



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, the wider UK and abroad.

We look forward to welcoming you to our very special school.

Dr. Kenneth Taylor, Headteacher



## Criteria for Entry

Entry to St Mary's Music School is based on musical ability and potential. Pupils are selected after an audition process. We will consider instrumentalists, singers and composers.

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.

For those interested in singing, there are two possible routes into the school, either as a 9 year old day pupil (chorister pathway) or as an instrumentalist (day or boarding) 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). 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).

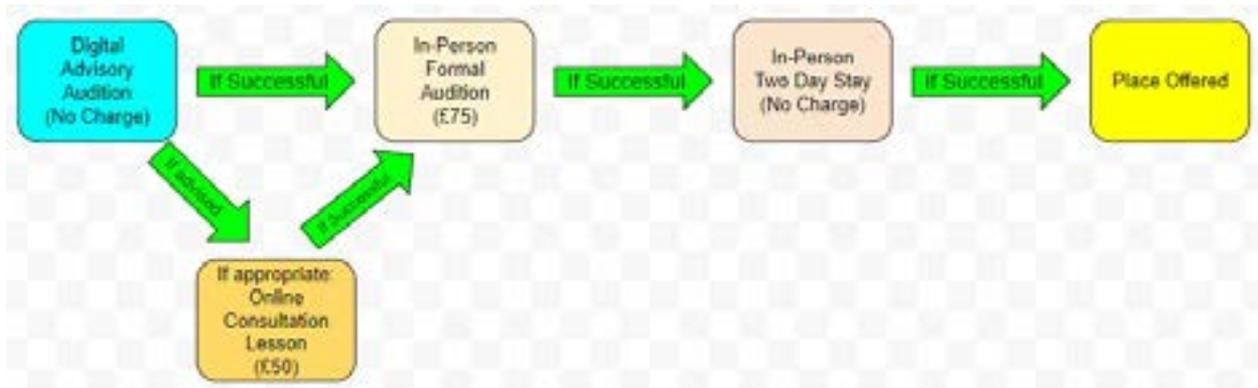
## Boarding and Day Places

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](mailto: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 invited for a formal audition, this will normally take place at our premises at Coates Hall in Edinburgh.

Auditions are usually held three times a year (November, February and April).

- You will be asked to prepare two contrasting pieces on your first study instrument and one piece on your second instrument if you have one. (These can be the same pieces as you prepared for your advisory audition.) Singing can also be presented.
- A panel will assess your musical ability and potential as well as explore the passion you have to study music. The audition will last around 45 minutes.
- Parents/guardians are welcome to accompany their child to an audition but will not be able to be present at the audition itself. There is an opportunity to take a tour of the School by prior arrangement.

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\*.

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

## Two Day Stay (in-person)

If you are successful at audition, we will invite you to the final stage of the audition process, a Two Day Stay.

The Two Day Stay will take place in School. If you are applying as a boarder you will stay overnight.

During the Two Day Stay you will:

- Get a real sense of life at the School and decide whether it is for you.
- Attend lessons (both academic and music), and meet our pupils and teachers; in fact, you will do everything our current pupils do during the school day.
- For parents/guardians there will be 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.

“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



## Fees for UK residents

We are one of five specialist music in the UK and are supported by the Scottish Government via the **Aided Places Scheme (Scotland)**, which is designed to ensure that any pupil with exceptional talent can receive a specialist education regardless of their financial means.

As part of this, the majority of UK-resident instrumental pupils at St Mary's Music School are eligible to be supported by the generous provisions of the Aided Places Scheme, (up to 100% of the cost of tuition and boarding fees) funded by the Scottish Government, or by the School itself. Further details on eligibility can be obtained from the Bursar.

The Aided Places Scheme provides means-tested financial assistance for the cost of tuition, boarding fees and other expenses for pupils attending St Mary's Music School. Fees are calculated based on affordability and family income.

Please see the Aided Places Scheme page for information on eligibility, what assistance is available and how to apply.

The Bursar will be happy to speak to prospective parents about the school fees and funding. Please contact admissions in the first instance to arrange a meeting.

## School Fees

Please see the School Fees page.

Included:

- Academic text books, jotters, etc.
- Academic music textbooks, music, manuscript paper etc.
- Examination fees where the pupil is entered by the School.
- Competition entry fees where the pupil is entered by the School.
- Some educational visits to a play, concert or other event.
- Instrument lessons.

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

“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



## 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](mailto: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.

“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



# 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.

## What funding assistance is available?

Over 90% of our pupils receive some kind of means-tested financial support through the Scottish Government's Aided Places Scheme, designed to ensure that any pupil with exceptional talent can receive a specialist education regardless of their financial means. Eligibility is based on length of residence in the UK.. Fees are calculated based on affordability and family income and you can find details of the fees and financial support at: <https://www.stmarysmusicschool.co.uk/fees-and-funding>

# Academic Curriculum

## What academic exams will I study?

Pupils at St Mary's Music School take SQA National Qualifications at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, along with AQA GCSE and A-level Music. With small classes and a high staff to pupil ratio, pupils can achieve the best of results in both their music and academic studies. Our examination results are consistently high. 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.



# 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 I go home at weekends?

Yes, you can go home at weekends provided you don't have school music commitments.

## 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.





## 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](mailto:admissions@st-marys-music-school.co.uk)  
T: 0131 538 7766

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