the Senior Management Team. For pupils in Year 7 and above, Wells offers a number of scholarship awards each year for excellence in:

- Academic
- Art
- Mathematics
- Sport
- Drama

- General Music

Candidates who excel in more than one area may be awarded two scholarships (see below).

8. Purpose of Scholarship Awards

Scholarships are designed to reward excellence and to celebrate exceptional talent. In recognition of their achievement, each awardee is offered a reduction in their tuition fees of 10 %. For those candidates who are awarded two Scholarships, the second will be an Honorary Scholarship without an additional financial award. Scholarship applicants can also be considered in exceptional circumstances for a discretionary Head Master's award.

The duration of any scholarship award can usually be expected (barring a change in circumstances) to last throughout their time at Wells, subject to an award holder meeting the expectations of the scholarship. All Scholars will receive a formal review of their progress at the end of each key stage in their education. For Art, Academic, Drama, Music and Sport scholars this will be November of Y8 and Y11. For Specialist Mathematicians this will be November of Y9 and February of Y11. This will involve a pupil one-to-one meeting with the leader of their scholarship field and a written report to parents. Pupils will be evaluated against the expectations of scholarship holders.

Details of the various scholarships and awards can be found on the School's website, or by contacting the Admissions Department.

9. Bursaries

Our bursary programme is designed to make it possible for as many as possible of those who meet Wells' entry criteria to take up a place. However, despite its long history, the School is not well endowed and until we have built up a sizable endowment, the School is necessarily limited in the amount of bursarial support that it can provide. Notwithstanding this limitation, we offer a number of means-tested bursaries each year to entrants at the usual points of entry. All bursaries are means-tested using a confidential financial circumstances questionnaire in which both parents are required to provide proof of their income and expenditure, assets and liabilities. The level of support varies according to parental need but can, in exceptional cases, extend to full fee remission in cases of proven need.

Bursaries are offered for the duration of a key stage, and are reviewed at this point. The recipient family is required to provide fresh information about its circumstances for every year that their child attends the School. Levels of support may vary with fluctuations in parental income and/or assets.

The School's practice is to allocate the bulk of its available bursary funding on entry subject only to retaining a prudent reserve against genuinely unforeseen circumstances e.g. death of the primary earner. The School's expectation is that parents, who do not choose to apply for a bursary at the time that their child is being assessed, will not require financial support throughout the time that their child attends the School, except in wholly unforeseen

circumstances.

Confidential financial circumstances questionnaires, the means by which the decision making of our Bursary Committee (the School's award-making body) is informed, will be sent to all who express an interest.

We encourage parents of awardees who anticipate that they will experience difficulty in meeting the balance of the boarding and/or tuition fees, to apply at the same time for one of the School's means-tested bursaries described below, when they register their child.

10. Music and Dance Scheme (MDS)

Pupils who are offered a place as a Music Specialist may become eligible for financial support from the UK government's Music and Dance Scheme (MDS). This means-tested award can cover up to 100% of tuition AND all boarding fees for UK pupils, or up to 100% of tuition fees only for EU pupils. Wells has a strictly limited number of places available each year, the number of which are determined by the Department of Education.. All eligible applicants will automatically be informed of their eligibility as part of the admissions process, and will be guided through the application process.

11. Other Fee Remissions

The School offers fee remissions for siblings, as well as for children of clergy and members of the armed forces. Proof of eligibility for these remissions will be requested as part of the application process.

12. Overseas Applicants

Wells has a thriving international community and looks to admit pupils who will both benefit from, and contribute to, the cultural breadth which the School is seeking to foster. Pupils from all parts of the world are considered for admission at all ages by face-to-face or online interview. A workable standard of written and spoken English and mathematical ability is required as is the potential to engage in active learning and living within a pupil body predominantly from a UK-based background. See section 13 below for more details.

We warmly welcome overseas pupils, who can study at Wells as boarders, provided that they have an educational guardian living in the UK who will support them when needed and with whom they can stay for exeat weekends, half terms, etc, and who can act *in loco parentis* in an emergency e.g. hospitalisation. Please see the School's Educational Guardianship Policy.

13. Fluency in English

In order to cope with the academic and social demands of Wells, pupils must be good English speakers. Normally pupils should have been educated in the English medium to a standard to enable them to thrive in an academic environment where the language of instruction is English

before coming to the School. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parents' expense but in some cases the School may require candidates to complete an external intensive English course of the type recognised by the British Council. International students will need to have the potential on admission to reach IELTS level 6.5 or equivalent standard for progression into higher education entry in the UK or overseas on leaving the School.

14. Supervision

All pupils at Wells Cathedral School are required to be either living with a parent, legal guardian or another responsible adult with delegated parental responsibility, aged 25 or over, or to board at the School in one of the Houses for the duration of their time in the School. This is to enable the School to fulfill its duty of care to the pupil and to comply with its obligation as a UKVI sponsor.

15. Religious Beliefs

Wells has a Christian foundation dating back over 1,100 years. We do not select for entry on the basis of religious belief: we offer the opportunity of an education for those of all faiths and none. All pupils are expected to regularly attend assemblies in the cathedral. Boarders also attend house chapels and a regular Sunday service in the cathedral. These communal acts of worship in beautiful and historic buildings underpin the ethos and spiritual life of the School.

16. Particular Religious, Dietary, Language or Cultural Needs

All reasonable provision will be made for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs by the appropriate departments within the School. This provision is coordinated by Form Tutors / Tutors / House Parents. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's EAL Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Allergy Policy and SEND Policy.

17. Terms and Conditions

Our Parent Contract contains terms and conditions setting out the rights and responsibilities of Parents and the School. The Parent Contract is published on the School's website and made available to parents as part of the admissions process. All parents are required to sign a contractual acceptance form to confirm that they understand and agree to the terms and conditions and to pay an acceptance deposit in order to accept any place at the School. The acceptance deposit is held on account and refunded upon payment of the pupil's final bill (less any outstanding expenses), unless donated to the School.

Specialist musicians, and their parents, are also required to sign up to the Specialist Music Charter. Parents of choristers are also required to sign up to a Chorister Contract. If a parent is dissatisfied with an admissions decision, they may request a review in writing. Any such review will be handled under the School's published Complaints Policy, which is available on the School's website or on request.

18. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records. A confidential admissions record will be kept for each candidate.

The information created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The School has published privacy notices on its website which explain how the School will use personal data.

19. Admission Register

In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the School will:

- Maintain an admissions register of all pupils (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) admitted to the School
- Inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be added to or deleted from the School's admission register at non-standard transition points
- Keep the admissions register in electronic form and ensure a back up is made at least once per month in the form of an electronic or printed copy
- Ensure that every entry in the School's admission register is preserved for six years beginning with the day on which the entry is made and that every back-up copy is preserved for six years after the end of the school year to which it relates
- Ensure that the admissions register contains specific personal details of every pupil in the School, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attended and whether each pupil of compulsory school age is a boarder or day pupil
- Ensure that a pupil's name is only deleted from the admissions register for a reason set out in Regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2024 and that when any of the situations in Regulation 9 occurs the pupil's record is deleted.

20. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Director of Admissions, Marketing and Enterprises and the Senior Management Team, and is approved by the Governing Body, in line with Part 8 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended).

If you would like to discuss any issues relating to our admissions process, please contact the Director of Admissions, Marketing and Enterprises via email
admissions@wells-cathedral-school.com