



St Mary's Music School
EDINBURGH

Admissions Guide

For Instrumentalists, Composers and
Singers

UK-Based Applicants

v1.0322



St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh

is one of five specialist music schools recognised by the UK Government as providing the finest training for young musicians from around the world.

The School provides music and academic education to talented children aged 9 to 19 and also educates the choristers of the internationally recognised Choir of St Mary's Cathedral.

We embrace all kind of music-making from classical repertoire to jazz to traditional Scottish music and our alumni go on to perform at the highest level, contributing actively to musical communities throughout the world.

We welcome applications from instrumentalists, composers and singers from Scotland and around the world who are passionate about music and who wish to study at a specialist music school.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Headteacher



Criteria for Entry

We look for young people with a real passion for music as well as musical ability. Applicants will usually be considering music as a subject of study at music college, conservatoire or university in the UK or abroad. Entry to St Mary's Music School is the same for all years and age-groups.

Our main criteria for entry are your musical ability and potential but we will also assess your English language level and ask to see your current school reports.

If you wish to apply you should propose two instruments or specialisms for your first and second studies. We accept applications from those who only have one instrument, however if that is the case then once you are at school, a second study will be identified in consultation with you, the Director of Music and your parents/guardians.

We accept applications for any instrument, as well as for voice* and composition.

*Due to how the voice develops with age we generally only consider Voice as a first study from applicants aged typically 13 and above.

Entry Years

Pupils can join the School at any time from Primary 5 (age 9-10) through to Senior 6 (age 17-18). Boarding is available from age 12. Year group equivalences and recommended entry points can be found at on page 7.

Advanced Training Programme

Our Advanced Training Programme is designed to help candidates prepare for application to conservatoire and music college. It provides a bespoke, intensive foundation that runs for either two or three years depending on the candidate. It is open to candidates from Senior 5/Senior 6 (age 16-17).

Boarding and Day Places

Boarding and day places are available. Day places are open to applicants from primary 5 (age 8/9) and above. Boarding places are open to applicants in S1 (age 11/12) and above.



Nicola Benedetti conducting a violin masterclass

Steps to Apply



Advisory Audition (digital*)

We require all candidates to complete an Advisory Audition as the first stage of the application process.

Advisory Auditions are free and are an informal way to assess your level and potential.

You should provide video links to an unlisted Youtube channel with the following:

- An introduction to who you are, what you play and what you are going to perform for your audition.
- Two short contrasting pieces on your first study instrument. If you are a composer, then please email a portfolio of contrasting compositions.
- If you have a second instrument, you can include a short piece on this as well.

These recordings are assessed by our Headteacher and Director of Music who will be able to provide advice as to whether progressing onto the next stage of the audition process would be appropriate.

To request an Advisory Audition, please submit the Audition form online here.

*We understand that some applicants may prefer to have an in-person advisory audition. If this is something that you would like to discuss further, please contact our Admissions department: admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk

Consultation Lesson (online)

Following your advisory audition, we may invite you for an online 45 minute Consultation Lesson on your first study instrument with one of our instrumental teachers. This will help give us further insight into your musical ability.

- Consultation lessons are a good way to gain valuable advice and feedback on your playing.
- The lesson is assessed, following which you will be advised on whether or not a formal audition would be appropriate at this time.
- There will be a fee of £50* for the Consultation Lesson.

*Allowances will be considered for those in financial hardship and this can be discussed further with our Bursar. Please contact Admissions in the first instance.

“The way you have to think about it is they aren’t looking for people who are necessarily good at the time, they’re looking for people who have the potential to progress. I feel like anyone can be that as long as you have the right attitude.”

Lachlan, Scotland

Formal Audition (in-person)

If you are successful following the Advisory Audition and consultation lesson, you will be invited to attend a formal audition. This will take place online unless you prefer to attend in-person.

- You will have the opportunity to provide us with additional online recordings on your instrument(s).
- If you would like to accept the invitation to attend the formal audition, we will ask you for some music references before the audition takes place. There will be an audition fee of £75*.
- We can also hold in-person auditions for those who may already be in the UK. This can be discussed further with our Admissions Department: admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk

Two Day Stay (in-person)

The final stage of the audition process is the Two Day Stay. This is the ideal opportunity for you to experience life as a pupil at St Mary's Music School and decide whether it is the right place for you.

- The Two Day Stay will take place at our premises at Coates Hall in Edinburgh and will always be in person.
- During the Two Day Stay you will stay in our boarding accommodation and get a real sense of life at the School.
- You will attend lessons, meet our pupils and teachers – both academic and music - and do everything our current pupils do.
- Parents/guardians will have an opportunity to meet the Headteacher and take a tour of the School.

At the end of your Two Day Stay, there will be three possible outcomes:

- We offer you a place.
- We advise that you study and practise your music further and apply again at a later date.
- We recommend you consider alternative options.

* We understand that flights can be expensive, so if you are successful in gaining a place, we will deduct the cost of economy fare flights from the first year of your fees.

“You just shouldn't be worried about it. It's just a good opportunity to get feedback from the teachers, and even if you don't get through it's just a nice experience.”

Kevin, Germany



Points of Entry

We accept applications for any year group dependent on availability, however the usual entry points for international boarding pupils are:

Senior 1/Senior 2/Senior 3 (Year 8/9/10)

Senior 5 (Year 12) for two or three years

Senior 6 (Year 13) for two years.

You can view a full table of UK year equivalences on the next page.

“I was terrified. I had just been to the masterclass with Renaud Capuçon and I had seen all these really good violinists playing. I was thinking they will never accept me, I am ages behind them. I was very insecure about my playing, I didn't have experience of playing solo, I had more experience of playing in an orchestra and my playing wasn't very good, I just didn't know how to practise. But they made me feel really welcome and what they were looking for in me was my potential and what I could feel from the music.”

Greta, Italy



School Fees

To view the full breakdown of fees, please see the School Fees page here.

Once you have been a pupil at St Mary's Music School (or at another school in the UK) for **three years**, you may be eligible for financial support from the Scottish government's aided places scheme. This is based on your household income but means you could be eligible for up to 100% financial support. Our Bursar can discuss this with you.

Included in the fees:

- Academic text books, jotters, etc.
- Academic music textbooks, music, manuscript paper etc.
- Examination fees where the pupil is entered by the School.
- Limited competition entry fees where the pupil is entered by the School.
- Some educational visits to a play, concert or other event.
- Instrument lessons
- Food and accommodation in an ensuite twin room.

There will be some additional costs for school uniform, music instrument repairs, outings, etc.



UK Year Group Equivalences

Age During School Year	England & Wales Curriculum	Scotland Curriculum
9-10	Year 5	P5
10-11	Year 6	P6
11-12	Year 7	P7
12-13	Year 8	S1
13-14	Year 9	S2
14-15	Year 10	S3
15-16	Year 11	S4

A-Levels and SCE Highers

Age During School Year	England & Wales Curriculum	Scotland Curriculum	
16-17	Year 12	S5	Advanced Training Programme
17-18	Year 13	S6	
18-19	St Mary's Music School S6 Extension Year*		

*The S6 extension year is an additional year specific to St Mary's Music School in which pupils have an opportunity to gain further exceptional musical training as well as any additional academic qualifications they may wish to engage in. This year is optional unless you are joining for our Advanced Training Programme in S6.

Point of entry: During the audition process we will discuss with you which year is most appropriate based on age and stage.



Frequently Asked Questions

The Application Process

What are the first steps towards an audition?

Get in touch by emailing admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk. Our Admissions department are happy to arrange for a phone call or Zoom chat to tell you a bit more about the school and the audition process. During the audition process, there will be plenty of opportunities to ask questions along the way and to meet staff and pupils.

We also hold open days throughout the year for further opportunities to find out more about a specialist music education.

What instruments do you accept?

Pupils can study a full range of orchestral instruments along with voice, piano, harpsichord, organ, harp, accordion, recorder, bagpipes and composition. We are happy to accept applications for any instrument. Traditional and jazz instruments are warmly welcomed.

Can I add a third study?

As you go through school you may wish to add a third study, This would be decided through discussion with you, the Director of Music and your instrumental teachers.

I have studied Rock and Pop - can I still apply?

Applications from Rock and Pop students are warmly welcomed. In reality, however, only candidates who demonstrate a firm knowledge of traditional music notation (and of music theory in general), and who have brought a second instrument up to a good standard - which may include singing or composition - are likely to have their applications progressed. Drummers are required to play another instrument to a good standard.

What if I'm not successful at an Audition, can I apply again?

We will always provide you with feedback at any stage of the process and give you advice on what you should do next. Where appropriate we will recommend that you reapply for the following year.



Fees and Finance

Is there an application fee?

There is no fee for an Advisory Audition. We charge a fee of £50 for a Consultation Lesson and £75 for a formal Audition.

Do you offer scholarships?

For exceptional candidates we may be able to provide some level of financial support. Our Bursar can discuss this with you.

Academic Curriculum

What if English is not my first language?

Don't worry. As long as you can speak, write and understand basic English then you can still apply. We provide additional ESOL (English as a Second Language) lessons and you will find that as soon as you are immersed in life at school your English will quickly improve.

What academic exams will I study?

Pupils at St Mary's Music School take Scottish (SQA) National Qualifications at National 5 (usually 7 or 8 subjects), Higher (usually 4 or 5 subjects) and Advanced Higher (usually 2 or 3 subjects) along with AQA GCSE and A-level in Music. These qualifications are recognised internationally. The school has a good reputation for languages, maths and science. The great majority of our pupils go on to study at Conservatoires and Universities.

How big are class sizes?

Classes can range from 3 to 15 pupils.

What are the academic results like?

Our examination results are consistently amongst the highest in the UK. Most of our pupils progress to Conservatoires and Universities. Pupils are regularly accepted at Oxford and Cambridge Universities every year. Although most pupils go on to study music, our academic curriculum and results prepare students for a range of disciplines.

“To anyone who wants to audition I would say – do what you can do, accept the fact that it's not going to be perfect, but be honest and trust what you are doing musically and they will understand. It's a great experience.”

Marie-Sophie, Russia



Boarding

How many boarders are there?

We have around 25 - 30 boarders who come from all over Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad. The Boarding House has a lovely family feel and pupils range in age from 11 - 19. Most pupils will share a room, with each room having en-suite facilities. As part of the audition process you will have the opportunity to meet with the Boarding House Manager.

Will I have to share a room?

There are a few single rooms which we tend to offer to the senior pupils, but all the rooms are large and have en-suite shower facilities - many of the boarders, including the seniors, often ask to share a room.

What happens in the evenings?

There is free time for all boarders along with supervised study for younger boarders and practice time. There are often organised activities which boarders may choose to participate in, followed by a light supper.

Do you cater for different food intolerances and allergies?

Yes, our chef and catering team can provide food that suits all diets - there is also a food committee who meet twice a term to put forward ideas to the chef.

Can my parents or friends visit me?

Yes, if notified in advanced, we welcome visits from parents or friends

Am I allowed out in the evenings/weekends?

Yes, boarders are allowed out in an evening for short walks or a visit to a concert etc. with permissions in place, or for a longer period by prior arrangement at weekends. On most Thursday evenings there is an outing to a concert at one of the major venues in Edinburgh.

Will I have access to WiFi?

Yes, you will have access to WiFi.

Can I practise at any time?

You will be able to practice from 7am until bedtime (which is dependent on your year of study).

Am I allowed my mobile phone with me?

Mobile phones are not permitted during the school day unless for learning purposes as directed by the school staff.



Do you provide additional English language support?

We provide lessons in English as a second language (ESOL) as part of our curriculum. There is usually no additional charge for this although we reserve the right to charge additional fees if more than the expected amount of support is required. This will be discussed with you.

Can I also sit exams for qualifications in my own country?

We recognise that sometimes you will wish to sit the exams of your own national curriculum and, if this will not impact on your musical studies, we will discuss this with you.

Visas and Guardianship

Do I need a visa?

If you are a non-UK student – or an EU student without settled or pre-settled status – it is likely that you will need to have a visa to study at St Mary's Music School. Up to date information on studying in the UK is to be found on the UK Border Agency website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

The School is a Child/Student Sponsor and if you are eligible we will be able to provide a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies sponsorship number for you to use when applying for your visa.

Do I require a Guardian?

Every student whose parents live or work outside the UK must have a guardian. Students will usually visit this guardian for short breaks such as in case of illness; and the guardian may respond on behalf of parents to educational or medical issues requiring urgent attention

Will I be met at the Airport?

We can arrange this on request.





Any questions? Do get in touch.

Contact our Admissions department.
We would be happy to arrange an informal chat with you over zoom.

E: admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk
T: 0131 538 7766

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