

Pre-Preparatory (4+) Admissions Policy for candidate entry from September 2024

This policy aims to explain how applications for places at the Pre-Preparatory School (Reception year) are handled and sets out the arrangements for assessments 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's website.

Highgate School 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 contribute to the co-curricular life of the School. The assessment process is designed to consider a child's academic potential for the Pre-Prep and their ability and readiness to cope with the style and pace of Highgate School life in the Pre-Prep. Applications from children of all social and cultural backgrounds are welcomed.

Parents and carers are asked to note that this policy is applicable for entry in 2024. Certain sections will of course retrospectively apply to pupils already at the School (e.g. section 10 and 11).

Policy and Procedures

1 Entry to Highgate

The principal point of entry to the Pre-Preparatory School in 2024 is at 4+ (Reception). Entry at 4+ is by means of two play-based assessments. Children must be turning 4 years old during the academic year (September to August) of application, therefore turning 5 during the academic year during which they will start at the School.

An application form will be available on the School website during a defined period in Autumn 2023. This should be submitted according to the dates published on the School website. Applications received before, or after, the published dates will **not** be accepted.

We expect to have several applicants for each of the places offered in the Reception classes each year. For 2024 entry, we will have 60 places available and aim to offer as many assessments as practicable for the first round; where we have more applying than it is possible to assess, as is expected, we use a number of criteria to determine to whom assessments can be offered in the event of such over-subscription. We aim to ensure that we invite to first assessment a broad range of ages and gender covering applicants who are born in each quarter, September–November, December–February, March–May, June–August. In the event of over-subscription during the application window, we will randomly select children from each gender and quarter to invite for assessment. The arrangements for sibling applicants are set out in Section 4. The registration fee is only payable where the School can offer an assessment

and details of how to pay will be sent with any invitation for assessment. Payment is expected within one week of any invitation to assessment.

If an application is accepted for assessment, we will email the parents or carers of the child in the October prior to the child's possible entry to the Pre-Prep to give them an appointment to bring their child to School for the first stage of the assessment process. Please note that, due to the impracticality of assessing such young children remotely, it is expected 4+ candidates will attend all assessments **in person**, except in very exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you currently reside abroad, please consider this before making an application.

In certain circumstances, the School may request a report regarding a child from their current school or nursery, or may discuss an applicant with their current teacher/Head teacher. This would not be before a child is shortlisted for first stage assessments. Parents and carers who do not wish this to be the case should inform the Admissions Office in writing.

Approximately 180 children will then be invited back for a second assessment for 2024 entry. The criteria by which children are chosen for a second assessment are:

- readiness for learning at Highgate Pre-Prep demonstrated directly during the first assessment
- siblings of pupils already at Highgate

The first round of assessment will usually take place in November during the academic year prior to the September entry and the second round will take place in January. Assessments are arranged largely in order of the applicants' birthdays, so that the children are assessed along with similar aged children.

Both stages of the assessment process comprise a series of play-based tasks to assess learning readiness. The assessments are based on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Each child will spend a short period of time in a group of children where he or she will be asked to carry out a series of play-based tasks. Several members of the Pre-Prep staff will present these tasks in an informal, relaxed way; there will also be an opportunity for free play, subject to any restrictions that may be in place at that time. It is not expected that parents/carers will remain with their child during the assessments.

We use play materials for these assessments and aim to make the process an enjoyable one for the child. An external assessor, not affiliated to the School or to the family of any applicant, may occasionally support the assessment process by observing a sample of first and second round assessments to ensure consistency and accuracy of judgements and decisions.

We have a number of children within the Pre-Prep who speak a variety of languages. However, parents and carers of applicants with English as an additional language should be aware that the assessments are all conducted in English. It will be necessary for applicants to demonstrate that they have a sufficient command of the language to fully access the assessments and, beyond this, potential to cope with a curriculum which is delivered in English.

The School reserves the right to make changes to an assessment process when necessitated by external factors, 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 Places available each year and financial assistance

For entry in 2024 and beyond there will be approximately 60 places available for girls and boys in Reception.

All Pre-Prep places are full fee-paying places as the School's limited funds for bursaries are committed to enabling older pupils to commence or complete their education at Highgate (see policy on financial assistance/ bursaries). Financial assistance for children at the Pre-Prep may only be available in exceptional circumstances; for example, following the death of a parent or carer after acceptance of a place.

3 Final Selection Procedure

The Admissions Panel convenes to decide collectively to whom offers will be made. This committee is usually made up of the Head of Admissions, the Principal of Pre-Prep and Deputy Principals of Pre-Prep. The decisions of the Admissions Panel are final and are not subject to appeal.

Emails or 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.

4 Siblings policy

For Pre-Prep entry, siblings are defined as children who are **currently attending** Highgate Pre-Prep or Highgate Junior School at the time of the candidate's initial registration (i.e. those who started at Highgate on or before September 2023)

Siblings are offered an assessment in the first and subsequent second round. At this point, siblings are given no further preferential treatment and all candidates reaching the second assessment are judged relative to each other. This means that in any given year there will be siblings who do not meet the required standard for entry relative to other candidates and who are therefore not offered a place. Furthermore, parents and carers of siblings who are offered a place are advised not to assume that progression to the Junior School is automatic (see section 11).

The Head of Admissions writes to the parents and carers of siblings applying for places prior to the entrance tests to explain the admissions policy above with particular regard to siblings. Parents and carers are asked to pay careful attention to this email which also sets out arrangements for communicating the outcomes for your child.

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.

Parents and carers of applicants should note that at other points of entry (Years 3 and 7 for example) siblings receive no preferential treatment and are assessed and selected for interview entirely relative to other candidates applying in that year.

5 Deferring admission for summer-born children

Children applying for September 2024 entry at 4+ are expected to have been born between 1/9/2019 and 31/8/2020. In exceptional cases, the School may consider accepting an application from a summer-born child born between 1/6/2019 and 31/8/2020 for entry in 2025. Parents and carers who wish to consider deferring their child's entry to 2025 should contact the admissions office before the 2024 application closing date, as published on the website, to discuss this and, if appropriate, will be asked to complete an application form. Parents and carers should provide evidence that a deferred entry would be in the best interests of the child and families may only apply for 4+ entry **once** (i.e. a child may not make an application to the appropriate chronological year and then make a second application (regardless of the outcome of the first application) a year later for a deferred entry place). An offer of a place cannot be carried over for the following year.

Parents and carers considering delaying entry for a year should consider this carefully and be aware that if the child were to change schools, the new school would not necessarily admit the child to the same year group and may wish the child to join the year group for their chronological age group.

6. Highgate staff policy

Parents, Carers and Governors who work at Highgate School should refer to the guidance for staff document when making applications for one of their children to the School. Please contact the Admissions Office for further details.

7 Acceptance of places

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

8 Feedback

Due to the volume of applicants being assessed, it is not practicable to provide detailed feedback on a child's individual performance.

9 Reserve list

Following the 4+ assessment, we operate a short reserve list to fill up spaces not taken up for entry to Reception. The reserve list includes children whom we have assessed and in whom we have confidence that they could cope well but to whom we were unable to offer a place because of the numbers reaching the required standard. Once the academic year preceding entry is completed the reserve list is closed. Candidates may be transferred to our occasional place list if parents/carers wish and spaces are available. Occasional places are dealt with entirely separately (see section 10).

In the event of there being more children on the reserve list than we have places, the following factors are taken into consideration in awarding the place:

- Performance at assessment
- Proportion of children who have accepted places within each age quarter
- Gender balance of children who have accepted places

10 Occasional Places

The Head of Admissions may seek to fill occasional places created by the departure of pupils prior to Year 3 unless the year group in question is above or at the optimal size for the good running of the School. However, only in very exceptional circumstances will places be offered for Year 2 for reasons other than major, unforeseeable changes in a family's personal circumstances.

The list of candidates for an occasional place in any given year group will usually be opened at the start of the academic year that the child would have been eligible to join, (i.e. for pupils of the chronological age to join Reception in 2024 the list will open at the start of term in September 2024). Families with children on the reserve list, siblings, siblings of children who have accepted places at any other entry point for subsequent entries or those relocating to London are usually given priority when adding to the Occasional Place list, and may be added prior to the start of term. Families who would be interested in such places should contact the Admissions Office on 1 September 2024. In the event of such occasional place registrations reaching twenty, further families seeking an occasional place registration will unfortunately not be added, as it is unlikely that more than this number could be assessed for an occasional place. After the initial list is full, families will be able to leave their details on a form on our website and will be contacted if the School can offer an assessment for the appropriate year group.

Candidates on the occasional place list may be contacted periodically and asked to reconfirm their interest in a place, should one become available. This is to ensure we hold up-to-date information and that the details of families whose plans have changed are removed.

Candidates for such places will be assessed as and when a place becomes available. It is however unlikely that more than one assessment for an occasional place will be held per academic year and we would usually aim to do this in March. 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 viability of that candidate remaining on the list for future Pre-Prep occasional places with parents or carers. We seek to avoid children who appear not ready for Highgate Pre-Prep being assessed multiple times.

11 Transfer of Highgate Pre-Preparatory School pupils

Transfer to the Junior School is not automatic. It is assumed that children will move to the Junior School where a pupil's progress, assessments and behavioural track-record indicate that they will, in the School's judgement, continue to flourish in, be best suited to and cope well with the pace of the Junior School curriculum and teaching. The Pre-Preparatory team will use assessment data and observation during a child's time in Reception and Year 1 to determine whether a child is likely to be suitable to progress. Parents and carers will be updated on the status of a pupil's expected progression at the end of Reception and then after two terms of Year 1. Recommendations will be based on objective evidence from regular assessments as part of the normal routine of school as well as professional teacher observation. If the School judges that Highgate would not be the most suitable educational setting for a child going forward, then guidance on possible alternative schools will be provided.

For details of expectations of pupils in the Junior School, parents and carers are directed to the Criteria for entry at 7+, published on the School's website.

12 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. 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 assessment/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.

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 assessment/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 assessments. This is particularly likely if, without adjustments, it is considered the applicant may have a significant adverse impact on other children attending the entry assessments.

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.

13 Educational Agencies

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

14 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 assessments took place. The Head or his representative 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.

15 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. Parents and carers are reminded this policy is effective for the admissions process in 2024 only and are asked to check back annually for any changes that may affect them.

June 2023