

Admissions Policy v11

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Approved by: Council of Trustees
College of Management

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History of review: April 2021, Revised to explain kindergarten readiness procedure. January 2021 Revised to take into account the restrictions in place due to COVID-19. November 2019 Revision to integrate the changes to the Class 1 transition age. January 2019: Revision of Admissions Policy to take into account the change in arrangements for Kindergarten to Class 1 transition. November 2017: Substantial revision of Admissions Policy, sixth edition of 2007. Subsequent review in February 2018 taking into account new information provided by SWSF. Both revisions by Kaycee Fordham.

Date for next review: April 2022

Policy Statement:

The South Devon Steiner School (SDSS) is a comprehensive Steiner Waldorf school. The school accepts children with a wide range of abilities, operating a socially inclusive admissions policy that does not select children on the grounds of gender, race or religion.

The admission of any individual applicant is subject to the criteria set out below. The school believes that all children have individual needs and aims to meet those needs as best as possible taking into consideration the child's age, developmental stage and other circumstances. The school aims so far as possible to create balanced, mixed-ability class groups. Applications are welcomed on behalf of all children although not all applicants can be admitted to the school.

Decisions on admission of a pupil and assignment to a particular class take into account the needs of the individual pupil, the likely impact on other children in the class, the balance of the class group and the resources available to the school.

SDSS is structured in three departments:

- Kindergarten (age 3-6)
- Lower School: Classes One to Eight (age 6+-14)
- Upper School: Classes Nine to Twelve (age 14+-19)

Although SDSS aims to provide a complete education for every child admitted, admission to one part of the school does not guarantee admission to another. A child initially entering Kindergarten will be assessed for school readiness before being granted entry to Class One, and a pupil transitioning from Class 8 to Class 9 will also be required to submit their interest in the Upper School programme and attend a meeting before being offered a place.

In this policy the word 'applicant' refers either to the applicant pupil or to their parents or guardian(s), depending upon context, and the term 'the School' refers to South Devon Steiner School.

The School welcomes applications well in advance of the proposed enrolment date.

The School determines the correct class for the applicant based on their date of birth. Year groups are formed with children born between 1st September and 31st August each year, for example a child born in February 2010 would join a class with children born between 1st September 2009 and 31st August 2010. (ref. Year Identifier Codes for Enrolment guidance document)

In exceptional cases, the School may consider an applicant for a class not chronologically appropriate, where the intellectual ability and/or social and emotional needs of the applicant would be better met in an older/younger class. (ref. Curriculum Policy)

Admissions Criteria

Kindergarten

Applicant children to the kindergarten will be assessed for their 'kindergarten readiness' through an informal interview process.

Parents are invited to discuss their child/ren with an Early Years teacher to provide a picture of the child coming towards the kindergarten. Simultaneously, the child (or children in the case of siblings) will be invited to play with another teacher in the same space as their parent/s.

This interview helps the teachers to ascertain the child's readiness for kindergarten. A child's ability to use the toilet independently and reliably, and the ease with which they can separate are all indicators of kindergarten readiness.

The Class Group

Our educational approach is built around the creation of a "healthy constellation" of children in each class group. There is no prescriptive formula for this, but it does mean that when a new applicant is being considered for an established class, the applicant may be rejected if we judge that the overall dynamic of the class would be to the detriment of the children already in the class. taking into account the guidelines set out in our Equality & Diversity Policy and Accessibility Policy respectively.

Our teaching approach places a great deal of importance on the class as a social group and on the class teacher as a focal point for the children's learning. Children are placed in their class group according to our document: Year Identifier Code.

Meeting the Needs of the Individual Child

SDSS will consider applications on behalf of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and those with medical needs. The school will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of an applicant child. Extra help is made available from the dedicated SENDCo so far as resources allow. Children with an EHCP (formerly known as a statement of special needs) can sometimes be accepted, provided local authority provision and appropriate resourcing is in place to support the EHCP/Statement, and where the SENDCO has the capacity to administer an additional EHCP, and where the School is able to continue to meet the needs of the individual children within the existing class.

When the school determines that an applicant may have SEND, these needs will be assessed with regard to (i) their severity, (ii) the resources available to meet those needs and (iii) the prime duty of the school to ensure that all its pupils receive effective education. This assessment will be made together with the SENDCo during the application process.

If the school is unable to offer a place, it will write to the applicant explaining the reasons for this conclusion.

Before a child reaches statutory school age, an ongoing informal assessment will be made of a child's SEND to ensure that the school can fulfil its responsibility to provide an effective education. If a place in Class 1 cannot be offered on these grounds, the usual notice period is not applicable. (ref. SEND Policy, Administering Medicines Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy)

Assessment of Applications

SDSS does not normally operate a written examination. Nevertheless, all applicants to the school are assessed for suitability by the following methods:

- Consideration of the existing constellation of pupils in the target class and the likely impact of the new applicant were they to join the class.
- Review of reports from previous schools and supporting documentation such as reports from Educational Psychologist / Psychiatrist, Medical Reports, EHCP.
- Interviews and/or observation of the child by the prospective class teacher, kindergarten teacher or sponsor.
- Assessment for school readiness, for those applicants applying to Class One only, before the class is formed.
- In exceptional circumstances, a parent conversation and meeting with the applicant child before a trial period is offered, where the teacher deems it necessary.
- Completion of a five day trial period with the target class (excluding Kindergarten and pre-Autumn term Class 1 applicants).
- Formal assessment by our SENDCo where necessary and / or appropriate.
- In cases of doubt, the school may require a report from an educational psychologist or medical doctor before reaching a decision on a particular application.

Candidates are assessed against the above criteria using reports from previous schools, interviews

with pupils and parents, and an assessment of the existing class into which the new applicant would be placed.

Kindergarten to Class 1 Transition Process

It is expected that all children who will be 6 years old by 31st August of the preceding academic year, will go to Class 1 each September. Exceptions can only be made where i) there is a significant need (i.e. SEND) and ii) the child is born between 1st April and 31st August. In this case, parents can request to defer the transition from Kindergarten to Class 1, to the next academic year, thereby delaying entry to formal education by 12 months.

The deadline for parental requests to defer the Kindergarten to Class 1 transition is the last day of the first half of the Spring term (beginning of February half term holiday).

Assessment for School Readiness

During the summer term of the academic year preceding formation of the new class one, all Kindergarten 'Sun' children will be informally assessed to determine their readiness to transition to the Lower School. This process is used to identify those applicants who may need support.(ref. SEND policy)

Where there is a question arising from either the developmental profile presentation or from the Assessment for School Readiness in relation to a child's specific learning needs and the school's ability to meet them within the context of the class, the SENDCo will be asked to consult.

For applicants from the SDSS Kindergarten, Kindergarten teachers will present a developmental profile of each child to the incoming Class 1 teacher to include an opportunity to look through each children's drawings, handwork etc.

For external applicants, a short meeting will be held with the applicant family during the summer term (where possible). This will then be followed by the 5 day trial period at the start of the academic year.

Admissions Procedure

Prospective applicants to the school should contact the Admissions Team in the first instance. As our approach to education is distinctive, it is important that parents understand our methods and educational philosophy, as a mutual understanding of child development and our curriculum between parents and the school is highly beneficial to pupils. It is therefore important that parents fully research Waldorf education, before submitting a formal application. Any questions can be answered by the Admissions team prior to application.

A formal application can then be submitted with the necessary supporting documentation,

payment of the (non-refundable) application fee of £50.00 and the Financial Agreement form (sometimes accompanied by the Financial Assessment form, where the applicant family wishes to apply for a Community Assisted Place). Complete applications will then be considered by the Admissions team.

In the case of an application to the School Business Manager (SBM) for a Community Assisted Place, the SBM will assess whether the level of fees offered by the applicant family meets the minimum level set by the school each academic year. The School Leadership Team is kept informed of all applications and makes the final decision on applications for Community Assisted Places. Applications cannot be processed until the fee level has been agreed and a Financial Agreement form completed and signed by the applicant parent/s.
(ref. the Finance and Fees Policy)

Once the financial contribution is agreed by the SLT, and in the event that the school deems that it can meet the needs of the applicant, the applicant will be invited to an admissions meeting (Kindergarten/Class One – before class is formed) or to complete a five day trial period (Classes One – Twelve).

In exceptional cases, where the teacher and / or SENDCo deem it necessary, the applicant family will be invited to a meeting before a trial period is offered, to assess whether it is possible to provide the child with a trial period at the school.

Applicants applying directly to Class One during the preceding academic year, who will not first join Kindergarten, will be invited to attend an Admissions meeting as described above, and five day trial period, to commence at the start of the academic year. Once Class One is established, applicants to the class are expected to complete the standard five day trial period and interview.

During the five day trial period, applicants will be assessed and the applicant and applicant parents will be invited to attend an interview with the teacher of the class applied for.

Further to completion of the trial period, the application will be considered at the relevant department meeting. A decision will be communicated to the applicant by letter, usually sent by email.

Admission to Kindergarten is for a minimum of three sessions per week. Children of Statutory School Age will be expected to attend Kindergarten for five sessions per week.

The first four weeks at the school is considered as a trial period both for the school and the family. During that period you may withdraw at short notice and you will be invoiced pro-rata for the period attended and your deposit returned. Thereafter, a full term's notice is required in writing to the SBM if you wish to withdraw your child without incurring charges. Please see our parent contract for full terms and conditions.

Policy of Acceptance

An offer will be made to successful candidates by the Admissions team and will specify the start date, class and any special conditions attached to the offer.

The SBM will subsequently issue the deposit invoice which requires immediate payment. Deposits are £600 for a first child and £300 for each subsequent child, payable in full before the new student begins school.

A Parents Handbook is available to all parents containing information about the school, its ethos, aims and provisions. This is available on our website:

<http://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/parents-handbook.html>

Our handbook for Kindergarten parents can be found here:

<https://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/early-years-3---6-years.html>

Policy of Non-Acceptance

The school reserves the right to refuse admission if, on the basis of the above criteria, the school does not feel that the child's needs can be best met at the school without detriment to those already in our care.

If you are not satisfied with the decision that we reach, you should put your appeal in writing to the Education Manager within fourteen days of the date of our admissions decision. An appeal will then be heard according to the timescales set out in our Concerns and Complaints Policy. Any decision reached by the appeals panel is final. (ref. Concerns and Complaints Policy)

Dates for Admission

SDSS welcomes admissions applications throughout the academic year.

Priority for Places

Where the number of applicants of a particular age group exceeds the number of places available in the school, applications will be processed in the order they are received, subject to priority being granted to the following in the order listed:

1. Children of staff members
2. Pupils for whom full fees will be paid
3. Siblings of current pupils
4. Children from other Steiner Waldorf Schools
5. Other new applicants

Re-admission of pupils will be considered along with new applications and will depend on the above criteria.

Availability of Places

Classes 1-12, 24 pupils constitutes a class which is technically full. A Kindergarten class is considered full at 16 children. When the number in a class is below these levels, applicants who meet the other criteria for admission will normally be offered places in the order detailed above.

The school may decide to admit additional pupils above the level at which the class is technically full, provided that the educational needs of the pupils to be admitted, and those already in the class, can continue to be met. Decisions will be taken on an individual basis and may take into account the ease with which applicants are expected to adjust to the class and the curriculum. In some cases this may result in an applicant being offered a place before another, earlier applicant.

COVID-19 Addendum

Please note that any required meetings, interviews and school tours which would usually be in-person, will switch to virtual platforms should COVID-19 restrictions prescribe. Applicant children may still attend trial periods and be admitted to the school.

Compliance:

Equal Opportunities Act 2010

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006

References:

Accessibility Policy

Gifted & Talented Policy (AGT)

Concerns & Complaints Policy

Curriculum Policy

Equality & Diversity Policy

Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy (SEND)

Finance and Fees Policy

Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy