

Frequently Asked Questions

Many prospective parents and students have questions about the admissions process and other general queries either before joining or once they have accepted a place.

We have tried to answer the most common questions below. However, if you have any queries at any time, please do contact the admissions team registrar@stswithuns.com or by telephone: 01962 835742, we will be delighted to assist.

General

- **When was St Swithun's founded?** 1884
- **How many girls attend St Swithun's Senior School?** Approximately 500 (ages 11-18)
- **Where do the girls come from?** Girls join St Swithun's from all around the world, as well as the UK. We currently have girls from 27 different countries.
- **What are the class sizes?** Maximum of 20; for GCSE and A Levels, class sizes are usually smaller.
- **Can I have my mobile phone with me during the day?** Girls joining Sixth Form are permitted to have their mobile phones but girls younger than Year 12 leave mobile phones in the boarding house and have limited access at the start and end of the day. International students are permitted to call home during break time or lunchtime, should they wish to do so. Day girls younger than Year 12 place their phone in a "Yondr" pouch which is locked and only unlocked by staff at the end of the school day.
- **When should I visit St Swithun's – an Open Day or individual tour?** There is no correct answer. You are welcome to come to Open day and have an individual tour. Find out more details [here](#).
- **What are the entry requirements and assessments?** Please find the most up-to-date information on the website [Admissions pathways](#).
- **Can you tell us about the social and educational opportunities which are available with boys?** We have socials approximately twice a year in the Sixth Form with Winchester College (and other independent schools) which is predominately a boys school in Winchester and in addition we have lots of educational collaboration – eg at Winchester College with our Model Nations Club, debating – half-termly friendly competition with them where the boys and girls work together. The maths department will have a Christmas dinner with the top

mathematics when they also have visiting speakers and there are other departmental collaborations as well as getting whole year groups together for social events.

- **Do you offer scholarships and do they have an accompanying fee remission?** We offer a variety of scholarships at different entry points. Scholarship awards from 2026 will not carry any fee remission.
- **Do you offer bursaries?** You will find further details on our [website](#)

Boarding/Boarders

- **How many boarders do you have?** There are approximately 200 boarders living in six boarding houses.
- **Do I get my own room?** Girls joining Year 8 upwards have a single room (in Year 7 girls share small dorms) with their own sink area. These rooms include wardrobe spaces, storage and a desk for completing their prep in the evening/ weekend.
- **How do I purchase uniform?** St Swithun's girls only wear uniform up to the end of Year 11 and we have a school shop on site so girls joining from overseas should arrive a few days early and book an appointment at the school shop. In Year 12, we allow girls to wear their own uniform such as jeans/trousers/joggers/jumpers/t ops/hoodies/skirts/dresses etc.
- **Who is the Housemistress/Houseparent?** The Housemistress/houseparent oversees the House where you live/board and they look after the girls with help from the Resident Tutor and day matron. We also have a graduate student supporting in each house. They live in their own accommodation in the boarding house and can help with absolutely everything. There is a member of staff available in house 24 hours a day and at least two resident staff members in the building overnight in every house.
- **What happens if I am ill or homesick?** There is a fully staffed Medical Centre at School to look after girls who are ill. This includes a team of four nurses. All the girls are also registered with a local Doctor, and we have two local GPs (doctors) visit the school for appointments every week. House staff and pastoral staff are experienced in helping girls deal with the pressures of being away from home and family. We also have a school counselling team, with two counsellors and a clinical psychologist on site. The health centre team and the counselling team are part of the school's welfare team, which also includes the deputy head pastoral and the head of boarding.

Our day matron team are also key in helping boarders to settle into life at school: they can help with laundry, escort to any medical appointments and bake favourite snacks.

- **Is there a school dentist?** Students can sign up to a dentist who visits the school regularly throughout the school year (in their mobile van).
- **What essential items do I need to bring as a boarder?** All the packing details will be sent to you in the summer term before you join. We will include information about clothes for all

weathers, bedding, personal items such as a teddy or family photographs. You can send luggage ahead and other items can be bought online or at shops locally. If you play a musical instrument you may wish to bring this so that you can join in musical activities and orchestra. The music department is open in the evenings and weekends for boarders' use.

- **How do I set up a bank account?** The school office will provide a letter for your chosen bank confirming you are a student at St Swithun's, and this will aid you setting up a bank account locally.
- **Can I get parcels delivered?** Yes, parents, family, friends can send you parcels directly to school at anytime of the school year. Boarding house addresses can be found in your boarding house handbook sent to you as part of the boarding induction programme.
- **Can I go to the shops?** St Swithun's girls are very busy during the week and the weekend. However, there is an opportunity every week to go to the local supermarket via minibus (Tesco) which is a short drive from the school, on a Friday evening. There is also a school shop on site for essential items, uniform and snacks and drinks. In addition, we have an airstream van on site which is open between 7.30 – 9.30 and 3.30 – 5.30 Monday – Friday and 8.00 am – 2.00 pm on a Saturday serving coffee, tea, hot chocolate, soft drinks; hot and cold food and snacks. Girls can walk safely into Winchester city centre at the weekend. Younger years are supervised by boarding staff while in Winchester city centre as part of the activity programme.
- **Is the school culturally sensitive and how will I be made to feel welcome?** St Swithun's welcomes students from all backgrounds and we celebrate cultural diversity in our whole school "Culture Week", boarding house discussions and activities, cooking international food in houses and through the plethora of cultural events that we recognise throughout the year from Nigerian Independence Day to the Mid-Autumn Festival; Thanksgiving celebrations; Luna New Year celebrations and much more. We have a dedicated EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) member of staff who ensures everyone, students and staff are treated fairly and without discrimination.
- **When can I speak to my parents?** International boarders can call home at breaktime/ lunchtime or in the evening. Special times are set aside for pupils to contact parents. Housemistresses are always ready to help with this.
- **How will I join in with other girls and school life?** Whether you are arriving in Year 7/L4 or Y12/Lower Sixth Form, your Housemistress, Matron, Tutor, teachers and current students will look after you. You will also be given a fellow student buddy, who will help you settle in and answer your questions. As part of the induction process, the headmistress will visit each boarding house in the evening to meet all new students and welcome them to school.

Travel (including Visa information)

- **Do International students need a visa?** Yes. Typically, students will apply for a Child Student Visa which is for applicants under 18, who are intending to study in the UK for longer than 6 months. The school will provide sponsorship to enable the student to apply for their visa around 4-5 months in advance of entry, providing a place has been offered and accepted and the necessary fees and paperwork have been submitted successfully. We have been granted a Child and Student visa sponsorship licence by the UK Home Office and so are able to invite boarders to join us from around the globe. The school works with an immigration company and details will be sent to all families on receipt of registration. To make life easier for our international student body, we currently only have one Exeat weekend a year in May.
- **How do I get to and from the airport to catch my flights?** We can help with your travel to and from the airport – St Swithun's is conveniently close to Heathrow and other airports. Airport transfers are usually arranged with other international students who are catching flights on the same day to save costs.
- **How far is it to Heathrow Airport?** Heathrow is usually a one-hour taxi ride from the school. Students flying home for holidays can usually share taxi's to the airport. There is also a very inexpensive National Express coach service from Winchester Park and Ride to Heathrow terminals.
- **Is there a local train station in Winchester?** Yes, the train station is a short drive from the school or approximately a 20-25 minute walk. There are approximately 100 trains daily from London Waterloo station to Winchester which takes one hour.
- **What happens if I can't fly home for the holidays?** All international students must have a UK guardian which is a UK Home Office requirement. This arrangement can be set up with a UK guardianship service. Schools work closely with several AEGIS (Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students) and BSA (Boarding Schools' Association) registered guardians used by current or former pupils, but this information should not be regarded as a recommendation for any one company in particular. Guardians should be over 25 years of age, have UK residency and living within a two-hour drive of the school
- **Where can my parents stay locally when they visit?** Winchester is a wonderful city to live and to visit. Click [here](#) for further information about where to stay, what to do and where to eat and drink whilst visiting Winchester.

Academic/University/Careers

- **Is it compulsory to have both Ukiset and International certificate for overseas students?** If you are based overseas, we use Ukiset to give us standardised scores and show reasoning skills to give us an indication of your academic potential. There is some English language testing within Ukiset but the scope of testing is not sufficient for us to feel confident that we know you will be ready for written, spoken and reading rigours of sixth form. However, if you are learning at an international school and the majority of your lessons are in English, and you speak English at home, we recommend you do Ukiset.

- **Do you offer EAL (English Language Support)?** Yes, our EAL department offer girls an individual 30-minute lesson each week. There is no additional cost for these lessons.
- **How many A Level subjects should someone choose?** There are 25 different subjects offered at A level representing a broad range of disciplines including the arts, science, humanities, maths, languages, technology, social sciences. Most of our students will complete three but we encourage them to start with four so they can take time to feel confident they have chosen the right subjects over two years. Or four or five if further mathematics is included – this is because not all universities regard maths and further mathematics as separate subjects for their entry requirements
- **When must a final decision re A Level choices be reached?** For purposes of your application to St Swithun's, you will need to select your top three so you can complete our entrance assessments. However, if you have a change of heart, you are welcome to contact us. Guideline: 4 – 5 hours per week per A Level subject each week outside of lessons – every subject has four hours of lesson time each day. This equates to five hours of lessons and five hours of study per A Level per week.
- **Which Universities do the girls join after school?** Please find a link to our fantastic A Level and GCSE [results and destinations](#). For a record breaking fifth year in a row, over 10% of UCAS applicants from the current upper sixth and class of 2025 received Oxbridge offers. A total of 16% of students have received offers to study at either Cambridge or Oxford. Overall, just under a third of students (32%) who applied to Oxbridge received an offer. Alongside our successful Oxbridge applications, U6 students have received offers to pursue pathways as diverse as their interests. Some of the highlights so far include offers to study Linguistics at the University of Chicago, Management at the University of Toronto, Art History at the University of St Andrews, Fashion at Institut de la Mode in Paris, and Biomedical Engineering at Imperial College in London.
- **How the girls are supported with University applications.** The process starts in February of L6 where we hold a UCAS evening focused on careers and the UCAS process. Each student has a tutor who will help them work on their personal statement. In the summer term, L6 students will be working on their applications and getting advice to help prepare them for entrance tests which are becoming more common place for the most competitive Universities. These usually take place in the Autumn Term of U6. Support offered is very comprehensive and depends on the course the student wishes to study e.g. medics Ucat test. We offer mock interviews and mock MMI's (medics) and aspiring lawyers run Lnat admissions test. We also aim to provide workplace opportunities especially for medics and lawyers. Whatever the aspiration of the student we will have a bespoke programme to help support them with their application.
- **What careers support do we give?** Employability is a key area of our 6 pillars of Sixth Form. In the summer term we have employability information time, careers networking events, and talks from visiting professionals. We train all students in interview techniques with assistance from HR experts. We run one-to-ones in L6 to find out what students interests are and to help them identify the best University course for them.

Extra-curricular/sport/facilities

→ **What are the extra-curricular opportunities?** There are many! We believe in a holistic education. Character development for all our students

Sport – two afternoons a week – Wednesday and Thursday all students in PE lessons (lacrosse, netball, badminton, golf, tennis etc)

Music – strong, ensemble etc; Drama – school productions; Engineering – greenpower – students create their sustainable powered go-kart; Whatever your interests are they can be explored to the depths of your curiosity with the support of your teachers.

→ **What are the main sports played each term?** We play a range of sports across the year but traditionally lacrosse and netball are very popular in the winter with cricket, tennis and athletics taking pride of place in the summer. We have an excellent swimming pool which regularly hosts swimming meets and galas. Badminton and golf are both sports that are growing in popularity at the school.

→ **What are the facilities like at St Swithun's?** We are blessed with excellent facilities across our extensive 45-acre site on the edge of Winchester and the Hampshire Downs. Our school buildings are modern and well-equipped. As well as academic classrooms and science laboratories, there is a magnificent performing arts centre with a 600-seat auditorium, a music school, an art and technology block, a sports hall and a full-size indoor swimming pool. There is an impressive library and ICT facility. The grounds are spacious and encompass sports fields, athletics track with all-weather jumping and throwing areas, tennis courts and gardens.

The senior school has six boarding houses for its full and weekly boarders, with separate houses for those in their first year and those in the upper sixth. Each is furnished to a high standard with spacious modern kitchens, communal areas and bathrooms.

Recent additions to the site include the Jill Isaac Study Centre – a place for university candidates to study and focus as well as the home of our flourishing academic enrichment programme. This summer we will also finish work on our new indoor sports courts, the first part of a two-phase project aiming to help our students be even more healthy and active.