

COGNITA



Duncombe
School

An Independent Preparatory
School and Nursery

Applications and Admissions Policy

Date Policy Reviewed	Policy Reviewed By	Reason/Outcome	Next Review Due
8 th August 2023	Lucy Evans	Review	Autumn 2026
1 st September 2024	Lucy Evans	Review	Autumn 2026
10 th September 2025	Lucy Evans	Review	Autumn 2026
3 rd November 2025	Lucy Evans	Review – Cognita Guidance & minor changes	September 2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Duncombe School is an independent day co-educational school for children aged 2 to 11.
- 1.2 The aims of this policy are:
- to set out the criteria and procedure for enquiries, pre-registration events, applications, and admissions which are clear, fair, and ensure compliance with the Equalities Act 2010; and
 - to ensure that the abilities and aptitudes of children (hereafter termed the '**applicant** (s)') joining Duncombe School (hereafter termed '**the School**') matches the ethos and standards of the School and may benefit from the opportunities offered at the School, able to make a positive contribution to the life of the School.
- 1.3 References to parents in the policy means a parent or legal guardian (or the parents or legal guardians) of an applicant to the School.
- 1.4 This policy is available on the School website and also on request from the School office. It can be made available in large print or other accessible format, if required.

2 Equal Treatment

- 2.1 The School welcomes applications for admission from pupils of all backgrounds. This policy applies to all pupils, including those in our Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 2.2 All applicants for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of their, or their parents', sex, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, or any disability or social background. Applicants will also be treated equally in respect of their parents' age, sex, gender, or marital or civil partnership status.
- 2.3 If an applicant has any allergies, special educational needs, or a disability, parents or guardians must notify the School on the Application Form, providing full written details in the dedicated space provided on the form.
- 2.4 Parents must let the School know about any particular requirements which may affect an applicant's ability to participate in a taster/trial session or day in School and/or their ability to participate in any pre-admission assessments so that the School can make appropriate provision for them.

- 2.5 Where necessary, parents will be asked to provide a copy of an Educational Psychologist's report, or a relevant medical report or any Education Health Care Plan (ECH Plan) (draft or otherwise) which may be in place with respect to the applicant, and the School may need to discuss provision with external agencies. This is so that the School can assess the applicant's needs, what support is required and consult with parents about the adjustments which can reasonably be made and so that the School can ensure, for example, that their child will be able to adequately access the education and opportunities offered at the School and that the School is able to ensure their health and safety, and the health and safety of others (including staff and pupils). The cost of such reports will usually be the responsibility of the parent.
- 2.6 Where a prospective applicant is disabled, the School will discuss with parents (and their child's medical advisers, and/or the Local Authority, where appropriate) the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the applicant if they become a pupil at the School, to ensure that the prospective pupil is not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a pupil who is not disadvantaged because of a disability.
- 2.7 There may be exceptional circumstances in which the School is not able to offer a place for reasons relating to an applicant's disability or special educational needs. For example, if, despite reasonable adjustments, we feel that a prospective pupil is not going to be able to adequately access the education offered, or that their health and safety, or those of other pupils or staff may be put at risk, we may not be able to offer a place at the School.
- 2.8 Sometimes, the situation of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs changes. The School requires parents to be pro-active and transparent in updating the School as to any relevant changes which mean that the information provided during the application process is out of date or incomplete. In the vast majority of cases, this will not affect a pupil's place at the School (where a place has been offered). However, the School may, in exceptional circumstances, need to reconsider the offer of a place if a pupil's circumstances change materially. It is in the pupil's interests that any such decision is made as early as possible to avoid any disruption to their education, so parents are urged to be forthcoming in their communications with the School about any material change to their child's circumstances.

3 Enquiries

All enquiries and applications, including within year applications, should be made to the Admissions Manager. Further information about the School's application process can be found on the School's website.

Visits

Prospective parents of applicants are encouraged to visit to see the School in action and to meet the Headteacher. Each term there is an open day which is an opportunity to tour the school on an informal basis. Details about scheduled open days are published on the School website and enquiries about ad hoc visits to the School should be made to the Admissions Manager.

4 Application

- 4.1 Following a visit, parents wishing to register their child should first complete an Application Form and return/submit it online with a payment for the registration fee. The registration fee covers the cost of administering the registration procedure, including the waiting lists and is non-refundable. An application is an indication of interest and is not a guarantee of a place. The Application Form and detail of the registration fee and how to pay the fee are available on the School website.
- 4.2 The School will respond to the parents by confirming that the applicant's name has been placed on the admission list for the relevant term and year. If the year group is fully subscribed, they will be placed on a waiting list. If this is a within-year application, the parents will be notified if there is a place for the applicant. The school reserves the right to give preference to siblings of children currently on roll.

5 Taster Days

We offer Taster Days as an opportunity for all prospective pupils to experience a typical school day. On this day, the School will make a general assessment of the child's suitability to attend the school. Our assessment criteria is designed to identify a pupil's ability to benefit from the School's well-rounded education, and make a positive contribution towards the life of the School, aligned with the School's ethos and values.

For children in our Treetops pre-school, the child is invited to spend a taster morning with the relevant class or to attend one of our weekly toddler group sessions. The class teacher will observe and informally assess him or her to ensure that he or she will integrate happily before the offer of a place is made.

Occasionally the child may be asked to return for a further taster session/assessment before the decision whether to offer a place is taken. The admissions policy aims to ensure that Duncombe will provide the most appropriate education for the new child and that the existing pupils will not be affected adversely. Parents will be asked about their child's general development and any identified special educational needs prior to a place being offered. Places are not automatic, in some rare cases a place will not be offered if we judge that a child's development is below expectation or that they will not flourish in the environment we offer, or because the Treetops class/Reception is unable to meet the needs of the child.

6 Admission to Treetops Pre-School

- 6.1 Children are welcomed into Treetops from age 2 and attendance may be part-time or full time until the Reception stage (the school year in which they turn 5).

Although parents will be asked about their child's general development and any identified special educational needs or disabilities prior to a place being offered. This is so that Treetops can properly cater for the child's needs.

Places in the Nursery (and progression from Nursery to Reception) are not automatic, in some rare cases, a place will not be offered, for example, if we judge that a child's development is below expectation such that they will not flourish in the environment we offer, or because the Nursery/Reception is unable to meet the needs of the child."

7 Admission to Other Year Groups

- 7.1 The requirement of the prospective pupils to provide information about any allergies, special educational needs or disabilities as detailed above under “Equal Treatment” will apply in the same way when a pupil is applying to enter another year group (i.e. outside the usual formal entry routes).
- 7.2 Please refer to section 6 for the taster day process.

8 Allocation of Places, Offers, and Waiting List

- 8.1 A place is only available once a formal offer has been made by the School and the required deposit has been received by the School in return.
- 8.2 In the event that the number of children registered for any year group exceeds the places available, the following criteria will be applied.
- Priority will be given to siblings of a child on roll in the school who have already registered.
 - If two or more children are registered to join on the same date during the academic year and there is availability in one or more year groups for the other siblings, priority will be given to any child on the waiting list so that they can be admitted on the same date.
 - Registration and admission to o Early Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Nursery will take priority over any registrations for the Reception year for children in the same cohort. For example, if a child wishes to register and be admitted to our Nursery year, they will take priority over a child who is only registered to enter for Reception. However, we will give registered families the option to move their child's admission forward wherever possible before moving their application on to any waiting list.
- 8.3 The parents of each applicant will be informed within 5 working days of their application whether a place is available, including those made within year. The School will not be obliged to state its reasons for declining a request for admission.
- 8.4 If no place is available, parents may place their child's name on the waiting list for the School. The School cannot guarantee when a place may become available.
- 8.5 The School reserves the right to withdraw an offer of place in circumstances when the School becomes aware that any material information which is provided as part of the child's application is intentionally false or misleading or important information about the child's needs or circumstances is not disclosed at the time of the application.

9 Appeal

There is no right to appeal a decision not to admit a pupil to the School. The decision of the Headteacher is final. The School's complaints procedure is not available for prospective parents or in respect of prospective pupils.

10 Overseas Applicants

We welcome overseas pupils provided that they have the legal right to enter and study in the UK and, where parents are resident outside the UK, have an education guardian who has legal authority to act on behalf of the parents. More details are contained in the School's Parent Contract.

11 Fluency in English

- 11.1 In order to cope with the academic and social demands of the School, applicants must have an appropriate working knowledge of English. Normally applicants should have been educated in the English medium before coming to the School.
- 11.2 Applicants may be required to undertake a language proficiency assessment before a place is offered. This includes a written assessment and may include an interview, either in person or online.

12 The Parent Contract

The terms upon which the School educates each child are set out in the School's Parent Contract as amended from time to time, which will be made available to parents as part of the admissions process.

13 Admissions Register and Record Keeping

- 13.1 The School maintains an Admissions Register in line with regulatory requirements.
- 13.2 Applicant's details will be held on file with due regard to data protection legislation, the School's Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy. The School will not hold the personal data of a child or parents for longer than is necessary for a lawful purpose.
- 13.3 For each pupil, the Admissions Register must contain:
- Name in full;
 - Gender;
 - Name and address of every person known to the proprietor to be a parent of the pupil (and an indication of which parent the pupil normally lives with, and which parents hold parental responsibility as defined by Section 3 Children Act 1989)
Note: parents holding parental responsibility, even if not actually caring for the child, have a right to receive relevant information from the School in respect of any pertinent matter affecting the child, unless a court order indicates otherwise. Where a parent notifies the School that a pupil will live at another address, in addition or instead; the new address, the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will normally live with in future and the date from which it is expected the pupil will normally live there, where it is reasonably practicable for the School to ascertain this information;
 - At least two emergency contact numbers for pupils with two or more parents, i.e. one per parent or at least two emergency contact numbers for children with single parents (where possible);
 - Day, month and year of birth;
 - Day, month and year of admission or re-admission to the School;
 - Name and address of the School last attended, if any; and
 - The name of the destination school (or additional school, in the case of dual registration) notified by a parent and the first date of attendance, where it is reasonably practicable for the School to ascertain this information (a new requirement from September 2016).

13.4 The name of a pupil must be included in the register from the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed, or has been notified, that the pupil will attend the School. For most pupils the expected first day of attendance is the first day of the School year. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the School should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity (see Child Absent from Education, Children Missing Education, and Attendance Policy).

13.5 The School will inform their local authority (where the School is situated) when a pupil's name is going to be deleted from the Admissions Register on certain grounds. In summary, these are:

- When the child has been taken out of school to be home educated;
- When the family has apparently moved away;
- When the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend;
- When the child is in custody for more than four months; and
- When the child has been permanently excluded.

Schools must notify their 'own' local authority when they add or remove a pupil's name from/to the Admissions Register at non-standard transitions, i.e. where a compulsory school-aged child leaves a school before completing the School's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the School's first year.

Where the School receives an in-year application, they must inform the local authority, including the outcome of the application, to ensure that the local authority is aware of any children who may not have a school place. Note: not all local authorities are requiring this notification – each school will check directly with their specific local authority on an annual basis and have written evidence.

13.6 The lawful grounds for removing a pupil, including the original ones above, and the information to be reported to the local authority, are set out in detail in Children Missing Education (DFE2025). Schools are also under a duty to provide information to the local authority for standard transitions if requested.

Version control:

Ownership and consultation	
Document Sponsor	European Director of Education
Document Author / Reviewer	European Director of Education
Consultation & Specialist Advice	Head of Legal – Europe and USA (Oct 2025) Regional Safeguarding Lead – Europe and USA (Oct 2025)
Document application and publication	
England	Yes
Wales	
Spain	
Switzerland	
Italy	
Greece	
USA	
Version control	
Current Review Date	October 2025

Applications and Admissions Policy

Next Review Date	June 2026
Related documentation	
Related documentation	Children Absent from Education, Children Missing Education and Attendance Policy
	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy