

Admissions Policy v13

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Approved by: Council of Trustees
College of Management

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History of review: September 2022 - Reviewed to insert two new clauses around data provided to the school upon admission and kindergarten to class 1 transition arrangements. January 2022, Revised to insert a clause around conflict of interest. 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: October 2023

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 Five (age 6-11)
- High School: Classes Six to Twelve (age 11-19)

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 10 to Class 11 will also be required to discuss their interest in the NZCSE 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 enrollment 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. The School reserves the right to make this decision based on the needs of the class in question, and the individual profile of the applicant child.

Admissions Criteria

Kindergarten

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

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 meeting 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 detrimentally impacted by the admission of a new pupil. All decisions of this nature will take 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. If the school believes it has the resources to meet an applicant with SEND it will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of the applicant child. Extra help is made available from the dedicated SENDCo as far as resources allow. Children with an EHCP (formerly known as a statement of special needs) can sometimes be accepted. There are three provisions that need to be met. These are:

1. Local authority provision and appropriate resourcing is in place to support the EHCP/Statement.
2. The SENDCO has the capacity to administer an additional EHCP.
3. The School is able to continue to meet the needs of the individual children within the existing class as well as the 'class as a whole'.

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 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.

Parents are required to provide the school with all the information necessary for the school to make an informed decision around the prospective pupils' admission. Withholding key information may mean that the school cannot meet the child's needs, even after the admission process has been formally concluded. The school reserves the right to require the removal of a child where information has been withheld at application stage, and where the school does not have the capacity or resources to meet the needs of the child.

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).

All kindergarten children will need to apply for a place in Class One. Applications must be received by the last day of the first half of the Spring term (beginning of February half term holiday). The Class One admissions team will ensure that all offers of places are communicated by Easter. Where a place cannot be offered in Class One, or where there are concerns around the transition into Class One, the parents will be invited to a meeting with the Class One admissions team to discuss next steps.

All children transitioning into class one will be subject to a six week trial period to ensure the school can meet the child's needs within the formal school environment. For most children, this process is simply a formality and the trial period will be concluded at the October half term. Where a permanent place cannot be confirmed, the parents will be invited to a meeting with the Class One Admissions team to discuss next steps.

It is important to note that in the event that the child is not able to settle successfully or fully engage with Class One learning, either party (the school or the parents) may end the contract without notice during the six week trial period.

Assessment for School Readiness

During the spring term of the academic year preceding formation of the new class one, all Kindergarten 'Sun' children will be formally assessed to determine their readiness to transition to the Lower School. This includes attendance, behaviour, SEND and medical needs.

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, this will be communicated by the Class One admissions team to the parents.

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). External applicants are also subject to the six week trial period.

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 (Lower and High School) is considered an extended trial period both for the school and the family. For Kindergarten children, this is stretched to **six** weeks.

During this period both the school and the family may end the contract without notice (parents may withdraw their child and the school may inform the parents that a permanent place will not be offered and require immediate removal of the child). Parents 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.

The school reserves the right to stretch the extended trial period for up to twelve weeks (commencing on the date of enrollment) where there is a concern that the school might not be able to meet a child's needs within the context of the class, and taking into account the school's resources and capacity for reasonable adjustment.

Any such extension is to allow the school time to consult with the faculty and the parents, and to implement support strategies to help the child transition successfully. Any changes to the initial extended trial period will be put in writing to the parents no later than the last school day of the extended trial period.

Parents may assume that there are no changes to the extended trial period and that the trial period has concluded if there is no further communication from the school between the offer letter, their child starting school and the formal end of the extended 4 week (or in the case of kindergarten, 6 week) trial period.

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 each applicant 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.

Additional considerations will be given to applications where:

- the applicant family has a pre-existing debt with the school
- the applicant has previously been enrolled in the school
- a conflict of interest is observed.

In these instances, the school reserves the right to deny admission.

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. Siblings of current pupils
3. Pupils for whom full fees will be paid
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 constitute 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. These additional places are offered entirely at the school's discretion.

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