

QUEEN MARY'S SCHOOLS

Frequently asked questions about appeals for Year 7 entry September 2020.

1. How do I appeal?

The appeal process is started by filling in, signing and returning the appeal form which is available from me, the Clerk to the Governors, Mr. David Milne, Queen Mary's Schools, Whitehouse Ridsdale, 26 Birmingham Road, Walsall, WS1 2LZ, or on the school's website. **Do not send your appeal form or supporting documents to the Local Authority.** I prefer the form to be sent electronically, but it can be posted or delivered to my address.

2. Can I submit my appeal form on line?

Yes – the appeal form is available from me at my e-mail address clerk@qmfoundation.org. The form will be sent to you as an e-mail attachment, and you can return it by e-mail as a completed attachment. Any supporting documents can either be sent by e-mail or post. Any form which is e-mailed will be accepted as "signed". Any documentation sent afterwards should indicate that the appeal form has been submitted by e-mail. I prefer to correspond by email if possible, so please let me know your email address if you have one. By disclosing your email address and submitting on-line, you consent to me using this email address for the appeal process. You should be aware that this may have confidentiality issues for emails that I send to this address (for example, that other people, including your child, may read correspondence) All material sent to me will be kept confidentially, and disclosed only to the school, the Independent Appeal Panel and the Appeal Clerk. Do not send appeals by email to the school or the Local Authority.

3. Is there a time limit for applications?

Yes – this is very important. There must be a cut-off point, and this is fixed for **3.00 p.m. Tuesday 31 March 2020**. Appeals lodged after this date will normally be listed for hearing on a date after the hearing of all appeals lodged in time, and (depending on when the appeal has been lodged) possibly after the decisions on those appeals have been made. If you are lodging your appeal late, but before the 29 May 2020, you should still send it to me. After 29 May 2020, all appeals should be sent by post directly to the school to which you wish to appeal, marked "Year 7 Appeal".

4. Can I send supporting documentation?

Yes, but you do not have to. If you do send documentation, please make sure it is fixed to the appeal form, or sent afterwards if the appeal form is e-mailed. Again, I refer to have supporting material sent electronically. Do not send original documents, as I cannot promise to return papers to you.

5. If I can't get the documentation, should I still send in the form?

Yes – what is important is that the appeal form is received by the closing date. If you want to submit documentation at a later date, or submit further information, then you are entitled to do so. If this is the case, please make sure that there is a covering letter referring to the relevant school (either the Grammar School (boys) or the High School (girls)), the full name of the child and the date when your appeal form was completed and sent. This will enable us to collect the papers together. You must also let me have any additional evidence no later than 5 school days before the hearing, so I can send it to the panel. Any material brought to the hearing will be considered only with the permission of the panel.

6. What does it mean by "Grounds for Appeal"?

You should set out here your reasons why you feel your child should be allowed into the school. There are no set rules for what it is to be said here, and you can say anything you wish as to why you would like your child to be admitted. You can attach additional sheets if there is not enough room. It is helpful, however, for the Independent Appeal Panel to know in advance what points you would like to make.

7. What happens to the material sent?

The material (including the form and supporting evidence) will be retained securely by me and will be copied and sent to the appeal clerk and the panel, and to the Head Teacher who will be at the hearing. After the hearing, the appeal panel and Head Teacher's papers will be securely shredded, and the appeal clerk and I have to retain the papers securely for two years.

8. What happens after the appeal form has been sent?

I collect the paperwork together and work out how many appeals have been received. If this year is similar to past years, there are likely to be a large number of appeals lodged. I will then work out with the Independent Appeal Panel dates when the appeals will be set for the hearing of the appeals. I will then notify you.

9. Will you acknowledge receipt of my appeal form?

Yes. I try to do this within 2 working days of receiving the appeal notice, but if you have not heard from me after 5 days please contact me.

10. Who hears the appeals?

There is an Independent Appeal Panel set up to deal with the appeals. The Appeal Panel consists of three people who have received specialist training on the appeal process. None of them is in any way connected to the school, and the appeal hearing has the benefit of advice from an independent Clerk (not me) so that the hearing is as fair as possible.

11. When will the appeals be heard?

The appeals are normally heard during May or June, but this will depend on the availability of the panel and the representatives from the schools. The precise time of the appeal will be sent to you in due course. You will be given at least 10 days' notice of the appeal. Because of the difficulty of arranging the appeals, requests for specific dates or times will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

12. What is the "school's statement"?

The school prepares two statements - a general one, and one specific to your child. These are sent to you and the Appeal Panel. The general one explains how the process works, and is sent to all people who appeal. The specific statement gives details of your child's performance, and why your child has not been offered a place, and is sent to the Appeal Panel and to you.

13. What happens at the appeal hearing?

The Appeal Panel will have been sent the appeal form, together with any supporting documents, and will also know your child's result, and where your child came in the ranking order. It will not have your child's actual test papers. Before the hearing, I will have sent you the school's statements.

I will invite all the parents who wish to appeal to attend at the same time to hear the school's general statement read out, and for the parents to ask questions about the *process and the examination* (but not about your child's performance). The specific statement relating to your child will not be read out in public, so no one else will know how your child performed in the entrance examination.

There will be a separate meeting (possibly on another day) with the Appeal Panel which will allow you to ask questions of the Head Teacher (or a representative) and make comments. You will be given the opportunity to address the panel, and put forward reasons why you think your child should be admitted to the school.

14. Do I have to attend the hearing?

No. You can allow the Appeal Panel to consider the appeal form and any supporting documents. The Panel will consider the appeal on the papers provided, and will not refuse an appeal simply because you were not there. If you do not intend to come to the hearing, it would be helpful if you could let me know.

15. How long will the hearing last?

Normally hearings last about 20 minutes, but this is by way of guidance only. Everyone has to be given the opportunity of a fair hearing. If it appears that the hearing is going to take some time, then it is open to the Appeal Panel to decide to hear it on another day.

16. Can I be represented at the hearing?

Yes. There is nothing to stop you bringing a friend or a representative to help you, but you are not expected to do so. If you do wish to bring somebody with you, it would be helpful if you could let me know in advance.

17. Should I bring my child?

Normally the Committee will not expect you to bring your child. Indeed, it is generally thought better not to do so.

18. Where will the appeal hearing be heard?

The appeal hearing will be held at a neutral venue, such as a local hotel, which will have easy access for people by car or public transport. I will make the arrangements when I know how many appeals will be listed.

19. What do I do if I have difficulties understanding the hearing or getting to the hearing?

If you have difficulty understanding English, or if you have a physical difficulty attending the hearing, then let me know as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

20. Why has my child not been successful?

The Mercian Academy Trust of the school is the Admissions Authority and has delegated responsibility for admission appeals to the individual schools which have set out in the Admission Arrangements the basis on which the pupils are admitted to the school. This is on the results of the entrance examinations, and pupils are offered places in strict order of merit. Your child has not been admitted because other pupils have performed better in the examination.

21. How many pupils are admitted each year?

At the present time there are 150 pupils who are admitted to the High School (the girls' school) and 180 to the Grammar School (the boys' school). This is a limit placed on the number of places at the school based available space and the resources of the school.

22. What makes a successful appeal?

It is not possible to say what will make an appeal successful. Anything that you wish to say to the Appeal Panel will be taken into account. From experience of previous years, however, and

bearing in mind what has been said before, some of the following things have been raised but have not been successful –

- your preference for the school and everything it represents;
- your desire for single sex education;
- that you live near to the school;
- that your child is generally very bright and would be a credit to the school;
- your child was nervous in the entrance tests and did not perform as well as might have been expected;
- your child was ill on the examination day (this is because there are provisions to hold the test on another day);
- your child is close to the last automatic place;
- that you have family or other connections with the school.

However, please note that you are still entitled to make these points if you think that they are relevant. The panel must undertake a two-stage process of weighing up the prejudice to the school by admitting more pupils, against the prejudice caused to your child.

Please note that there are procedures for special arrangements to be made for taking the examination if your child has Special Educational Needs or a disability.

Please bear in mind, however, that the school's Admission Policy states that places will be awarded based on the performance in the entrance examinations only.

23. What happens after the Appeal?

The Panel will hear all appeals before anyone is notified of the Panel's decision. The Clerk to the Appeal Panel will then write to you with the Panel's decision. The letter will show the reasons why the Panel has reached its decision. This will usually be sent within 5 school days.

24. What if I have further questions?

If you have further questions then please speak to me. Further information about the legal position regarding appeals and the process can be obtained via the Department for Education website, which can also provide a copy of the School Admission Appeals Code:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

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