



Oaklands School

Admissions Policy

Aims

The aims of this policy are to identify and admit children who will benefit from an academic education and who will contribute to and benefit from the ethos and activities of our School Community.

Oaklands is a privately-owned independent preparatory school for children from 2½ to 11. These procedures apply to candidates applying to join the School at any point. We expect our pupils to stay with us until they complete their time with us at age 11. The School would not normally accept children where it is known that they intend to leave at an earlier age.

Equal treatment

We welcome children from many different ethnic and racial groups, backgrounds and creeds. Human rights and freedoms are respected but must be balanced with the lawful needs and rules of our School Community and the rights and freedoms of others.

All candidates for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of their, or their parents' race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, orientation, property, birth or other status. We expect all of our pupils to attend our church services and school assemblies that are fundamental to our Christian ethos.

Disability and Special Educational Needs

The School has limited facilities for the disabled. However, the School will do all that is reasonable to comply with its legal and moral responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 in order to accommodate the needs of applicants who have disabilities for which, with reasonable adjustments, the School can cater adequately.

The School needs to be aware of any known disability or special educational need that may affect a child's ability to participate in the admissions procedure and take full advantage of the education provided. Parents of a child who has any disability or special educational needs should provide the School with written evidence undertaken by an appropriate specialist prior to the admissions procedure, at registration, or subsequently before accepting the offer of a place. In line with JCQ expectations, a report and any recommendations for special access arrangements must be no more than two years old at the point of the entrance assessment.

The School needs this information so that, in the case of any child with particular needs, the School can assess those needs and consult with parents about the adjustments which can reasonably be made to ensure that the application procedure is accessible for the child and that the School can cater adequately for the pupil should an offer of a place be made. The School is able to accommodate children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) who pass the entrance criteria. From point of entry, the School's SEND Policy will be followed.

The School will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the information and application procedure is accessible for disabled candidates and will make such reasonable adjustments as necessary. For example, the School may be able to provide an examination paper in large font for a visually impaired pupil. Similarly, if special educational needs or a disability become apparent after admission, the School will consult with parents about reasonable adjustments in order to allow the child to continue at the School.

The School has an Accessibility Plan that can be downloaded from the website. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Registration

Parents are invited to tour the School and meet with the Headmistress to discuss their child/ren. In order to secure a place on our waiting list parents will need to complete the Registration Form and return it with the non-refundable deposit of £50 to the School Office. The school will only be able to offer a place to children who have been registered properly.

A place on the waiting list does not guarantee admission. The School must feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his/her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers.

Entry into the Early Years (Lower Kindergarten, Upper Kindergarten and Reception) - children aged 2½ to 5

At all points of entry in the Early Years, the School sets its own tests as appropriate through extensive informal observations that take place by one or more members of staff during an extended Taster Session.

We are looking to admit children who:

- are able to interact appropriately with children of a similar age and adults
- display a level of behaviour that meets the school's high expectations
- are able to listen to directions and follow instructions
- are able to concentrate on set activities
- are able to use the toilet independently, and are dry at the point of entry
- are able to use language appropriate to their age.

In all cases there will be a discussion with the parents by the Headmistress to establish that the School is right for the child.

Lower Kindergarten

Children are able to start at different points in the academic year.

- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding January for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for September entry.
- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding June for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for January entry.
- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding November for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for April entry.
- Parents will normally be required to update their paperwork, including completing a Pupil Health Questionnaire, prior to the Taster Sessions.
- A formal offer will normally be sent to parents around seven months prior to the intended start date
- The Acceptance Form must be signed and returned to the School Office by two weeks after the formal offer date, after which point if not returned the offer will lapse and a new offer will be sent to the next child on our list.

Home visits are used for the Lower Kindergarten staff to gain a better understanding of the children's likes, dislikes, habits and behaviour in their own environment, and to give them the opportunity of discussing with parents any individual needs that may have been identified or disclosed. A home visit will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

School experience sessions are used for the Lower Kindergarten staff to observe the children in school and to help the children to acclimatise to their new surroundings. A school experience session will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

Children in Lower Kindergarten start with a minimum of three half-day sessions. Families are able to increase their sessions at the start of each term.

Upper Kindergarten

The main point of entry for Upper Kindergarten is at the start of the Autumn Term, although children are able to start at different points in the academic year.

- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding November for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for September entry.
- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding June for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for January entry.
- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding November for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for April entry.
- Parents will normally be required to update their paperwork, including completing a Pupil Health Questionnaire, prior to the Taster Sessions.
- A formal offer will normally be sent to parents around seven months prior to the intended start date
- The Acceptance Form must be signed and returned to the School Office by two weeks after the formal offer date, after which point if not returned the offer will lapse and a new offer will be sent to the next child on our list.

School experience sessions are used for the Lower Kindergarten staff to observe the children in school and to help the children to acclimatise to their new surroundings. A school experience session will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

Children in Upper Kindergarten start with a minimum of five half-day sessions. Families are able to increase their sessions at the start of term and children are encouraged to attend full time mornings and afternoons by the Summer Term before they start in Reception.

Reception

The main point of entry for Reception is at the start of the Autumn Term.

- Taster sessions will take place during the first three weeks of the preceding November for prospective children whose families have registered them with us for September entry.
- Parents will normally be required to update their paperwork, including completing a Pupil Health Questionnaire, prior to the Taster Sessions.
- A formal offer will normally be sent to parents around seven months prior to the intended start date
- The Acceptance Form must be signed and returned to the School Office by two weeks after the formal offer date, after which point if not returned the offer will lapse and a new offer will be sent to the next child on our list.

The same procedures will be used if children look to join the school at any other point in the academic year.

Children in Reception attend full time.

Entry into Years 1 to 5 (children aged 5 to 9)

At all points of entry from Year 1 to Year 5, the School sets its own tests as appropriate through informal classroom observations and formal academic assessments. The School is looking for pupils who show potential as well as those who are academically able.

We will only admit a child who:

- has met the academic criteria
- shows the capacity to engage with the learning
- is able to interact productively with children of a similar age
- does not display a level of behaviour deemed to disrupt the education of the other pupils.

In all cases there will be a general interview to explore the candidate's interests, attitude to school, personal qualities, ability to contribute to the school community, support available at home and any relevant connection with the School.

- Children will be invited to spend a long morning in school at a mutually convenient time.
- The morning will include formal academic assessments in English, Maths and Non-Verbal Reasoning, with additional informal classroom observations.
- Offers will be sent if children successfully pass our entrance criteria.
- Acceptances should be returned within two weeks of receipt of the offer.

We do not normally accept children into Years 5 or 6 unless for very exceptional circumstances.

Additional factors

The School is oversubscribed in many areas. If we need to decide between two or more candidates who meet our admission requirements, after all appropriate allowances and special consideration has been given, we may give preference to:

- a child who already has a sibling in the school or whose parent is a former pupil here
- a child whose parent is a current member of our staff
- a child with a particular skill, talent or aptitude
- a child who will stay at the School until age 11.

We recognise that a candidate's performance may be affected by particular circumstances, eg:

- if he / she is unwell when taking tests or has had a lengthy absence from his / her school
- if there are particular family circumstances such as a recent bereavement
- if there is a relevant educational history, for example education outside the British system
- if the applicant has a disability or specific learning difficulties
- if English is not the candidate's first language.

In any of these cases, we may request further information such as a medical certificate, educational psychologist's report or any family history as we consider necessary to make a fair assessment.

The School will not normally accept children with challenging behaviour or who have been required to leave another nursery, school or college due to unacceptable levels of behaviour.

Siblings

We aim to give the siblings of current pupils at Oaklands priority when considering children applying to join the school from outside. However, admission is not necessarily automatic and siblings are still subject to the school's admissions procedures when applying for all year groups.

The deadline by which time siblings must be registered to join Oaklands each September is the start of the preceding October. We will not be able guarantee siblings priority consideration if applications are made after this time as the process will have started for those who have already registered to enter the school from outside.

Character references

At all points of entry the candidate's current school or nursery will be asked to provide a written reference as to the candidate's academic ability, attitude and behaviour, involvement in the School Community, talents and interest, and any other special circumstances such as special educational needs, or a disability. The reference may also include the results of tests taken at the school.

Disclosures

Parents must as soon as possible disclose any particular known or suspected circumstances relating to their child's health, allergies, disabilities or learning difficulties.

Candidate's age

Very occasionally we may offer places to pupils one year ahead or behind their standard year group if we consider, in our professional judgement, that this would be in the best interests of the pupil and the School. This is very rare.

Acceptance of an offer

If a place is offered, to confirm the acceptance of the place, parents are asked to complete the Acceptance Form and return it with a non-refundable deposit of £500 to secure the child's place. The Acceptance Deposit will be held without payment of interest in the general account of the School and returned as follows:

- Children entering Lower and Upper Kindergarten
£500 will be credited against the first term's fees.
- Children entering Reception upwards
£250 will be credited against the first term's fees and £250 will be refunded at the end of the child's final term at school.

Unsuccessful candidates

Unsuccessful candidates are informed by letter. The School does not operate an appeals system.

Withdrawal

In accordance with the School's Terms and Conditions, parents are required to give one full term's notice in writing or to pay a term's fees in lieu of such notice before withdrawing a child from School.

Essex County Council Free Early Years Entitlement Scheme

Oaklands School currently participates in Essex County Council's Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) scheme, under which all pupils in the term after they reach three years of age until the end of the final term of the Upper Kindergarten are eligible to receive 15 hours' free entitlement.

The School administers the scheme on behalf of its families and ECC forward the money directly to the school. One free place for up to 15 hours per week is available in the setting while a child is accessing the FEEE scheme. If a child is successful at gaining a free place, the £50 Registration Fee will be returned to the family.

Please see the FEEE Policy for full details.