



# 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**

The school's aim is to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world.

All candidates for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or social background. 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 does not unlawfully discriminate in any way regarding entry. We welcome pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs, provided we can offer them any support that they require and cater for any additional needs and that our site can accommodate them. We aim to ensure that all our pupils, including those with disabilities and/or special educational needs, are provided with a safe and inclusive environment in which to learn.

Our policy is to apply our admission criteria to all potential pupils. We require parents of children with special educational needs, disabilities or allergies to discuss their child's needs with the school before they attend the Taster Session/Day so that we can make adequate provision for them.

Parents should provide full details of all relevant information with the Registration Form, including a copy of an educational psychologist's report or a medical report if they have one. This is so that the school can assess their child's needs and consult with parents about the adjustments that can reasonably be made and so that the school can ensure, for example, that their child will be able to access the education offered and that we are able to ensure their health and safety, and the health and safety of others.

Where a prospective pupil is disabled, the school will discuss with parents (and their child's medical advisers, if 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 disabled.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which we are not able to offer a place for reasons relating to a child's disability. For example, if, despite reasonable adjustments, we feel that a prospective pupil is not going to be able to 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.

Sometimes, the situation of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs changes between an offer of a place being made and the pupil starting at the school. The school requires parents to be pro-active in updating the school as to any significant changes which means 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. 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.

### **Academic Selection**

Oaklands is an academically selective school. Selection is based upon academic merit that is assessed through an entry examination, observed time spent in school with prospective peers, an interview at the school and references and other relevant information from the candidate's previous school.

Our selection process is designed to identify pupils who are able to benefit from our balanced and well-rounded education and to make a positive contribution towards the life of the school. 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.

### **Requests for Admission outside the normal Age Group**

Parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group. Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of:

- Parents' views
- Information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional
- Whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The school's views

Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria listed in section 6. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group. There is no right to appeal if a child is offered a place at the school, but it is not in their preferred age group.

### **Siblings**

Most siblings join the school with the other members of their family. Although we aim to give the siblings of current pupils priority, admission for siblings is not automatic and there may be occasions where the school judges that a sibling is likely to thrive better in a different academic environment.

### **Visiting the School**

We very much hope that you and your child will visit the School. We usually hold open events in the Autumn and Spring Terms, which give a general introduction to the School. Details and dates are published on our website. We are also very happy to welcome prospective parents and their children at other times. Please contact the Admissions Registrar to arrange a personalised visit to tour the School and meet with the Headmistress to discuss your child/ren.

## **Registration**

In order to secure a place on our waiting list, parents will need to complete the online Registration Form and submit it with the non-refundable deposit of £50. The school will only be able to proceed with its admissions process if a child has been registered properly. A place on the waiting list does not guarantee admission.

## **The Assessment Process**

The aim of the process is to identify potential. The school is looking for well-rounded pupils with a genuine interest in education in the broadest sense of the word, with interests that stretch beyond the confines of the academic curriculum. There are many extra-curricular activities, all of which are important in developing a well-balanced, confident individual. No specific preparation for our entrance tests is needed; all candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their academic aptitude and any extra-curricular skills.

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

At all points of entry in the Kindergarten, 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
- achieve the expected milestones for 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 and not only at the start of a new term. We will follow the process below:

- An observed Taster Session lasting around 1½ hours with various interactive activities will be organised in school as part of the admissions process prior to offering a place.
- An online pre-taster questionnaire will be sent prior to the Taster Session in order to gather any important information that we need to know.
- If successful, a formal offer will be sent to the parents.
- 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.
- A 'moving up' school experience session will be arranged before the accepted start date.
- A home visit will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date 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.

Children in Lower Kindergarten start with a minimum of three morning 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. We will follow the process below:

- An observed Taster Session lasting around 2½ hours with various interactive activities will be organised in school as part of the admissions process prior to offering a place.
- An online pre-taster questionnaire will be sent prior to the Taster Session in order to gather any important information that we need to know.
- If successful, a formal offer will be sent to the parents.
- 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.
- A 'moving up' 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, of which three must be mornings. 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, but children sometimes join at other points in the academic year. Children from Reception attend school full time. We will follow the process below:

- Either an observed Taster Session lasting around 2¾ hours for children being assessed prior to the academic year of entry, or an observed Taster Day for children looking to join during the academic year of entry will be organised in school as part of the admissions process prior to offering a place.
- During the Taster Session/Day, areas such as social skills, phonics, sequencing, writing and reading skills, drawing and picture recognition skills will be observed as well as the interaction between children and adults.
- An online pre-taster questionnaire will be sent prior to the Taster Session/Day in order to gather any important information that we need to know.
- If successful, a formal offer will be sent to the parents.
- 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.
- A 'moving up' school experience session will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

For all children in the Early Years, We will request a confidential reference from the previous school as to the candidate's academic ability, attitude and behaviour, involvement in the school community, talents, interests and any other special circumstances such as special educational needs or a disability.

### **Entry into Years 1 to Year 5 (children aged 5 to 10)**

At all points of entry from Year 1 to Year 5, the school sets its own tests as appropriate and relevant to the prospective pupil's age 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 appropriately with children of a similar age and adults
- is able and willing to benefit from the school's broad and varied curriculum
- displays a level of behaviour that meets the school's high expectations
- will make a positive contribution to the school community.

We will follow the process below:

- An observed Taster Day will be organised in school as part of the admissions process prior to offering a place. This will include:
  - Observed time in class with prospective peers to assess social skills, behaviour, general conduct and how the candidate fits with the school's ethos.
  - Interactive activities in class.
  - An interview with the Head to explore the candidate's interests, attitude to school, personal qualities, ability to contribute to the school community, support available at home and any other relevant factors.
  - Formal Entrance Assessments in English, Maths and Creative Writing under exam conditions.
- An online pre-taster questionnaire will be sent prior to the Taster Day in order to gather any important information that we need to know.
- We will request a confidential reference from the previous school or setting as to the candidate's academic ability, attitude and behaviour, involvement in the school community, talents, interests and any other special circumstances such as special educational needs or a disability.
- We will request copies of previous school or setting reports.
- If successful, a formal offer will be sent to the parents.
- 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.
- A 'moving up' school experience session will be arranged during the half term before the accepted start date.

The school does not normally accept new pupils into Year 6.

#### **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 throughout.

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.

**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.

**Financial Information**

Any applicant for a place at the school, including those who apply for bursary support, may at the discretion of the school be required to provide additional financial information and/or undergo checks to confirm that they are able to pay the school's fees (or any percentage of the fees still payable if a bursary or scholarship is granted).

**Fluency in English**

In order to cope with the high academic and social demands of Oaklands, pupils must be fluent English speakers. Normally pupils should have been educated in the English medium for at least two years before coming to the school. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged at the parents' expense.

**Terms and Conditions**

The terms upon which the school educates each child are set out in the school's Terms and Conditions, which will be made available to parents as part of the admissions process at the point of formal offer.

**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 £600 (£500+VAT) to secure the child's place. The Acceptance Deposit will be held without payment of interest in the general account of the school. £300 (£250 + VAT) will be credited against the first term's fees and £300 (£250 + VAT) will be refunded at the end of the child's final term at school in accordance with the school's *Terms and Conditions*.

**Unsuccessful candidates**

Unsuccessful candidates are informed by letter at the end of the admissions process. The school does not operate an appeals system.

**Data Protection**

Applicants' details will be held securely for the duration of the admissions process with due regard to data protection legislation. No specific marks or grades will be shared with families after Entrance Assessments/Examinations, and the papers themselves are not released.

In keeping with the school's GDPR and Data Protection Policy, all documentation relating to the admissions process, include Entrance Assessment/Examination scripts, is securely shredded as soon as a candidate has been notified that they have been unsuccessful.

**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.

**Right to Live/Study**

All candidates must have the legal right to live and study in the UK.

**Class Allocation**

All classes are mixed ability with birth dates ranging from September through to August. Our aim is to make the classes as balanced as possible on a boy girl ratio. The allocation of class teachers is at the school's discretion. We do not allocate teachers on parent preference or request. Once the classes are confirmed, and the academic year has started, children will remain with the assigned class teacher and not move from one class in a year group to another.

**Essex County Council Early Years Development Plan**

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 term in which they are five 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.