

## Dragon School Admissions Policy

Applies to Prep, Pre-Prep and EYFS

Reviewed and approved:	Registrar
	October 2023
Next review due:	October 2024



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[www.dragonschool.org](http://www.dragonschool.org)

Throughout this Admissions Policy the term “parents” includes legal guardians and all others who have parental responsibility for children entering the School.

Dragon School is a co-educational boarding and day school for children from ages 4 to 13. There are about 800 pupils across the Pre-Prep and the Preparatory School (Prep) and children can start boarding from Year 4. We offer a range of boarding options from full and weekly boarding to flexi boarding and our Prep pupils have the choice to take part in our unique Saturday morning enrichment programme, Dragon *QUEST*.

### VISITING THE SCHOOL

You will find further information about the School on our website, [www.dragonschool.org](http://www.dragonschool.org), but since deciding on the right school for your child is very important, we believe that a personal visit is invaluable and we very much hope that you and your child will come and see us. We hold a number of Open Mornings across the academic year – including virtual meetings - which give a general introduction to the School. Details are published on our website and parents can book online. We can also arrange an individual tour at other times too. We want to make sure that you understand the admissions process and that we all reach the right decisions at the right time. Following a visit you may wish to register your child(ren) and this can be completed online via our website.

To visit our Pre-Prep, please ring the School Administrator, Pat Gilgrass, to make an appointment (Tel: +44 (0)1865 315541). To visit the Dragon Prep at Bardwell Road, please ring the Admissions Officer, Sophie Boyd, to make an appointment (Tel: +44 (0)1865 315405).

A tour with a member of staff from the Admissions Department, or senior staff at our Pre-Prep, will enable you to get a feel for daily life at School. We hope that during this time we can discuss our respective educational aims and answer any queries you may have. This can be an opportunity for parents to discuss, in confidence, details of any special needs their child may have. It is important that all parties are content that a child will cope with a diverse and rich curriculum, feel safe and happy in our learning environment and make a positive contribution to the school. We would also like parents to develop an understanding of the School’s ethos, policies and procedures so that the working partnership between future Dragon families and the School can begin.

We recognise the importance of information sharing so that we can care for and safeguard all children in line with our statutory duty of care.

Notes on the admissions procedure are attached at Appendix 1 for further information.

## **THE ENTRY PROCEDURE**

We are looking for well-rounded children with a enthusiasm for learning, with interests that stretch beyond the confines of the academic curriculum. Dragons are encouraged to be free thinkers and to 'reach for the sun'. The School has strong traditions in music, drama, art, and sport. Our children move onto a wide range of senior schools and many achieve scholarships to leading independent schools. There are also many extra-curricular activities, all of which are important in developing a well-balanced, confident individual. These are delivered through activities during the normal curriculum programme, after school clubs and our Saturday morning enrichment programme, Dragon *QUEST*. All pupils are encouraged to engage in Dragon *QUEST* and all those who are boarding on a Friday night will be expected to attend. All pupils who are selected to represent the School on a Saturday, for example in a match or as tour guides at an Open Morning are expected to come to School to attend the events.

The main points of entry are at Reception (4+), Year 3 (7+), and Year 4 (8+), but we do have some day and boarding places at other ages. Entry in Year 8, the final year of our Prep School, is uncommon as there is limited time to prepare a child for a scholarship or Common Entrance examinations.

## **THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Children at the Dragon are recognised as individuals: each discovers how to learn, as well as what to learn, through an ethos of mutual respect and celebration of achievement. Accordingly, the assessment process aims to identify a child's potential – not simply their current attainment – and to assess whether they will benefit from the education provided, so no preparation is needed. We interview all prospective children as part of the assessment for each age group (apart from Reception). We also advise parents of children with special needs to discuss their child's requirements with the School before the process starts in order that the School can make adequate provision during the process. The assessment process aims to identify those prospective pupils who will be able to access our curriculum at each key stage to advance through the School. Once a pupil at the School, we would discuss with you in good time if we felt such a move through the year groups was not appropriate.

For entry into Reception (4+), we do not conduct interviews or tests. During the academic year of entry we like to visit children in their nursery and invite them to spend some time with us at School. During the process we seek to assure ourselves and you that the curriculum and the Pre-Prep environment is suitable for your child and that we can meet all their needs.

We invite all children over the age of 5 for assessment as part of a morning or day in school. The assessment includes some Maths and English. It is not academically competitive and is designed to check that the children are comfortable with our curriculum. We talk to the children about their interests and they have the opportunity to engage in normal lessons and/or activities. A confidential report is required at this stage from their previous school.

There may be circumstances where a visit and assessment in person is not possible; we will always seek to discuss alternative options for prospective pupils who cannot visit the school in person.

Parents of those children who we judge will not benefit from a Dragon education will be informed and given advice.

A report is always requested from the child's current school to help us understand their educational background. Offers are dependent on the receipt of a satisfactory report from the current school of any prospective pupil. We also note when a learning difficulty has arisen or has been reported prior to the assessment day. The average ability of the children in any one year group is above the national average and we design our curriculum so that children will feel comfortable meeting the needs of most senior school entry requirements. It is our responsibility as professionals to ensure that any decision we come to about entry into the School will be the best for that individual child. We need to ensure that they will be able to access our curriculum (at each key stage) and advance happily through the School. We are happy to discuss decisions with you.

Where a child has a learning difficulty, it will be important to assess whether we can provide adequate support for that individual, and whether this allows them to cope with our curriculum. Learning support lessons incur an additional charge, the details of which are set out on the School's website.

Where possible, we always seek to arrange an overnight stay in a boarding house for any child seeking a boarding place. Children stay in a junior or a senior house with their peer group.

The formal offer of any place will be made in writing from the Registrar and will be complete on return of the contract and the deposit. The contract must be signed by all parties with parental responsibility unless some other arrangement has been made with the School.

Joining literature is sent out prior to the term of admission; we will need this information to ensure appropriate care for your child and we ask you to complete this in full prior to the child's start date. We expect that the parents of all full/weekly boarders will appoint an educational guardian. (For further details, please refer to our Guardianship Policy on our School website.)

## **SIBLING POLICY**

Most siblings join us, although admission is not automatic, and there may be occasions where we judge that a sibling is likely to thrive more in a different environment.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Equality is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Dragon School. The School promotes equality and diversity and ensures that policies and procedures are in place to tackle discrimination. The School seeks to eliminate unlawful discrimination in all its activities, and promote equality of opportunity for everyone engaging in the admissions process, and within the School

community. In furtherance of this, Dragon School is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of a prospective pupil's gender, race, religion and belief, cultural background, social background, linguistic background, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, SEN and disability.

The School aims to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. To that end, the Governors are committed to broadening access to the School by offering to eligible and prospective parents, means-tested financial support to assist with the payment of school fees. A summary of the School's 125th Anniversary Bursary Programme is included below.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

For the purposes of this document, special educational needs may be defined as a physical or mental disability, a medical condition or a learning need (e.g. dyslexia, developmental coordination disorder, ADHD, Autistic spectrum disorder, speech and language difficulties).

We do not discriminate in any way regarding entry. Children with specific diagnosed, or assessed learning needs, in or out of the classroom, can be supported in a variety of ways. We welcome children with learning needs, providing that our Learning Support department can, with reasonable adjustment, offer them the support that they require and whether the support that we provide will allow them to cope with our curriculum and the daily routine of school. We welcome children with physical disabilities provided that our site can, with reasonable adjustments, accommodate them.

We will consider each prospective pupil's admission individually.

Parents of a child who has any known special educational needs or learning difficulty, must provide the School with full written details at registration or during the admissions process. The School needs to be made aware of any known disability, special educational needs or learning difficulties that may affect the child's ability to participate in the admissions process and take full advantage of the education provided at the School. With this information, the School will, in the case of any child, assess those needs and consult with parents over any reasonable adjustments that can be made to make sure the information and application procedure is accessible to the child and that the School can cater adequately for the child if they become a pupil. The School acknowledges its legal and moral responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015. Similarly, if a learning difficulty, medical condition or disability becomes apparent after admission, the School will consult with the parents about reasonable adjustments that can be made and which may allow the child to continue at the School. If it is felt that the School can no longer provide for the educational needs of the child, then parents will be given every support and advice in seeking an alternative educational establishment for their child (see Standards and Monitoring of Progress Policy).

We expect that parents of all children - prospective or current - with special educational needs, will provide full disclosure of any medical, educational psychologist or other reports regarding their child's disability, medical condition or educational needs. This information

may be used to support any request, for example, for examination extra time provision or other special arrangements. In assessing any child, the School may take such advice and require parents to seek assessments it regards as appropriate. We will, of course, talk each stage through with parents on a case by case basis. Failure by parents to make the necessary disclosure of information may prevent the School from providing adequate support and may jeopardise the entry or advancement of the child through the School.

## **BURSARIES**

The School Governors are pleased to offer a means-tested bursary scheme aimed at children who would not otherwise be able to come to the School. The School offers approximately five places each year to new applicants to Year 4, whose parents would otherwise be unable to send their children to the School. Exceptionally, children coming up from the Dragon Pre-Prep, and children joining the School in Year 5 may also be considered.

Bursaries are means-tested in accordance with the criteria set out in the School's Means Tested Bursary Policy, which is available on our website and can be obtained from the Registrar. Both parents are required to provide proof of their income and assets. The level of support varies according to parental need, but can extend to full fee remission in cases of proven need. Before the offer of a bursary is confirmed, a home visit from an independent bursaries administration company will be conducted to provide an independent view of family financial circumstances.

All bursary awards (including hardship grants) are subject to annual review of parental means and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on changing parental circumstances.

## **OVERSEAS APPLICANTS AND THOSE WHO REQUIRE PERMISSION TO BE IN THE UK AND STUDY AT THE SCHOOL**

We welcome overseas children provided that they have suitable Guardianship arrangements in the UK. In order to cope with the academic and social demands of the School, children must be fluent English speakers. Normally children should have been educated in the English medium for at least one year before coming to the School. Tuition in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can normally be arranged at the parent's expense.

Please note that some pupils may be required to have a Child Student Route (formerly known as Tier 4) visa, or otherwise qualify under the UK's immigration system to study in the UK. The parents must inform the Admissions Office when returning a completed registration form or at any other time if their child requires sponsorship from the School in order to obtain a visa to study at the School. Whilst the School will issue a CAS number to parents, it is the responsibility of parents to apply for any necessary visa. United Kingdom Visas and Immigration issues our licence as an educational sponsor. They regularly monitor all boarding schools to make sure the correct procedures for Child Student visas, Immigration and Guardianship are being followed in order to ensure that overseas children are properly supported. Part of our sponsorship obligations include ensuring that all children studying with us have the requisite right to study under UK immigration law. As such, we may ask you for

proof of nationality and visa status. Our aim is to make sure we carry out these duties attentively to safeguard children in our care at all times and protect our status as a sponsor of educational student visas.

If your child has or will have a time restricted or temporary visa in any other immigration category (for example as a dependent) please provide a copy of this when returning the registration form or Acceptance Form, or as soon as this is available.

It shall be the parents' responsibility at all times to ensure that their child has the appropriate immigration permission to live in the United Kingdom and to study at this School.

Please note that we reserve the right to:

(1) request further information and sight of documentation in support of your declarations regarding immigration and

(2) to share information with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and the Home Office for the purposes of compliance with our responsibilities as a licensed sponsor.

## **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

Although the School has Christian roots, we do not select for entry on the basis of religious belief. Through Faith, Philosophy and Ethics (FPE) lessons, pupils learn about the world's main faiths.

## **SCHOOL'S CONTRACTUAL TERMS & CONDITIONS**

A copy of the School's contractual terms and conditions will be made available to parents on the offer of a place. The standard charges (including deposits, rates for individual music, and learning support lessons) are set out in the 'Fees and Deposits' section under 'Admissions', on the School's website. Please note that all fees and extras are subject to annual review.

## **HOW WE WILL USE THE INFORMATION PROVIDED TO US DURING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS.**

The information will be used by the School during the admissions process to manage and assess your application and your child's suitability for a place at the School. If your child is not offered a place, we will only retain this information for as long as we need to. For more information about how the School will use your information please see our Pupil Privacy Notice and our Parent Privacy Notice.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

This policy is available on the School website and can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

## **SAFEGUARDING IN THE ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT**

The Admissions Department is committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of every child at the School in line with the School's Safeguarding Children Policy with which every member of the department must be familiar.

We aim to ensure that at each stage of the admissions process we are aware of the learning and pastoral needs of the children with whom we come into contact. In order to do this we gather, record and share appropriately, information about a child who may join the School as a pupil. In the event of a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be notified.

Please note that when children leave or join the School at 'non-standard' points (where a school compulsory-aged child leaves before Year 8 or joins after the start of the Autumn Term of the Reception year) we are obliged to provide information of the transition to Oxfordshire County Council.

## **APPENDIX 1 - ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

### **REGISTRATION**

A child may be registered at any time after birth. Please note that:

- The school year runs from September to August. Children born on or after the 1st September are put into the following year, so they go through as the oldest in their year, rather than the youngest.
- The registration form can be completed online or may be returned to the Registrar in hardcopy. Payment of the registration fee should be arranged to the Bursary at the same time. (The registration fee is to cover the cost of administering the registration procedure, including administration of the waiting lists. This payment is not returnable.
- The School will then respond by informing parents that the child has been placed on the list for the year in question. The School will be in touch about School events such as Open Mornings and about entry procedures a year before the proposed date of entry.

In the registration process we will ask for details of the prospective pupil including full name, date of birth, gender, address of normal residence and, where appropriate, current school. We will also require details of all those who have parental responsibility (i.e. legal responsibility) for the prospective pupil including addresses, telephone numbers and email contact details. This person may be a legal guardian, or step parent and their consent to the child attending school will be required if an offer of a place is made.

### **LISTS**

Although our lists can be long at certain entry points, we find that at all the main points of entry many of those who remain on the list obtain places. Please note that:

- All our lists are specific in terms of status (day or boarding) and year group. Should you decide not to move forward with the admissions process for your chosen year of entry, you may ask to be added to other lists for a later entry point. Please note that there is no automatic moving of children to future lists if they do not take up a place in the Year(s) for which they were first registered.
- At any given time we are only actively working on the next academic year. For all subsequent years the lists are static.
- We write to everyone about a year before the time of entry. It is vital that we have been informed of any changes of contact details since registration, or you may miss a deadline and forfeit your place on the list. It is normal for there to be a reduction to the lists at this point.
- It is common for vacancies to occur late in the day, due either to the plans of prospective parents changing, or because children within the School are leaving. Please feel free to ring the Admissions Office with any enquiries.



- We are always happy to answer questions or discuss your plans either over the telephone or in person. When coming to visit the school, there will be a chance to discuss these matters with the Registrar.
- For further information regarding the points of entry, please see the sections below.

## **DEPOSITS AND CONTRACTS**

On successful completion of the assessment process, parents will be invited to secure offered place(s) by returning a signed contract and paying a deposit by a stated date.

Those who do not secure the place by payment of a deposit and return of contract by the stated date may lose their place(s); these may be offered to other families seeking places on the same list (s).

The deposit will be returned by a credit on the account at the end of the child's final term at the School, unless the parents express a wish to donate the deposit to the School Bursary Fund. If a child is withdrawn after the deposit has been paid and the contract signed, the School reserves the right to charge the first term's fees unless a term's notice has been given, although any deposit held would be offset against the fees due.

## **POINTS OF ENTRY**

The main points of entry are at Reception (4+), Year 3 (7+), and Year 4 (8+). We will also have day and boarding places at other ages in the Prep School

At the Pre-Prep there are 3 classes in each of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. We add a fourth class at the Year 3 stage. We may also have occasional places in Years 1 and 2. As it generally requires a child to leave for a place to become available, it tends to be the case that vacancies only occur late in the academic year (i.e. end of the Spring Term onwards). These places may go to siblings of existing Dragon children or other priority cases.

Those children entering the School in Year 3 are expected to transfer to the Prep School in Year 4. There is no academic assessment at that stage.

## **BOARDING**

Boarders who board for the whole of the School week are placed into a boys or girls junior house (Years 4, 5 and 6), or a senior House (Years 7 and 8).

A number of day children change over to boarding during their time in the School. The School meets as many requests of this nature as it can, but parents are recommended to give as much notice as possible. Day pupils who choose a flexible day boarding option may stay for between one and three nights per week; this can be booked on a half term or termly basis. Where space allows, we also welcome occasional boarders; this can be booked week by week.

Parents of all full or weekly boarding children must arrange for their child to have a guardian in this country who will be able to accommodate children if parents cannot be in the UK and

to deal with any emergencies that may arise when parents are outside the UK. There are professional organisations that are prepared to offer these services and the School is happy to advise. Parents of day pupils who take up flexible boarding must ensure that they have provided the School with details of a UK-based emergency contact.

### **SUMMER BORN CHILDREN**

We believe that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group with an appropriately differentiated curriculum. We shall consider individually the most appropriate year group for admission of summer born\* children into the School.

We will be happy to advise on this matter and may ask parents to provide information in support of any application for the deferral of the admission of their child into the School. In each case, decisions will be made based on the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child.

### **GENERAL**

Although every effort will be made to notify parents, please note that the School reserves the right to change the Admissions procedure without notice at any time.

Prospective parents should be aware that the School reserves the right to vary the entry procedures and assessment tests at any time after registration has taken place, and to vary or waive them in any respect in individual cases. It also reserves the right to introduce a competitive examination as a condition of admission.

Parents are also advised that they should keep any current school informed of any intended move to Dragon School and must observe their regulations regarding the giving of due notice. We cannot accept anyone from another independent school who has failed to meet their commitments to the previous school in full prior to joining us.

The information on the School's website is not part of any agreement between parents and the School. Although correct at the time of writing, certain statements may go out of date from time to time. Parents wishing to place specific reliance upon any statement in the web pages referred to in this guidance should seek written confirmation before accepting an offer of a place.

\*Summer born children according to UK Government guidelines: 01 April – 31 August