



The Acorn School

Admissions Policy

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1. Statement & Aims

The Acorn School is an independent Steiner-inspired school, with its own unique, holistic curriculum. The school does not set academic selection conditions and accepts children with a wide range of abilities. The admission of any individual applicant is subject to the criteria set out below.

Our admission decisions will be free from any discrimination on the grounds of disability, race, ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, or belief. At the same time, we ask and anticipate that prospective pupils and parents agree to support the ethos of the school as described in our parent literature.

The school must, nonetheless, feel reasonably sure that we are able to educate and develop any prospective pupil according to his or her potential and in line with general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, in order that there is every chance that our pupils will have happy, fulfilling, and successful school careers.

We recognise that all children are individuals, and we aim to meet their needs as well as possible, taking into consideration their age, developmental stage, and other relevant circumstances. The school aims so far as possible to create balanced, mixed-ability class groups.

This policy has been written in accordance with and being aware of the latest guidance provided by **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024**.

2. The Acorn School Community

There is a strong and vibrant whole-school community at The Acorn School that we are proud of, encompassing pupils, parents, and staff. This partnership is based on mutual honesty and respect and permeates throughout the entire pupil body, enhancing the educational experience for all the pupils.

3. Admissions Criteria - General

3.1. The Class Group

Our educational approach is built around the creation of a “healthy constellation” of children in each class group.

Our teaching approach places a great deal of importance on the class as a social group and on the class teacher as focal point for the children's learning, especially in the Lower and Middle School. In the Upper School, the classes are overseen by a Class Sponsor and taught by a range of specialist teachers.

3.2. Individual needs and school resources

All pupils at The Acorn School have access to quality first, differentiated teaching, where needs are identified and met through a graduated response. We also have a small team of teaching assistants that can provide additional support under the guidance of the Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSCO), and Headteacher based on need.

With our commitment to meet the needs of each individual child, we will always consider if we can make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of each applicant. However, there are some children whose needs exceed the educational approach we offer and the resources we have. A statement of needs and any relevant educational reports will be asked for during the application process, so that the school can assess whether we have the provision to support each child to reach their potential.

As part of the admission process, any individual medical needs will be considered, and a risk assessment will take place. Where resources and the curriculum allow, adjustments will be made to accommodate a child's medical needs.

4. Admissions Criteria - Specific

Preference will be given to applicants who can join at the end of the admission process. Where places are limited, places will be offered in the following order:

If the applicant is the child of a member of staff

If the applicant has a sibling already in the school

If the applicant has a sibling that also wants to join the school

If the applicant comes from another alternative educational setting or has previous experience of a school with shared values and / or ethos

The date of completion of the online enquiry application form

5. Admissions Process

5.1. Assessment of Applicants

Whilst The Acorn School does not set a formal written entrance examination, all applicants are assessed for suitability as follows:

Interviews with parent(s) with a member of the leadership team

Interview with the child by the prospective class teacher (Lower School) or class sponsor (Upper School) and a member of the leadership team

Review of recent reports from the pupil's current or previous school / kindergarten and any additional internal/external educational or medical reports.

Review of a selection of the pupil's recent work and completion of a written and maths task at class level.

5.2. Key Steps

Before submitting a formal application

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. Information is available on the school website and from the school office.

Additionally, a visit to any of our public school events, such as our Advent Fair and Summer Fair, will allow prospective families to get to know our school and community better. Full details of our upcoming school events are to be found on our website.

Step 1 – Visiting the school

Prospective applicants to the school should contact the school office in the first instance to request an online initial enquiry form. This can be done by emailing the admissions team at contact@theacornschool.com or phoning the office telephone: +44 (0)1453 836508. The Acorn School's Guiding Principles document is shared in email with the online enquiry form link so parents can get an understanding of the school's ethos and approach. Once the online enquiry form is completed, the admissions team contact prospective parents to arrange an appointment to visit the school for a private tour.

Step 2 – Making an application

After the initial visit, the school will send the parents a link to an online student application form, this will provide us with as much information about the child as possible. We will also request copies of the child's most recent school reports, information on additional language needs, and any internal/external educational or medical reports that the school should be aware of.

Step 3 - Interview

If we believe a place may become available in the class, we will invite successful applicants to interview as follows:

Leadership team member interview with parent(s)

Interview with the child by the prospective class teacher (Lower School) or class sponsor (Upper School) and a member of the leadership team. This can include a review of a selection of the pupil's recent work and written and maths task at class level.

New Class 1 Child Interview:

This is an informal interview with the child where they will be asked to draw a picture, and engage in different physical activities such as throwing, catching and balancing.

If there is a question about the child's readiness for Class 1, a second meeting may be offered in the summer term prior to the September start. During the meeting, we will assess their age and readiness, and if we believe they will benefit from deferring their entry another year, we will discuss this with parents.

Please note that at The Acorn School children start Class 1 the September after they turn 6 years old.

Step 4: Acorn Experience

Apart from new Class 1 children joining at the start of the academic year, applicants who are successful at interview will be offered a two-week Acorn Experience when a place becomes available in the class. This is a unique opportunity for each prospective pupil to spend two weeks as a full-time student. This two-week experience enables prospective pupils to become fully integrated into all aspects of school life and get to know the school, students and staff.

There is a non-refundable fee of £150 for the two-week experience, which will be invoiced on confirmation of the experience date and is due before the two-week period commences.

The Acorn Experience applies to all applications except for new Class 1 September entry children.

- Please note the two-week experience forms part of the formal application process; we do not arrange the Acorn Experience prior to submission of the relevant documents and fees for the experience being paid.
- Please further note that the Acorn Experience is not usually arranged in the last two weeks of a term.
- In the unfortunate event that the student's experience is not going well, both parties reserve the right to end the two-week experience early.

Where the Acorn Experience has raised questions about suitability, a place will not immediately be offered and a further meeting may be offered to discuss next steps, which could include extending the experience, identifying additional support, or rejection of the application.

If the school decides not to admit the prospective pupil, the parents are entitled to appeal against the decision.

- Appeals about an admission decision may be made to the Headteacher, in writing within 5 working days of the receipt of the admissions decision.
- A response to an appeal will normally be provided within 10 working school days of receipt unless external specialist advice is required in which case a response will be provided as soon as possible.

Step 5: Decisions and Offers

All admissions are entirely at the school's discretion and parents will receive the school's decision about their application in writing.

a 'Confirmed Offer' for new Class 1 September applicants: When a new Class 1 September place is offered, parents must confirm acceptance of the place in writing.

- A 'confirmed offer' letter will be sent to the parents.
- A registration charge of £250 will be invoiced and sent with the offer letter.
- Acceptance of the offer, together with payment of the registration fee will secure the child's place at the school. The registration fee will be refunded if the child joins The Acorn School.
- Normally we expect this acceptance to be signed by both parents, or all adults holding parental responsibility for the child.
- The acceptance of the place must be made within three weeks, or the school reserves the right to withdraw the offer.

b A 'Confirmed Offer' for applicants joining immediately after an Acorn Experience

If the student successfully completes the experience period and can join immediately, the school may offer a place if space is available in the class, therefore

- A 'confirmed offer' letter is sent to the parents.
- The acceptance of the place must be made before the student joins the school.
- The experience fee is refunded against payment of the school fees from the first day of the experience period.

c An 'Offer in Principle' for applicants who wish to join at a later date

Unfortunately, the school is not in the position to hold a place for an extended period, longer than 6 weeks. Therefore, if another applicant completes the admissions process, meets the admissions criteria, and would like to take up the place sooner, priority may be given to the applicant who can join at the earlier date.

- The school may make an 'offer in principle' to a student who has successfully completed their experience period but is unable to join the school until a later date.
- If parents confirm acceptance of an 'offer in principle', the student is added to the waiting list for the class for their preferred date. On the preferred start date, if there is space(s) available in the class, place(s) will be allocated per the admissions criteria.
- If a space is expected to become available on the preferred start date, the student may be offered a 'confirmed offer'.
 - The school aims to inform parents at the earliest opportunity when an 'offer in principle' changes to a 'confirmed offer' (see 5.d).
 - For example, if a student wishes to join in September and a place is expected to be available, the school may 'confirm the offer' before the end of the summer half term holiday in June/July.

d A 'Confirmed Offer' for applicants joining at a later date

If the student successfully completes the experience period and their joining date is not directly after the experience period, the school may make a 'confirmed offer' if space is available in the class, therefore.

A 'confirmed offer' letter is sent to the parents with the agreed starting date. A registration charge of £250 will be invoiced and sent with the 'confirmed offer' letter.

The acceptance of the 'confirmed offer' and payment of the registration charge must be made within two weeks, or the school reserves the right to withdraw the offer.

6. 6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and approved by the Board of Governors annually.

7. Links with other policies

This document is linked with the following school policies:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- The School's Guiding Principles
- Finance Policy