

Introduction

The purpose of the Admissions Policy is to set out and explain the Admissions Process at George Watson's College ("the School") and the criteria that we will use when deciding whether or not to offer places at our School, to award Music Scholarships, Foundation Places or offer other financial assistance. This Policy applies equally to all applicants at all entry points in the Preschool, Junior School and Senior School.

All offers of places at George Watson's College are made at the discretion of the Principal on behalf of the Governing Council and the Merchant Company of Edinburgh Education Board. By making an application for a place at the School for their child, parents are deemed to have accepted the terms of this policy.

For the purposes of this Policy, the term 'parent' will also apply to special guardians, carers or other persons with parental responsibility.

Principles and Values

The motto of George Watson's College is *Ex Corde Caritas* – Love from the Heart. The School champions excellent education through endeavour and achievement in the classroom and beyond. Our aim is to admit pupils who will be able to benefit from our wide range of academic and extra-curricular opportunities, who will thrive in the vibrant environment that we offer and who will be able to make a positive contribution to our community. We recognise that some pupils will need more support than others in taking full advantage of a Watson's education and we welcome applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, both locally and further afield.

Our School Values are at the centre of all we do: Aim High; Respect All; Be Kind: Join in.

The admissions process, including the assessment of pupils, is designed to reflect our ethos by offering a personal approach which enables the School to make an all-round judgement about an applicant and also enables parents to satisfy themselves that Watson's is the right school for their children.

We consider a broad range of information including reports from an applicant's previous school and information provided from interviews in making our decisions. We do not simply make our decisions based on assessment scores.

We are committed to ensuring that our admissions process does not discriminate against any pupil, potential pupil or parent with a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

It is a fundamental principle that all applicants are treated fairly and equally regardless of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity as it applies to them directly or to their families. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity throughout our admissions process. Reasonable adjustments will be made to our admissions procedures, including assessments, where necessary to mitigate any disadvantage that would otherwise occur due to one of the protected characteristics.

We welcome applications from pupils of all social and cultural backgrounds and are proud of the diversity within our pupil body. Our Foundation Places programme is designed to help children and young people who may have an exceptional social or educational need. Details of the Programme can be found below.

Admissions Procedures

Scope of Admissions Procedures

Our admissions procedures include the actual application process itself and all associated procedures. The admissions procedures begin when initial contact is made by a parent registering an interest on behalf of their child(ren), and ends on the first day when a successful applicant attends school as a pupil at Watson's. During that time, responsibility for new pupils and the administration associated with them will transfer to the School's teaching and guidance staff. The precise timing during this timeframe depends upon the year group, and the time of year the pupil joins us.

The key dates for the admissions procedures, including application closing date, will be reviewed and set by the Principal on an annual basis to ensure that there is sufficient time for the Admissions team to process applications and put reasonable adjustments in place for applicants where necessary.

The Application Process

We encourage parents to visit the School before making an application by attending our annual Open Morning or requesting an individual tour of the School. The 'Parent Journey' through the Admissions Process is outlined in Appendix A.

Preschool places are allocated approximately 9-12 months in advance of starting for children aged 3-4 years. We accept Preschool applications throughout the school year, depending on places available. It is anticipated that most pupils will progress to Primary 1 (P1).

The dates for our next admissions round can be found in Appendix B. Other than in the Preschool, the main entry points for new pupils in the Junior School are P1, P6 and P7. We also consider pupils for a limited number of places in other years as outlined in Appendix B. The deadline for applications for Junior School places (P1-P7) is in the November before August when the applicant would start in the School.

Arrangements for entry to the Junior School are dependent on the entry point, with assessments designed to be age and stage appropriate, providing a supportive environment which will bring out the best in all applicants. It is anticipated that most pupils will progress from P7 to Senior 1 (S1).

The main entry point for new pupils in Senior School is S1. We also consider pupils for places in other years should places become available. Places are only offered in S4 in the most exceptional of cases as pupils are in the process of taking examinations for National Qualifications during the S4. The deadline for applications for Senior School places (S1-S6) is in the November before the August in which the applicant would start in the School.

Applicants for entry to Senior School (S1-S6) attend the Entrance Assessment day, unless participating in a distance assessment (see below). The assessment includes English and Mathematics. In S1 the applicants will also have an interview, typically in a group situation, with the Head of Senior School or one of his deputies. For entry to S2-S5, applicants will have a one to one interview with a member of the Senior School Leadership Team or guidance team.

Where there is a genuine reason why an application cannot be made within the deadlines given above, for example in the case of relocation or family difficulties, and where a place may be available in the appropriate year group, the Principal (or the Admissions Registrar acting under his or her authority) may allow an application to be considered beyond the normal deadline.

Foundation Place applicants will receive additional consideration based on their social and educational needs as identified during the Foundation Place application process. Additional consideration takes into account criteria outlined in our Foundation Places and Other Financial Assistance to Parents Policy. All applications are dealt with confidentially by the Wider Access Officer and Assistant Bursar.

In making a judgement, due regard is given to the age of the pupil and any particular personal or family circumstances which may apply, and due consideration is given to ensure that an applicant with a protected characteristic does not suffer unlawful discrimination on account of that characteristic.

Application and Acceptance Fees

Submitting an Application (Local Applicants)

Applications must be made on the official online Application Form which is available on the George Watson's College website or by contacting the Admissions Registrar for a paper copy. We require:

- A copy of a valid passport for the applicant (if passports are not up-to-date or not available – a copy of a Birth Certificate for the applicant will suffice);

Where there are any court orders (interim or otherwise) that relate to any areas of dispute about an applicant's care, upbringing or access arrangements we ask that parents and guardians make us aware of these at the outset of the application process and enclose copies of any relevant orders with the Application Form. If information regarding custody matters are not shared and a parent does not have sole decision making rights regarding education, the application will be removed.

Reasonable Adjustments for Applicants

Throughout the admissions process, we may ask for additional information to help us learn about the applicant's needs and abilities and to consider whether reasonable adjustments need to be made for the applicant. Typically, this will include a school report, details of any disability, Additional Support for Learning needs, English as an Additional Language, access requirements and other relevant information. It is important that parents give us as much information about any particular need or disability at the outset of the process in order that we can make adjustments that are reasonable. See Appendix D for further details.

There are two types of fees associated with the Admissions Process:

- an Application Fee of £70 payable on submission of the Application Form
- an Acceptance Fee of £300 payable when the offer of a place at George Watson's College is accepted. The Acceptance Fee must be paid on submission of the Acceptance Form.

Both fees are non-refundable, however they will be reduced pro rata, and any balance refunded, for those applicants who are offered a Foundation Place (as detailed in the Financial Assistance section below). We accept payment by debit or credit card and bank transfer.

International Applicants and Homestay Pupils

George Watson's College welcomes international applicants. Watson's is a registered sponsor for the Child Student Visa and is therefore able to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to applicants who fully meet the selection criteria to study at Watson's and the requirements for a Student Child Visa as specified by the Home Office.

Parents of pupils looking to join P1 - S4 with a Child Student Visa will be required to reside in Edinburgh with their child. For those international applicants looking to join in S5 and S6 they will be required to reside with a parent, close adult relative or make use of our Home Stay provision. International applicants should contact the Admissions Registrar to discuss a potential application.

There are two types of fees associated with the International Admissions Process:

- an Application Fee of £150 payable on submission of the Application Form
- an Acceptance Fee of one term's fees in advance payable when the offer of a place at George Watson's College is accepted. The Acceptance Fee must be paid on submission of the Acceptance Form.

The fees for International Applicants reflect the additional costs of administering an international application.

Watson's offers Homestay Places for S5 and S6 pupils via our preferred third party provider, [Study Links International](#). The third-party provider will have full legal responsibility for arranging Homestays including selecting families and, when instructed by parents, acting as a guardian for international pupils.

To determine an applicant's suitability for entry to the School, Watson's will use the selection criteria outlined on Page 4. In addition to this, the School will determine an applicant's suitability for Homestay by assessing:

- Level of proficiency in English to ensure that the curriculum can be followed at the appropriate level. International applicants applying to P6 - S6, whose first language is not English, to complete the Cambridge A2 Key for Schools qualification.
- Ability to live away from home for the duration of study, including emotional resilience.

Distance Assessments

If an applicant lives abroad or otherwise too far from Watson to be able to travel to the School for assessment, an assessment can be arranged at their existing school at the discretion of the Admissions Registrar and with the permission of their current Head Teacher. Distance assessments can only be undertaken for applicants applying for entry into P2-S6.

Selection of Pupils

Selection Criteria

Each application is carefully considered on an individual basis taking into account a range of factors including observations when meeting the child, assessment scores and the reference from their current school, where available.

The Head of School selects applicants using the following criteria:

- Ability to cope with the curriculum at Watson's as demonstrated in admissions tests and assessments, interviews and information from previous school(s);
- Ability and interest in taking part in extracurricular activities provided at the School as demonstrated in assessments, interviews and information from previous school(s);
- Ability to thrive within the Watson's school environment, including potential to make a positive contribution to the community as demonstrated when meeting the candidate during interviews and in the information from previous school(s).

Oversubscription Criteria

Where the number of applicants meeting the above criteria exceeds the number of places available, places will be allocated taking into account the following criteria (in order of importance):

- An applicant who currently has no school place or where there is another exceptional educational or social need for them to attend George Watson's College;
- An applicant who has sibling(s) currently in the School (and who will still be in the School when the applicant joins the School).

If further "tie breaks" are required within the above oversubscription criteria, preference is given to applicants who have:

- At least one parent who is a former pupil of George Watson's College, or
- Another close connection with the School or the Royal Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh, for example through a grandparent.

Integrity of the Selection Process

The Principal, Head of School and other senior members of staff who lead the selection process will be required to declare any potential conflict of interest should they be related to, or have another close personal or professional relationship with the applicant or their family. In such cases where this relationship may affect the impartiality of decision-making, the member of staff will withdraw from the selection process in relation to this applicant and the decision will be taken by another appropriate member of staff.

Under no circumstances will inducements, for example donations, gifts or services to the School or to individuals, be allowed to influence the admissions or the selection processes. If any such inducements are offered the

application to which they relate will be deemed void and the applicant removed from the admissions process. The School will report any incidents which may constitute an offence under the Bribery Act 2010 to the Police.

Offers

For key entry points at P1 and S1, offers will be sent by post on a set date agreed amongst the independent schools in Edinburgh. For other year groups or admissions during the year, offers will be sent as soon as a decision is made after assessments, provided all other relevant information has been submitted. Parents will be required to accept their place by the deadline stated in the offer letter.

On acceptance of a place, there will be a non-refundable acceptance fee of £300 or one term's fees for international applicants. These fees will be reduced pro-rata if the applicant is successful in being awarded a Foundation Place.

Waiting List and Continuing Application Procedures

If an applicant is not judged to be suitable for admission to the School at the time of application as a result of the assessments undertaken, the application will be deemed to have lapsed. A new application may be made for a subsequent year (on the payment of the appropriate fee) and the applicant will once again be assessed according to the criteria as set out in this policy.

Where an applicant has been judged to be suitable for admission to the School but has not been allocated a place due to there being more candidates than there are available places, the School will keep the applicant's name on a waiting list in case a place becomes available later in that school year.

If no such place becomes available in the Junior School, the applicant will then be reconsidered for a place at the next standard admission point along with candidates who have applied for admission at that point. The School will request updated school and Support for Learning reports and the applicant will be invited to the Entrance Assessment with other candidates. The Junior School application will only be carried forward for one year and if no place is offered or the applicant is placed on the waiting list the following year, the application will be considered no longer active and removed from the admissions process.

If no Senior School place can be offered by the October half term of the year the applicant applied to join the application will be considered no longer active and removed from the admissions process.

Appeals

The Principal will consider an appeal against a decision not to admit a pupil where:

- A parent considers that the School has failed to apply this policy and this has resulted in detriment to an applicant and/or
- A parent considers that the School has failed to properly judge the reasonable adjustments required to mitigate potential disadvantage caused by a protected characteristic.

Appeals will not be considered on any other grounds. Appeals must reach the Principal no later than 14 school days after the date of the communication informing the parent of a decision not to admit an applicant.

Legislation and Wider Context

Equality and Diversity

Our School is committed to ensuring that its Admissions Process does not discriminate against any pupils or potential pupils with a protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Data Protection

The Admissions team will request and process personal applicant and family data in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and we will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation. The collected data will be used for the purpose of registering the applicant's interest in applying for a place at George Watson's College and collecting information required by the School to enable applicant selection and if successful, the offer of a school place. Data will be held securely and will not be retained by the School for any longer than is

necessary for this purpose. Please refer to the School's Privacy Policies - the Admissions Process - these can be provided by contacting [Admissions](#).

Duties as a Sponsor for Student Child Visa

The School is a Student Child Visa Sponsor and will discharge its statutory duties in line with the Sponsor guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration.

Edinburgh Independent Schools

Our school is committed to working with other independent schools in Edinburgh when setting dates for Open Mornings and Days, assessments, scholarship assessments, offers and acceptances. This ensures equality and fairness amongst independent schools in Edinburgh, allowing families to make informed decisions. However, each School has its own admissions policy and makes its own decisions according to its own criteria.

Music Scholarships

George Watson's pupils and applicants for entry into S3 who are musically talented can apply for Music Scholarships, which provide annual music tuition fees for two instruments or for voice and instrument. These are awarded on an assessment of a candidate's musical promise made at the time of, and in conjunction with, the assessments for entry to the School. To be considered for a Music Scholarship, applicants must tick the relevant box on the Application Form.

If a Music Scholarship is offered it is expected that scholars will participate in appropriate instrumental ensembles, performances and maintain excellent musical standards. In addition to this scholars would be expected to participate in engagement opportunities both within the school and wider community.

Music Scholarships are awarded without reference to the financial circumstances of an applicant's family. They may, however, be combined with a Foundation Place or support from the FAP scheme in certain circumstances.

Related Documents and Other Policies

Privacy Policy "The Admissions Process"
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

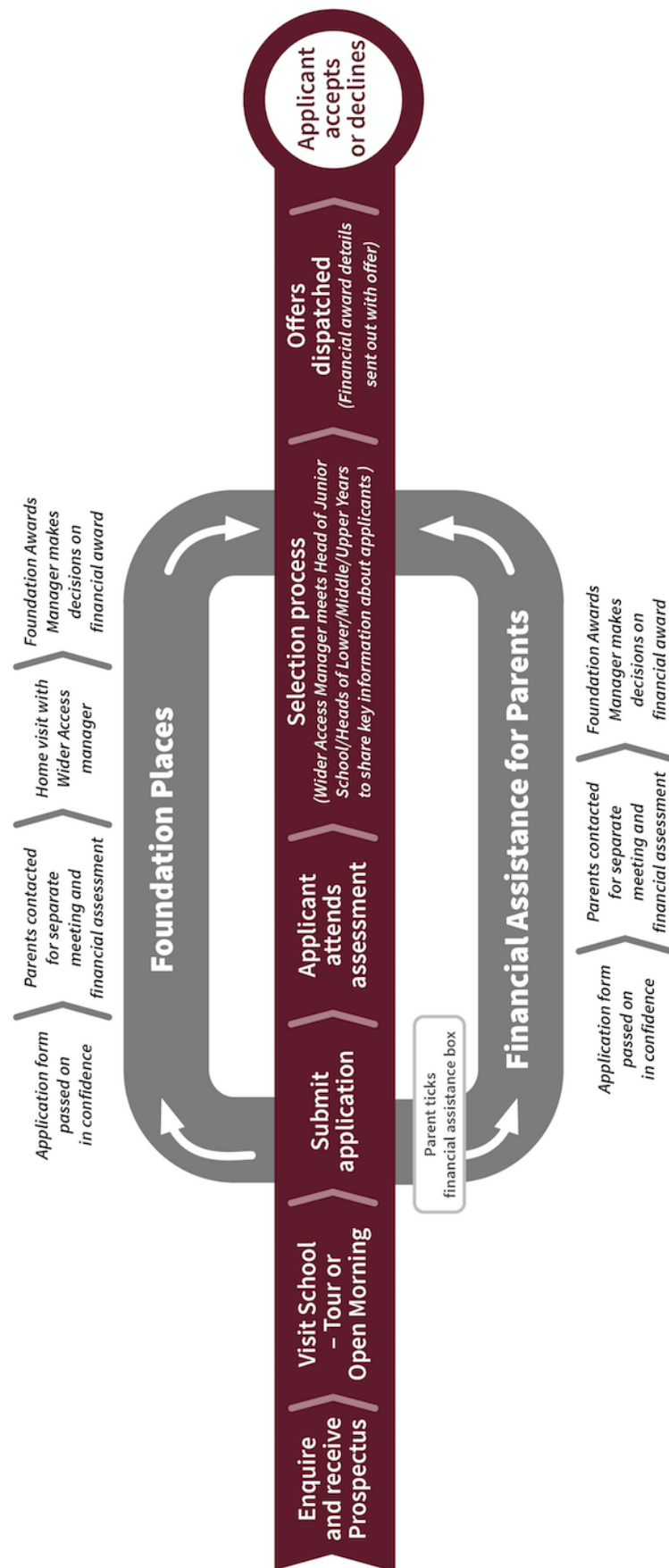
Review and Approval

The Registrar is the owner of this Policy.

This Policy will be reviewed annually. It is approved by the Governing Council after endorsement by the Education and Pupil Wellbeing Committee.

Date of Next Review: **Summer Term 2024**

Parent Journey Through the Admissions Process



Appendix B

Deadline for Applications

Preschool - S6

Mid November for entry to school in the following August.

Number of Places Available

The number of places available for new pupils from August 2020 at Watson's in each Year Group are as follows:

Entry point	Number of places
Preschool	60
P1	55
P2 – P5	As and when places become available
P6	27
P7	27
S1	49
S2 – S3	As and when places become available
S4	No entry, unless in exceptional circumstances
S5 – S6	As and when places become available

These numbers are provided as a guide only.

Circumstances may require changes to these numbers in particular years.

Appendix D

Additional Support for Learning

Our School welcomes applications from applicants who may benefit from our Additional Support for Learning provision. In order that we can meet the needs of all our pupils, parents must share as much information as possible with the School at the point of application, including details of any:

- Additional Support for Learning needs,
- English as an Additional Language,
- Access requirements (physical, visual or auditory),
- Multi-agency support, that was or is in place, e.g. CAMHS intervention,
- Educational Psychologists' or other specialist reports where available, and
- any other relevant information that relates to a disability or medical condition,

The School will use the information to assess the requirement for reasonable adjustments during the Admissions Process and to consider what support may be required if the application is successful. We will carry out these considerations in conjunction with the parents and the applicant where appropriate and it is important that parents engage cooperatively and openly in this process. It may sometimes be necessary to obtain specialist input as part of this process.

It is important to recognise that George Watson's College is a mainstream independent school. Our Additional Support for Learning provision is intended to enable pupils to succeed in a mainstream setting and provision may not be appropriate for those for whom more specialised support or a specialised setting is required to meet their needs, or for whom the School cannot offer the necessary level of support for other legitimate reasons.