

4+ Admissions Policy and Procedures (2026 entry)

Policy Owner(s)	Head of Admissions
Approved by	Bursar
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1. Policy statement

This policy aims to explain how applications for places at 4+ (Reception) are handled, and to set 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 admits academically able children 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. Applications from children of all social and cultural backgrounds are welcomed.

Parents¹ are asked to note that this policy is applicable for entry in 2026.

2. Entry to Highgate

The principal point of entry to the Pre-Preparatory School in 2026 is at 4+ (Reception). Entry at 4+ is by means of two assessment days, both comprising of play-based activities and exploratory one-to-one tasks. 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 from Monday 8 September 2025. This should be completed and submitted, with the relevant registration fee, by Friday 26 September 2025. Applications received before or after the published dates will not be accepted.

We expect to have large numbers of applicants per place. Our aim is to offer as many first round assessments as we can. If, as expected, we have more children applying than it is possible to assess, we will use a number of criteria to determine to whom assessments will be offered. We will automatically offer first round assessments to siblings (see Section 6 below) and children of staff (see Section 8 below). We may also take into account geographical location. Beyond this, we may need to conduct a random ballot to award spaces in the assessment process. We aim to ensure that we invite an equal gender split and a broad range of ages, therefore if we need to conduct a random ballot, we will randomly select children from each gender who are born in each quarter of the academic year (September–November, December–February, March–May, June–August). If we are unable to offer an assessment, we will refund the registration fee in full.

If a child is accepted for assessment, we will email the parents of the child in October 2025, informing of the date of the first round 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 will not be before a child is shortlisted for first round assessments. Parents who do not wish us to contact their child's current school or nursery should contact the Admissions Office at prepadmissions@highgateschool.org.uk.

Following the first round of assessments, approximately 180 children will then be invited back for a second assessment. 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

¹ All references to 'parents' in this policy includes parents/carers/guardians.

- siblings of pupils already at Highgate
- children of staff

The first round of assessment will take place in November 2025 and the second round will take place in January 2026. 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 of a series of play-based activities and exploratory one-to-one tasks to assess learning readiness. The assessments are based on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in conjunction with the characteristics of effective learners as detailed in [Development Matters](#), the UK government's guidance for the early years foundation stage. Each child will spend a short period of time in a group of children, and a short period of time working one-to-one with a teacher/assessor, where they 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. Parents will not remain with their child during the assessments.

Highgate celebrates children who speak multiple languages, and we have a number of children within the Pre-Prep who speak a variety of languages. Parents should indicate on the application form where applicants speak multiple languages, so that staff can respond accordingly. The assessments are all conducted in English, and it will be necessary for applicants to demonstrate that they have a sufficient command of the language to cope with a curriculum which is delivered in English. However, if applicants are struggling with the assessments - but there are indications that they will develop their language skills sufficiently to be able to cope with the curriculum by the time they arrive at the School - then minor adjustments may be made during the assessment process (e.g. using pictures alongside words).

The School reserves the right to make changes to an assessment process when necessitated by external factors. In the event of alterations to timings or processes, all applicant families will be advised as soon as practically possible.

3. Places available

For entry in 2026 at 4+, there will be approximately 60 places available for girls and boys in Reception.

4. Financial assistance

All Pre-Prep places are full fee-paying places. This is because the School's limited funds for bursaries are committed to enabling older pupils to commence or complete their education at Highgate.

Financial assistance for children who have already accepted place at the Pre-Prep may be available in exceptional circumstances; for example, following the death of a parent.

5. Final selection procedure

Once assessments have taken place, the 4+ Admissions Panel convenes to decide collectively to whom offers will be made. This Admissions Panel 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. In the event that a parent wishes to raise a concern about the way their child's application has been handled (e.g. they believe the Admissions Policy has not been adhered to), they are advised to reach out directly to the Head of Admissions. We assure you that every concern is treated

with the utmost seriousness and addressed promptly, as we strive to ensure a fair and equitable admissions process for all prospective pupils. The School's Complaints Procedure is on the School's website, however it is not available for use by prospective parents.

Letters will be issued setting out the outcome of a child's application, sent on dates agreed between independent schools. They will make clear the arrangements for any reserve list or for the acceptance of places and the payment of a deposit.

6. Sibling policy

For Pre-Prep entry, siblings are defined as children who are or will be attending Highgate Pre-Prep, Junior School or Senior School at the time of the candidate's application or enrolment (i.e. a sibling who is enrolled in the School in the 2025/26 academic year or has a firm offer of a place for September 2026).

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 are judged relative to each other. This means that parents should be aware that there is no guarantee or expectation that a sibling is offered a place.

Parents 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. Furthermore, parents of siblings who are offered a place are reminded that progression to the Junior School is not automatic (see section 11). 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 their individual merits. If we have to decide between two or more candidates who meet our entrance criteria, we may give preference to siblings or children with a particular skill, talent or aptitude. Children are assessed relative to all other candidates applying in that particular year.

The Head of Admissions writes to the parents of siblings applying for places prior to the assessments to explain the admissions policy above with particular regard to siblings.

7. Deferring admission for summer-born children

Children applying for September 2026 entry at 4+ are expected to have been born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022. In exceptional cases, the School may consider accepting an application from a summer-born child born between 1 June 2022 and 31 August 2022 for entry in 2027. Parents who wish to consider deferring their child's entry to 2026 should contact the admissions office before the 2026 application closing date, as published on the website, to discuss this and, if appropriate, will be asked to complete an application form. Parents should provide evidence that a deferred entry would be in the best interests of the child. 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 a year later for a deferred entry place). An offer of a place cannot be carried over for the following year.

Parents 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.

8. Highgate staff policy

Parents and Governors who work and/or volunteer 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.

9. Acceptance of places

Written acceptances, together with a 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.

10. Feedback

Although some general guidance may be provided on request, it is not practicable to provide detailed feedback on a child's individual performance.

11. Reserve list

Following the 4+ assessment process, we operate a 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 wish and spaces are available. Occasional places are dealt with entirely separately (see below).

12. 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. Please see the Occasional Places Admissions Policy, available on the School website, for full details.

Only in very exceptional circumstances will places be offered for Year 2 for reasons other than major changes in a family's personal circumstances.

If a child is unsuccessful in an application to Highgate, it is highly unlikely that the School will accept another application for an entry point any sooner than two years after the original anticipated entry point. This allows time for the child to develop and progress and ensures they are not subject to excessive testing.

13. 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-Prep 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 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.

Details of entry criteria for the Junior School are to be found in the 7+ Admissions Policy, published on the School website. For details of expectations of pupils in the Junior School, parents are directed to the Criteria for entry at 7+, published on the School's website.

14. 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 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 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. Parents 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 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, 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 and prospective pupils to undertake this assessment prior to the assessment 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 will 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 is not 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 withdraw the invitation to attend any assessment 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 assessment. This is particularly likely if, without adjustments, it is considered the applicant may have a significant adverse impact on other children attending the assessment.

15. Educational agencies

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

16. Future policy changes

This policy will be reviewed ahead of entry for September 2027.

Table of substantive changes

Paragraph	Detail of Change	Date	Owner
2	<p>Applicants will now pay a registration fee up front, and will be reimbursed if we are unable to offer them an assessment</p> <p>Description of our assessments rewritten to provide more detailed information</p> <p>Description of help for bilingual children rewritten to emphasise that we welcome and support applicants</p>	May 2025	JDF
6	Our sibling policy now also encompasses siblings in the Senior School and new joiners	May 2025	JDF
All	Reviewed to reflect current practice	May 2025	JDF

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