

COGNITA



DOWNSEND
SCHOOL

Inspiring Young Minds

Applications and Admissions Policy

September 2023-26

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Downsend is an independent academically selective day co-education school for children aged 6 months to 16.
- 1.2 The aims of this policy are:
 - to set out the criteria and procedure for enquiries, pre-registration events, and admissions which are clear, fair and ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010; and
 - to ensure that the abilities and aptitudes of applicants joining Downsend (**'the School'**) matches the ethos and standards of the School and may benefit from the opportunities offered at the School, able to make a positive contribution to the life of the School.
- 1.3 References to parents in the policy means a parent or legal guardian (or the parents or legal guardians) of a child or applicant to the School.
- 1.4 This policy is available on the School website and also on request from the School office and can be made available in large print or other accessible format, if required.

2 Equal Treatment

- 2.1 The School welcomes applications for admission from pupils of all backgrounds. This policy applies to all pupils, including those in our Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 2.2 All candidates for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of their, or their parents', sex, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, or any disability or social background. Candidates will also be treated equally in respect of their parents' age, gender or marital or civil partnership status.
- 2.3 If an applicant has any allergies, special educational needs, or a disability, parents or guardians must notify the School on the Registration Form, providing full written details in the dedicated space provided on the form.
- 2.4 Parents must let the School know about any particular requirements which may affect a child's ability to participate in a taster/trial session or day in School and/or their ability to participate in any pre-admission assessments so that the School can make appropriate provision for them.
- 2.5 Where necessary, parents will be asked to provide a copy of an Educational Psychologist's report, or a relevant medical report or any Education Health Care Plan (ECH Plan) (draft or otherwise) which may be in place with respect to their child, and the School may need to discuss provision with external agencies. This is so that the School can assess the child's needs, what support is required and consult with parents about the adjustments which can reasonably be made and so that the School can ensure, for example, that their child will be able to adequately access the education and opportunities offered at the School and that the School is able to ensure their health and safety, and the health and safety of others (including staff and pupils). The cost of such reports will usually be the responsibility of the parent.
- 2.6 Where a prospective pupil is disabled, the School will discuss with parents (and their child's medical adviser's, and/or the Local Authority, where appropriate) the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the child if they become a pupil at the School, to ensure that the prospective pupil is not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a pupil who is not disadvantaged because of a disability.

- 2.7 There may be exceptional circumstances in which the School is not able to offer a place for reasons relating to a child's disability or special educational needs. For example, if, despite reasonable adjustments, we feel that a prospective pupil is not going to be able to adequately access the education offered, or that their health and safety or those of other pupils or staff may be put at risk, we may not be able to offer a place at the School.
- 2.8 Sometimes, the situation of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs changes. The School requires parents to be pro-active and transparent in updating the School as to any relevant changes which mean that the information provided during the application process is out of date or incomplete. In the vast majority of cases, this will not affect a pupil's place at the School (where a place has been offered). However, the School may, in exceptional circumstances, need to reconsider the offer of a place if a pupil's circumstances change materially. It is in the pupil's interests that any such decision is made as early as possible to avoid any disruption to their education, so parents are urged to be forthcoming in their communications with the School about any material change to their child's circumstances.

3 Enquiries

All enquiries and applications should be made to the Admissions Manager. Further information about the School's application process can be found on the School's website.

4 Visits

Prospective parents are encouraged to visit to see the school in action and to meet the Heads of School. Open Days run throughout the year providing an opportunity to experience the school. Alternatively, you might like to make an appointment for a Talk and Tour, or a personal tour. Please contact a member of the Admissions Team to arrange this.

5 Registration

- 5.1 Following a visit, parents wishing to register their child should complete a Registration Form and return it with a payment for the registration fee. The registration fee covers the cost of administering the registration procedure, including the waiting lists and is non-refundable. Registration is an indication of interest and is not a guarantee of a place.
- 5.2 The School will respond by confirming that the child's name has been placed on the admission list for the relevant term and year. If the year group is fully subscribed, they will be placed on a waiting list.

6 Taster Days

We offer Taster sessions/mornings at Little Downsend. Taster Days at the Main School are an opportunity to experience the school and take assessments if children are unable to attend the formal assessment days in November, January and March.

7 Admission to Nursery

Children are welcomed into the Nursery from the age of 2 at Little Downsend Leatherhead and Little Downsend Epsom and 6 months at Little Downsend Ashted. There is no formal assessment, but all children are invited into a taster session or tour. Parents will be asked about their child's general development and any identified special educational needs prior to a place being offered. Places are not automatic; in some rare cases a place will not be offered if we judge that a child's development is below expectation or that they will not flourish in the environment we offer.

8 Transition from Nursery to Reception

Transition from Nursery (age 3-4) to Reception (age 4-5) is automatic. Children are assessed based on an ongoing observation of their learning and development. In order to effectively plan class sizes and available places in Reception for the next academic year, parents will be asked to confirm their intention to transition to Reception in the Spring Term of Rising Reception.

9 Admission to Other Year Groups

- 9.1 Children who have registered are invited to one of our assessment days held in the November, January and March prior to the September entry. These days aim to ensure that those pupils who join Downsend are most likely to benefit from the School's Future Skills provision. In the Junior School, children are assessed in Maths, English and Writing. They will also be given the opportunity to interact as a group to demonstrate their wider skill set. To enter the Senior School, pupils are assessed in Maths and English, and undertake a problem-solving exercise to determine their ability to be creative and to work collaboratively as a team. The assessment days are designed to be informal and enjoyable, as well as provide a thorough assessment of a child's profile.
- 9.2 Parents will be asked to provide a copy of the child's latest full school report and any interim reports. Parents are asked for reference details of their current school so that the Admissions Team can request the reference.
- 9.2 Parents are asked about their child's general development and any identified special educational needs prior to a place being offered. Places are not automatic, in some cases a place will not be offered if we judge that a child's development is below expectation or that they will not flourish in the environment we offer.
- 9.3 Overseas pupils may be required to undertake a language proficiency assessment before a place is offered. This includes a written assessment and may also include an interview in person or via electronic media.
- 9.4 Assessment Days for Y3 and above run in November, January and March. The optimum number of pupils at each Assessment Day is 20, at which places will be capped. Invitations to reserve a place at an Assessment Day will be sent out to registered families with a booking link. The first bookings received for November will be registered for the Assessment Day. Once the optimum number is reached for November, bookings will be allocated to January.

10 Allocation of Places, Offers and Waiting List

- 10.1 A place is only available once a formal offer has been made by the School and the required deposit has been received by the School in return.
- 10.2 In the event that the number of children registered for any year group exceeds the places available, the following criteria will be assessed to balance the cohort appropriately:
 - Siblings in the school
 - References from previous schools
 - Results obtained in standardised tests
 - Demonstration of Future Skills according to a ranking system. Ranking will be based upon the pupil's ability to:
 - Think with a global perspective
 - Work collaboratively in a team
 - Be creative in their problem-solving activity

Applications and Admissions Policy

- Show aptitude in using digital technology and terminology
- The length of time the child has been registered
- The school reserves the right to ensure an appropriate co-educational balance dependent upon the existing cohort.
- For a child entering the Nursery, a child requiring a full time place will be given priority over a children requesting a part time place, provided sufficient sessions are available.
- The School reserves the right to prioritise places for children requiring a through-school place in future years.

- 10.3 The parents of each applicant will be informed within four weeks of the assessment, if their application has been successful and whether a place is available. The School will not be obliged to state its reasons for declining a request for admission.
- 10.4 The School will allocate a number of places in November, and again in January and March, based on trend data as a guide to the number of places that are likely to be available.
- 10.5 If no place is available, parents may place their child's name on the waiting list for the School. The School cannot guarantee when a place may become available.
- 10.6 The School reserves the right to withdraw an offer of place in circumstances when the School becomes aware that material information provided as part of the child's application is intentionally false or misleading.

11 Appeal

There is no right to appeal a decision not to admit a pupil to the School. The decision of the Headteacher is final. The School's complaints procedure is not available for prospective parents or in respect of prospective pupils.

12 Overseas Applicants

We welcome overseas pupils provided that they have the legal right to enter and study in the UK and, where parents are resident outside the UK, have an education guardian who has legal authority to act on behalf of the parents. More details are contained in the School's Parent Contract.

13 Fluency in English

- 13.1 In order to cope with the academic and social demands of the School pupils must have an appropriate working knowledge of English. Normally pupils should have been educated in the English medium for at least 3 years before coming to the School. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parent's expense.
- 13.2 Applicant pupils may be required to undertake a language proficiency assessment before a place is offered. This includes a written assessment and may include an interview, either in person or online.

14 The Parent Contract

The terms upon which the School educates each child are set out in the School's Parent Contract as amended from time to time, which will be made available to parents as part of the admissions process.

15 Admissions Register and Record Keeping

- 15.1 The School maintains an Admissions Register in line with regulatory requirements.
- 15.2 Applicants' details will be held on file with due regard to data protection legislation, the School's Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy. The School will not hold the personal data of your child or you for longer than is necessary for a lawful purpose.
- 15.3 For each pupil, the Admissions Register must contain:
- Name in full;
 - Gender;
 - Name and address of every person known to the proprietor to be a parent of the pupil (and an indication of which parent the pupil normally lives with and which parents hold parental responsibility as defined by Section 3 Children Act 1989)
Note: parents holding parental responsibility, even if not actually caring for the child, have a right to receive relevant information from the School in respect of any pertinent matter affecting the child, unless a court order indicates otherwise. Where a parent notifies the School that a pupil will live at another address, in addition or instead; the new address, the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will normally live with in future and the date from which it is expected the pupil will normally live there, where it is reasonably practicable for the School to ascertain this information;
 - At least two emergency contact numbers for pupils with two or more parents, i.e. one per parent or at least two emergency contact numbers for children with single parents (where possible);
 - Day, month and year of birth;
 - Day, month and year of admission or re-admission to the School;
 - Name and address of the School last attended, if any; and
 - The name of the destination school (or additional school, in the case of dual registration) notified by a parent and the first date of attendance, where it is reasonably practicable for the School to ascertain this information (a new requirement from September 2016).
- 15.4 The name of a pupil must be included in the register from the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend the School. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the School year. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the School should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.
- 15.5 The School will inform their local authority (where the School is situated) when a pupil's name is going to be deleted from the Admissions Register on certain grounds. In summary, these are:
- When the child has been taken out of school to be home educated;
 - When the family has apparently moved away;
 - When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend;
 - When the child is in custody for more than four months; and
 - When the child has been permanently excluded.

Applications and Admissions Policy

15.6 Schools must notify their 'own' local authority when they add or remove a pupil's name from/to the Admissions Register at non-standard transitions, i.e. where a compulsory school-aged child leaves a school before completing the School's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the School's first year. The lawful grounds for removing a pupil, including the original ones above, and the information to be reported to the local authority, are set out in detail in Children Missing Education (DFE, 2016). Schools are also under a duty to provide information to the local authority for standard transitions if requested.

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