

DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER PRIEST'S REFERENCE: GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

INTRODUCTION

Responsibility for the admission of pupils to Catholic maintained schools rests with the governing body of each school. The governing body determines and publishes an admissions policy each year, which is included in the school prospectus. Where there are more applications than places available, the policy must state how the places are to be allocated. **Parents should read the admissions policy carefully.** It will vary from school to school, and from year to year.

The bishops expect all Catholic schools to give first priority to Catholic applicants. Catholic schools exist to assist parents in handing on the Catholic faith to their children. So where there are insufficient places in an area for all Catholics, governing bodies may decide to give priority to children from practising Catholic families. Where schools do so, they should use, as evidence of practice, the priest's reference supplied with these notes (**Part B**). Please note, however, that **a supportive reference from a priest is no guarantee of a place in any particular school.**

This reference form is intended to give all priests a framework in which they can let schools know whether an applicant for a place at a Catholic school is from a practising Catholic family.

Where a school is over-subscribed with Catholic applicants, all of whom have provided evidence of Catholic practice, the governing body will apply other criteria such as proximity to the school, or whether there is an older sister or brother attending the school at the same time. These factors are likely to be crucial in deciding how places are to be allocated. These points will be explained in detail in the school's prospectus.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Fill in the two pages marked **PART A** following carefully the notes below (you also fill in the top box on the page marked **PART B**). You may need to fill in more than one **Part B** if you are making application to more than one Catholic school.
2. Give both Part A and Part B of the form to the appropriate priest (see below). Part B will be completed by the priest and returned to you for you to include with your application to the school. The priest will fill in extra copies of **Part B** if necessary. He will **keep** Part A for reference but **it will not be supplied to the school.**

Which Priest should complete the form?

The reference should be given by the appropriate priest, who is normally either:

- your own Parish Priest (i.e. the Parish Priest of the Parish in which you **live**); or
- the Parish Priest of the Parish where you worship regularly (if different).

If you worship at a church which does not have a Parish Priest, then the priest who is the equivalent of a Parish Priest is the appropriate priest (e.g. Administrator, Ethnic Chaplain etc.). If the priest giving the reference is not one of the priests described above, an explanation will be required.

HOW TO FILL IN THE FORMS

PART A requires you to consider your responsibilities. It will be used by the priest when he completes Part B. All the questions are designed to help the priest give you the most accurate reference possible in the circumstances. So it is important that you give him as much relevant information as you can. Please answer all the questions as fully as possible, filling in the forms clearly in capital letters and in black ink.

Normal home address of child. Please give the address of the family home. If the child lives at more than one address, please give both and give full details of the arrangements.

Religion/Denomination of the child. Please state if the child is a Catholic. A Catholic is one who has been baptised into the Catholic Church (or has been received into it after being baptised in another Christian church). NB: if the child has undergone more than one ceremony of baptism, **ONLY** the first is valid and is the only one that can be taken into account for the purposes of admissions.

Date and place of Baptism. Fill in the date and place of **baptism**. If the child was not first baptised in the Catholic Church, you must also give the date and place of **reception** into full communion with the Catholic Church.

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Parents' names. The terms 'Mother', 'Father' and 'Parent' include all persons who legally have **parental responsibility** for the child. Please enter the details of each person who has parental responsibility, and if any of them is not the child's mother or father, please state clearly for each the relationship with the child. There may be more than two people with parental responsibility. If so please give details on a separate sheet.

Parents' religions / denominations. If you are a Christian, please state which denomination. You are a Catholic only if you have been baptised into the Catholic Church (or have been received into it after being baptised in another Christian church).

Home address(es) of parent(s). If any parent does not live at the address given for the child, please give their address(es).

Catholic Parish in which you live. This is each parent's Parish of residence. Please give the title of the church **and** the geographical parish (e.g. *St. Edmund's, Millwall*). If the parents do not live together, give both parishes of residence (if different).

Usual place of worship. Some people regularly attend a church other than their Parish Church. If you often attend more than one church, please give as much detail as you can here. Always give both the title of the church (e.g. *St Joseph's*) **and** the geographical parish (e.g. *Highgate*). You do not need to answer this question if you are not a Catholic.

How often do you attend Mass? Please tick which statement you feel best describes your attendance as a family.

For how long has this been your practice? Please indicate how long you have been practising at the level described in the previous question. Please give the answer in years and months. If this is a relatively short time, you may wish to give the priest further information about your practice before then to assist his assessment.

If you do not go to Mass regularly, it will be helpful for the priest to know why. It is therefore helpful if you give reasons in the space provided. Please also give any other details which you think may help the priest decide whether you are a practising Catholic family or whether there are exceptional pastoral circumstances.

Your Declaration

Unless there is a good reason, each person with parental responsibility should sign and date the form. This is to affirm that the contents of the form are true, and that you understand and accept that:

- the information you have given will remain confidential to the priest and will not be shared with the school, and
- the information will not be used in any way except for purposes connected with your pastoral care within the Catholic Church.

Warning: making a false statement in order to gain entry to a school is both immoral and illegal, as it might deprive another child of a place which is rightfully his or hers. **Making a false statement is a good reason for a school to withdraw any place which has been offered and could leave you without a school place.**

PART B identifies your child and allows the priest to confirm whether you are a practising Catholic family. This judgment will be based on your Mass attendance. In very exceptional circumstances, Part B also allows the priest an opportunity to let the school know about particular pastoral circumstances which may affect an application. In these cases the **school** and not the priest will make a judgment whether such circumstances will have any effect on your application. The school's decision will be based on its published criteria.

Name of child and date of birth. You need to give the child's name and date of birth again. This is simply because the school will only see this part of the form and must be able to match it up with your application.

Address of child. As before, if the child lives at more than one address, please give both and give full details of the arrangements.

THIS PART IS TO BE KEPT BY THE PRIEST: NOT TO BE SENT TO THE SCHOOL

Diocese of Westminster

Diocesan Priest's Reference – PART A

This form should be completed when applying for a place in a Catholic School in the Diocese of Westminster. Please complete and sign Part A of the form below and hand it to your parish priest or the priest at the church at which you normally worship. He will add his reference in Part B.

NB Please ensure that you have also completed and returned one Common Application Form and a Supplementary Information Form to EACH AND EVERY school to which you are applying (available from schools and/or Local Authorities)

| PART A (To be completed by all parents and carers) | |
|--|--|
| ABOUT YOUR CHILD | |
| Full Name of child: _____ | Date of birth: _____ |
| Religion/Denomination: (e.g. Catholic) _____ | Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Normal home address of child: _____ | |
| _____ | Postcode _____ |
| Date and place of Baptism (if applicable): _____ | |
| Name of current school, nursery or playgroup (if any): _____ | |

| ABOUT YOU | | |
|--|---|---|
| | Father | Mother |
| Parents' names: | _____ | _____ |
| Parents' religions/denominations: | _____ | _____ |
| Home address(es) of parent(s) (if different to child's normal address): | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| Catholic Parish in which you live (e.g. St Anselm's, Southall) | _____ | _____ |
| If Catholic : Usual place of worship (if different): | _____ | _____ |
| How often do you attend Mass? | <input type="checkbox"/> weekly <input type="checkbox"/> at least twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> at least once a month <input type="checkbox"/> less often | <input type="checkbox"/> weekly <input type="checkbox"/> at least twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> at least once a month <input type="checkbox"/> less often |
| For how long has this been your practice? | _____ years _____ months | _____ years _____ months |
| Which Mass do you normally attend? | Sat/Sun _____ (time) | Sat/Sun _____ (time) |
| How long have you worshipped at this Mass? | _____ years _____ months | _____ years _____ months |
| Please give details of any other church(es) at which you worship or have worshipped regularly in the past few years. | _____ | _____ |
| Do you attend Mass on Holy Days of Obligation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Which Mass do you normally attend? | _____ (time) | _____ (time) |

Please turn over and complete the rest of this Part, sign it, and hand it to your Priest.

NB: This form is a Diocesan Form. It does not form part of any school's admission arrangements.

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Additional Information

If you do not worship at Mass regularly, or you have only started to do so recently (i.e. within the past few months or years) please give any reasons below. Please give any other details which you think may either be relevant or assist the priest in identifying you, including any exceptional circumstances.
(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Please give contact numbers (in case there is a query about any information on this form):

(please specify: home / work / mother / father / carer etc.)

Declaration

I/we declare that the information given on this Form is full, accurate and true. I/we give permission for the information on this Form to be held and processed by the Diocese in accordance with its policy on School Admissions, and I/we understand and accept that (except in cases of suspected fraud) the information given on this sheet remains confidential and will not be shared with the school, or used in any way except for purposes connected with my/our pastoral care within the Catholic Church. I understand that if I/we have made any false statements this can lead to any school place(s) offered being withdrawn.

Signed: _____ Parent/carers Date: _____

Signed: _____ Parent/carers Date: _____

Signed: _____ Parent/carers Date: _____

Please sign this part of the Form, and hand it to your Priest.

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PART B (To be completed by the appropriate priest)

Details of Child (for identification only)

Full Name of child: _____ Date of birth: _____

Address of child: _____

_____ Postcode _____

A. For all schools:

To the best of my knowledge the child is a baptised Catholic

Yes ☐ No ☐

(The school will verify this by means of a certificate of baptism or reception)

B. For schools requiring evidence of Catholic practice:

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | I hereby confirm that I know the child and the family and that the child is a member of a practising Catholic family for the purposes of school admissions in accordance with Diocesan Guidance. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | I have insufficient evidence to be able to make the statement set out in 1 above with full confidence. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If there are **exceptional circumstances** which may explain the lack of practice, or lack of sufficient evidence of practice, please give full details below:

Declaration

I have read and understood the *Guidance Notes for Parish Priests on Admission to Catholic Schools* and I confirm that, on the basis described in that guidance, the above statements about the child named above and his or her family's practice are true, to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am the appropriate Catholic priest in relation to the child in accordance with that guidance.

Date: _____ Priest's Name: _____ signed: _____

Parish Seal
(to be applied **over** the priest's signature)

Please return this part of the Form to the school.

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