



**PRIEST REFERENCE FORM**  
**For Admission of children to St Paul's Catholic College, Burgess Hill**

The Name and Address of the College to which you are applying for a place for your child.	<b>St Paul's Catholic College</b> <b>Jane Murray Way</b> <b>Burgess Hill</b> <b>West Sussex</b> <b>RH15 8GA</b>
The Name and Address of the Child for whom you are applying for a place.	
Your Name and Address. <i>(Give all names by which you are or have been known. Give all addresses at which you have resided in the past three years)</i>	
Your Telephone Numbers and other Contact Details	
Your Email Address	
What is your Relationship to the Child? (Parent, Guardian, etc.)	

Please give details of your Religious affiliation. <i><b>(Please study the notes accompanying this Form before completing this section)</b></i>	
Which Parish, Parishes or Places of Worship do you normally attend for Sunday Mass (or 'First Mass' on Saturday)? Give the Name and Contact Details of the Parish Priests, and the Names and Addresses of the Churches.	
If the Admission Policy of the college to which you wish to apply gives priority to children whose parents worship regularly, you must indicate here that you have attended Sunday Mass (or 'First Mass' on Saturday) at least once a month in the last year. If this is the case, please place a tick in the box on the right.	

Please give any other supporting information concerning your religious affiliation and practice that you wish to be taken into account.

*Note: the priest cannot give additional weight to subjective factors such as your 'commitment' to the parish. Nor can he take into account participation in parish activities to which some parishioners might have little access, for example, because of their hours of employment. It is not necessary to mention siblings or other associations with the college. If the college gives priority to siblings, this will be applied by the college, not the priest who signs this form. Previous attendance by the child's relatives cannot be taken into account.*

**Parental Declaration**

I certify that I am a member of the Catholic Church (as defined by the information notes accompanying this Form).

I certify that the information given in this Form is true to the best of my knowledge. I accept that if any of this information is subsequently found to be false, my child will be liable to lose their place at the college.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

**Priest's Declaration**

*\*Please delete as appropriate:*

\*I certify that \_\_\_\_\_ has signed this self declaration form in my presence and that the information he/she has given concerning his/her religious practice is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

\*I certify that \_\_\_\_\_ has signed this self declaration form in my presence. I have recorded below, under 'comments', any reservations that I may have concerning the accuracy of the information on religious practice.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Stamp



Use separate sheet for additional comments if necessary

## Comments

# **GUIDANCE ON PRIESTS' REFERENCES**

## **Guidance for parents**

The Form for obtaining a priest's reference in connection with an application for admission to a Diocesan school/college is for use where the school's/college's admission policy specifies that priority for admission will be given to baptised Catholic children whose parents are "practising Catholics". If the term 'committed Catholics' is used, it must be taken as referring to objective evidence of the parents' religious practice.

## **Who is allowed to apply to a school/college and a priest for the admission of a child to that school/college?**

A person who makes an application to a school/college for the admission of a child must be the parent or guardian of that child. This Form must only be completed by such a person. (In these notes reference to the 'parent' should be taken to apply to that person.) To qualify to complete the Form, you must have the responsibility for the care of the child on a permanent basis at your main place of residence. If you are in doubt about whether you are the appropriate person to make this application, it is your responsibility to check requirements with the school/college.

## **When is it necessary to complete the form?**

You can claim priority for the admission of your child by providing the school/college with proof of your child's baptism. The information you give on this Form will establish whether your child is entitled to further priority for admission on the grounds that you are a practising Catholic (but please note that not all schools/colleges offer this further priority). The purpose of the Form is to gather the essential details to ensure that the school/college governors apply their admission criteria fairly. Fairness is a legal requirement on all schools/colleges.

## **Why is it that some schools/colleges give priority to parents who practise their faith and some do not?**

The policy of this Diocese for school/college admissions is in line with the national Catholic policy. All Diocesan school/college admission policies must give overall priority to baptised Catholic children before other children. However, some Diocesan schools/colleges find that they do not always have enough places for all the Catholic children whose parents apply to the school/college. They may have to set up their policy to allow them to give even higher priority to those children whose parents practise their Catholic faith. Some schools/colleges may even need to make further distinctions in order to distribute their places fairly. For instance, they may decide to take into account the degree of parental practice by the frequency of attendance at Sunday Mass. A few schools/colleges take into account the age at which the child was baptised.

### **Who must be a practising Catholic in order for the child to be given admission priority?**

The requirement is that at least one of the child's parents should fulfil this criterion. Please note that, to be recognised as a Catholic for the purposes of school/college admission, either you must have been baptised according to the rites of the Catholic Church or you must have been baptised according to another rite that is recognised by the Catholic Church and you have been received subsequently into the Catholic Church. It is not sufficient for you to attend a Catholic Church. If you are in doubt about whether you fulfil this criterion, you must consult a priest and obtain his written confirmation that you are a member of the Catholic Church. Further information is given in the notes below.

### **Why does the parent have to sign the Form? Is the priest's signature not sufficient?**

This Form is part of a 'self-declaration' process. You must complete it accurately and truthfully and sign that you have done so. The Form must also be signed by a priest who can personally vouch for your practice on the basis of evidence that you can provide to him or his own evidence. The priest has the right to withhold his signature if he has reasonable doubt about your practice. In this case, the school/college will not be able to offer priority for your child on the basis that you are a practising Catholic. However, your child will receive priority if you can provide a valid certificate showing that your child is a baptised Catholic.

### **What are the penalties for making a false declaration?**

It is important that any parent completing this self declaration is aware of the risks they are running for their child if it is established that the information the parent has given is false. Any place allocated would be liable to be withdrawn immediately. In these circumstances, the parent would have the right to lodge an appeal to an independent panel. If the appeal failed, the parent would have to find a place at another school/college. In some parts of the Diocese it is unlikely that there would be a vacant place at another Catholic school/college. The local authority might even have difficulty in finding a vacancy in any school/college near to where the child lived.

### **Which priest should I ask to sign the Form?**

You should obtain the signature of the priest who can personally vouch for your practice. In most cases this would be the parish priest of the church where you normally worship. If the priest who knows your practice has very recently left the parish, you should ask him to sign the Form. If for any reason you are unsure about whom to ask, or if you are unable to have the Form signed for some practical reason beyond your control, or you think you have been unreasonably refused a signature, you should consult with the school and the Dean (the Deans are listed in the Diocesan Directory) for the area where you worship, in order to find a way forward. It remains your responsibility to provide a valid signature.

### **To whom should the completed Form be returned?**

Each school/college will have specific arrangements for the return of Forms. You should refer to the school/college admission policy for details or contact the school/college for confirmation of the correct procedure.

## Who is 'a member of the Catholic Church'?

Those who have been baptised as Catholics are members of the Church. Baptised Catholics would include those baptised in any eastern rite church which is 'in communion with the See of Rome'. These are sometimes referred to as 'Uniate' churches. The Diocese can advise on whether a church meets the criterion. With the recent increase in migration from Eastern Europe, schools need to be fully aware of which families have admission rights through membership of these churches. The Diocese can advise on whether a church meets this criterion. A list of the names of Eastern Rite Catholic churches is given below. A policy which refers to Roman Catholic families would exclude these applicants. The term should be avoided.

- A. The criterion baptised CATHOLIC describes a member whose Church of Baptism is "in communion with the See of Rome".
- B. The Catholic Church comprises within it the Latin Rite (Roman Catholics) and the Eastern or Oriental Rite (composed of Catholic (Uniate) Churches).
- C. Eastern or Oriental Rite Churches in full Communion with the See of Rome.

EASTERN OR ORIENTAL RITE CHURCHES IN FULL COMMUNION WITH ROME
<i>ALEXANDRIA</i> : Coptic, Ethiopian. <i>ANTIOCH</i> : Malankrese (Sri Lanka), Maronite, Syrian. <i>ARMENIAN</i> : Armenian. <i>CHALDEAN (Syro-Oriental)</i> : Chaldean, Malabar. <i>CONSTANTINOPLE (BYZANTINE)</i> : Albanian, Byelorussian, Bulgarian, Greek, Melchite, Italo-Albanian, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, Ukrainian, Hungarian.
Source: Annuario Pontificio 2009 Riti nella chiesa pp1167-1170, 1878-1881

- D. ORTHODOX Churches are not in full Communion with the See of Rome and so rank after Catholic (Roman or Eastern/Oriental Rite Catholics). With the influx of families from Eastern Europe and beyond there will be applicants from Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox and other Oriental Orthodox churches. Families from Orthodox Churches should be considered for priority after Catholic families, as they are regarded as in a closer communion with the Catholic Church.
- E. Baptised Christians from other Ecclesial Communities such as the Church of England, Methodists, etc. rank after Orthodox baptised Christians. Some communities do not have the practice of infant baptism.
- F. Parents who have had children baptised in a non-Catholic Christian community but who subsequently have become Catholics should ensure that the children have been welcomed into full Communion and the fact noted in the Register of Reception.

- G. Catechumens are unbaptised persons who have been formally admitted to the Catechumenate, known as the RCIA Programme, who are expressing an explicit desire to be incorporated into the Church through Baptism. Some admission policies explicitly recognise this status. Governors must decide how applicants in this category will be treated.

Schools/colleges sometimes seek further advice on whether a parent's church can be regarded as another Christian denomination for school/college admission purposes. The local group of Churches Together is a reference point.

The Diocese can advise on the baptisms that are recognised as Christian by the Catholic Church. If a child has undergone a recognised baptism, it would not be repeated on entry to the Catholic Church. However, a record of having been received into the Church would still be required to verify membership of the Church.

The practice of one parent is sufficient to meet any criterion of practice. Some policies give some degree of priority to an unbaptised child of a Catholic parent. This might apply to a case where one of the parents prevented baptism.

If priority is given to one Christian denomination over another, there should be a clear reason to do so. Such a reason might be that a joint or ecumenical school/college has been set up to serve specific denominations.