

HIGHGATE

Occasional Place Admissions Policy and Procedures (Pre-Prep, Junior and Senior School) for candidate entry during the academic year 2022 - 2023 and onwards

This policy aims to explain how applications for occasional places arising across the Pre-Prep, Junior and Senior School are handled and sets out the arrangements for assessments, written tests and interviews and the criteria by which places are offered. Details of the School's ethos, curriculum, pastoral care, co-curricular provision, together with contact details for the Admissions Office, are published on the School website.

Highgate admits academically able pupils who have a love of learning and are willing to rise to the challenges of a fast-paced, exciting curriculum, who also seek to contribute to the co-curricular life of the school and who enjoy learning and working in a community to the benefit of all its members. Tests are used to assess candidates' strengths in these areas. Applications from pupils of all social and cultural backgrounds are welcomed.

Policy and Procedures

1 Entry to Highgate

An occasional place is a place that becomes available at a non-standard entry point (i.e. not 4+, 7+, 11+ or 16+). The Head of Admissions will usually seek to fill occasional places created by the departure of pupils prior to Year 10 unless the year group in question is above or at the optimal size for the good running of the School. Therefore, the departure of a pupil does not automatically signal a place has become available.

Only in very exceptional circumstances will places be offered for Year 2 or Year 6 for reasons other than major, unforeseeable changes in a family's personal circumstances. We do not offer occasional places in Year 11 or Year 13.

We experience high demand for occasional places. From September 2022, parents or carers interested in an occasional place will be able to complete their details on our website. The form submission will not be complete without uploading the child's most recent school report.

If a place becomes available in the year group your child would be joining, we will review the form submissions expressing interest in a place. Where form submissions outnumber the number of children we can practically assess, we will use a number of criteria to determine who to offer priority to. These may include:

- whether the child has a sibling at the school
- whether the candidate is the child of a staff member
- whether the child was on a reserve list from an earlier "standard" admissions entry point
- whether the reason for seeking a new school is due to relocation from abroad
- the caliber of the child's submitted school report

- whether a child has an exceptional pastoral need to be offered an assessment

We will contact families to whom we are able to offer an assessment to confirm you wish to be included and outline the time frame. We will ask for prompt completion of an application form and payment of the registration fee. A fee is required for an occasional place assessment even if the candidate has been assessed for an earlier entry point.

While the Head of Admissions will speak to parents or carers informally in confidence, we will request a reference from the pupil's current school once any assessment date is scheduled. We will expect the pupil's current school to be informed of the application to Highgate before any offer will be made.

For Pre-Prep candidates, the assessment is likely to be an age-appropriate play-based session. This must be attended in person – we do not assess such young children remotely. There is likely to be only one assessment session, rather than two rounds.

For Junior and Senior School candidates, entry is usually by means of written tests and interviews. The written entry tests may consist of papers in English, Mathematics and Reasoning, but this may vary slightly dependent on the year group for which the candidate is applying. The Admissions Office will advise further on application. This is the first stage of the selection procedure. The tests allow the School to identify candidates who should cope with the scholarly nature of the academic education offered by Highgate and whose application should be progressed to the second stage, an interview. In the instance that the number of candidates applying for any particular place makes interviewing all of the candidates impractical, candidates will be chosen for interview on the basis of the results gained in the written tests. Interviews may take place in person or remotely. It is anticipated that successful candidates will fare well in all aspects of the written tests but a candidate who fares poorly in one paper but strongly in another may be considered.

Children are assessed relative to all other candidates applying in that particular year, also being mindful of the academic level of the cohort of children the candidate would be joining.

The School reserves the right to make changes to an assessment process when necessitated by external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure that, as far as possible, a process can run and the outcome can be determined in as timely a manner as possible. In the event of alterations to timings or processes, all applicant families will be advised as soon as practically possible.

2 Interviews

For Junior and Senior School pupils, the interview is not a second academic test but is an important factor in the selection process. The aim is to make the procedure fair and consistent for all candidates: candidates are interviewed either in groups (which will test their listening skills, their ability to collaborate with other children and their problem-solving ability) or individually. We aim to gauge candidates' intellectual curiosity, their instincts and attitudes to co-curricular life, their teachability, their interpersonal skills and their behaviour, during the selection process, in order to choose those who will most benefit from what we have to offer at Highgate, in and out of the classroom. Teaching staff will interview the children.

In the case where very few children are sitting tests for an occasional place, the interview may well be arranged to take place on the same day as the test so that no 'shortlisting' for interview will apply.

3 Places and awards available each year

Any occasional place offered will be a full fee-paying place, as there are no bursary places available outside of the standard entry points.

The number of places available will vary from year group to year group and year to year. Where possible, Occasional Place assessments would be held during the Lent term with outcomes communicated before the Easter holiday. However, the School cannot always hold every occasional place process at a time that would allow parents or carers with a child already in an independent school sufficient time to give the current school the required notice to leave. Parents or carers in this situation should be aware of potential fees due in lieu of notice to their current school.

4 Final Selection Procedure

The Head of Admissions, in consultation with colleagues involved in the assessment process, decides to whom offers will be made. Decisions regarding admission to the School are final and are not subject to appeal.

Letters setting out the result of a child's application make clear the arrangements for any reserve list or for the acceptance of places and the payment of a deposit; details may be requested from the Admissions Office.

5 Siblings policy

Parents and carers should be aware that there is no guarantee or expectation that a sibling is offered a place. In addition, in cases where interviews take place subsequent to tests, siblings are only invited to the interview stage should their performance in the written tests justify it.

Parents or carers of twins or other multiples applying for places together should be aware that the outcome of each child's application may differ from the other(s). Likewise, siblings applying at the same time for different entry points may receive different outcomes. If you would like to discuss managing this in advance, please contact the Head of Admissions.

Because of the competitive entry procedure to the School, each child is assessed on his or her individual merits. If we have to decide between two or more candidates who meet our entrance criteria, we may give preference to children whose personal circumstances are beyond their family's control (e.g. relocation to the area), siblings or to children with a particular skill, talent or aptitude.

6 Acceptance of places

Written acceptances, together with the deposit of the amount stated in the current schedule of fees published on our website, need to be received by the deadline date and time stated in the offer letter. After that time, we may automatically offer the place to another candidate.

7 Feedback

Although some general guidance may be provided on request, it is not practicable to give detailed feedback on a child's individual performance. The School does not return test papers to candidates nor divulge specific scores or those of other candidates.

8 Reserve list

We operate a reserve list and in some years may be able to make firm offers to one or two children from that list should further places become available at a later time. Once the academic year preceding entry is completed then the reserve list is closed. Any further occasional places that become available after this date are dealt with entirely separately.

It is unlikely that more than one assessment for an occasional place will be held per academic year. This is because one or two initially unsuccessful candidates from the first assessment would be placed on a reserve list to be considered for any further places that become available in the year group before the start of the next academic year. In exceptional cases, and pending the timing of any occasional place assessment during the school year, the occasional place reserve list may also carry forward into the subsequent academic year. After a candidate from the occasional place list has been assessed and has not been successful, and not been placed on any reserve list, we will discuss the suitability of that candidate remaining on the list for future occasional places with parents or carers. We would usually not recommend reapplying within two years. This allows time for the child to develop and progress and ensures they are not subject to excessive testing.

9 Learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and special or particular circumstances

Highgate welcomes applications from all who have the ability and aptitude to access Highgate's academic curriculum, providing those with any LDD or special/particular circumstances (for example physical or mental health conditions) can be offered the support they require from the School and can be accommodated within the constraints imposed by the School's historic and listed buildings and dual-site.

Early and open communication with the School about all matters which may be relevant to a prospective pupil's education is essential. If parents or carers are in any doubt about what might be relevant they should contact the Head of Admissions directly prior to making an application for a place. We will ask about the child's reason for moving schools and we should be informed of any pastoral issue or contact with outside agencies from the last year (or older, if still relevant). Parents or carers are expected to indicate any LDD or special/particular circumstances which a child may have when the application for a place is made. This allows appropriate consideration to be given to any reasonable provision that may need to be made for the child before any entry test/interview. Parents and carers should be aware that insufficient notice of any relevant matter is likely to mean consideration cannot be given to any provision that ordinarily would have been considered in such circumstances. Parents and carers will be asked to provide a copy of a medical report or educational psychologist's report and/or any other pertinent information to assist with such consideration which may include, for example, large print material, extra time, use of laptops or other special arrangements.

Early and open communication also allows the School to discuss thoroughly with parents and carers and, if necessary, their medical advisers the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the child if

they become a pupil and whether these will be sufficient to enable the School to provide for the prospective pupil's needs. The School feels it is more helpful to parents or carers and prospective pupils to undertake this assessment prior to the entry test/interview where feasible but, at the very least, it needs to be undertaken before any offer is made. The School will not offer a place if, after all reasonable adjustments have been made, it will not be able to provide adequately for the prospective pupil's physical, educational and other relevant needs. In these circumstances, parents or carers shall be informed of the reasons why a place is not offered.

Failure to disclose information about LDD or special/particular circumstances before a place is offered may trigger a review of any offer of a place and may lead to its withdrawal if the School will not be able to provide adequately for the prospective pupil's physical, educational and other relevant needs once all reasonable adjustments have been made. In addition, subject to the circumstances, the School reserves the right to refuse an applicant from attending any entry test/interview if relevant matters were not disclosed in a timely manner meaning that the School cannot now make adjustments which would ordinarily have been considered in such circumstances for the entry test/interview. This is particularly likely if, without adjustments, it is considered the applicant may have a significant adverse impact on other children attending the entry test/interview.

Candidates with English as an additional language will need to demonstrate that they have a sufficient command of English to cope with a curriculum which is delivered in English. Allowances will, of course, be made and parents and carers are invited to seek guidance from the Head of Admissions.

10 Educational agencies

We deal exclusively with parents or guardians or carers of prospective candidates and not with educational or third-party agencies throughout the admissions process.

11 Complaints

In the event that a parent or carer wishes to make a complaint about the way in which their child's application has been handled (in other words, the admissions process), they should write to the Head setting out the reasons for the complaint before the end of the term in which the final entrance assessment took place. The Head will examine the grounds for the complaint and will respond in writing, guided by the deadlines specified in the Complaints Procedure, setting out their decision and the timetable for any further steps which may include a recommendation to the Secretary to the Governing Body that an Appeals Panel be convened involving one or more Governors. Appeals against admissions decisions are not accepted.

12 Future policy changes

This policy may be amended at any meeting of the governing body, in which case the revised policy would operate from the start of the following academic year.

L Eaden, Head of Admissions
June 2022