



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Admissions Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Accessibility Plan (Incorporating Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy) and Terms and Conditions.

Birkenhead School educates boys and girls from 3 months to 18 years. It selects its students on the basis of their academic aptitude, attitude, desire to learn and their ability to benefit from the kind of education offered by the School.

In order to encourage as diverse an entry as possible, the School advertises widely and promotes contact with local primary and prep schools. In order to remove financial barriers to admission, the School provides a limited number of bursaries through the Birkenhead School Foundation Trust, which typically supports approximately 70 to 80 students within the School at any one time. The principal criteria for the award of bursaries are individual student's academic aptitude and the parents' financial means.

The Prep

The Prep admits pupils at four main points of entry:

Nursery	From three months' old
Pre-Prep (Foundation 1)	Rising threes and fours – boys and girls who will have their third or fourth birthday in the academic year September to August.
Reception (Foundation 2)	Rising fives – boys and girls who will have their fifth birthday in the academic year September to August of the intake year.
Year 3	Seven plus – boys and girls who will have their eighth birthday within the academic year September to August of the intake year.

However, throughout the year, boys and girls may join the School at any point subject to places being available.

The Prep is academically selective. From Reception upwards, children usually spend a day at School when they are assessed either formally or informally, as appropriate, by teachers and by the

Head or Deputy Head of Prep. The intention here is to check on development and future potential and to put children at ease so that they perform at their best and enjoy their day on-site.

For older pupils, assessment is undertaken through standardised tests which might include assessing capability in Reading, Spelling, English, Mathematics and Reasoning. The final offer of a place is dependent on successfully passing these relevant assessment tests alongside receipt of a satisfactory reference from the pupil's current school to confirm suitability.

Appeals Process

Not all applicants will be offered a place at the School. For those seeking places in Reception to Year 6, the following appeals process will apply:

- Any family wishing to appeal the decision not to admit their child into Prep should, in the first instance, raise the matter in writing with the Head of Prep within 14 days from the date of the initial decision. They should outline the reasons on which they wish the decision to be reconsidered. The Head of Prep will respond in writing within 10 working days, giving reasons for the decision.
- If a family feels that their concerns have not been addressed by the Head of Prep, they may appeal the decision in writing to the Headmaster within 14 days from the Head of Prep's response, outlining the reasons on which they wish the School to reconsider its decision. The Headmaster will respond in writing within 10 working days. The Headmaster's decision will be final.

Should a family's correspondence to appeal an admissions decision be received during the School's holidays, acknowledgement will be made within 3 working days of the start of the new term. Where the process extends into the School holidays, reasonable endeavours will be made to adhere to the timescales stated above, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Scholarships

Pupils seeking an Academic Scholarship into Seniors sit a Scholarship Examination which typically takes place in either the January or February of Year 6. A small number of Music Scholarships are also available for entry into Year 7.

Seniors

In selecting students for admission into Seniors (Year 7 and above), the School is looking for academic potential to proceed to Higher Education, alongside an excellent attitude and a desire to learn. The School also seeks students with wide-ranging interests and talents, who are prepared to participate in the broader life of the School and to be proactive in taking the opportunities that are available to them. At all levels, the final offer of a place is dependent on the student successfully passing any relevant assessment tests alongside receipt of a satisfactory reference from the student's current school to confirm suitability.

Current Birkenhead School Prep pupils are assessed without examination for transfer to Seniors (Year 7) using information from standardised NFER tests, internal examinations, day to day performance and discussion between the Headmaster, Prep teachers and the Head of Prep. This takes place towards the end of Year 5.

For students applying to Birkenhead School for entrance into Seniors in Year 7, assessments are typically conducted via Taster and Assessment Days at the end of Year 5 or the beginning of Year 6. Children are invited in small groups for a full day, which is intended to be an enjoyable experience, whilst at the same time, providing the School with an opportunity to assess candidates in both formal and informal situations. The formal assessments take the form of a Verbal Reasoning test alongside an assessment of their reading, writing and arithmetic. Subsequently, confidential references will be taken from their current schools. Early application is encouraged due to high demand and once full, prospective students will be placed on a waiting list.

For entry to other years, students are assessed for academic aptitude through National Standardised tests, assessments in Maths and English and an interview with senior staff. This would usually be done on a taster day to the school. Students are accepted at any point of entry, including mid-year, dependent on availability. Should the applicable year group be full, successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

Academic suitability for entrance into the School's Sixth Form is via interview, school references and GCSE performance. Students already in the School are admitted to the Sixth Form on the basis of their performance to date, their attitude to study and wider School life, and the minimum GCSE requirements set out in the Sixth Form prospectus (typically six grades 6 or above and 7 in the subjects chosen for further study).

Appeals Process

Any family wishing to appeal the decision not to admit their child into Seniors should raise the matter in the first instance with the Headmaster, in writing, within 14 days from the date of the initial decision. They should outline the reasons on which they wish the School to reconsider its decision.

The Headmaster will respond, in writing, within 10 working days, giving reasons for the decision.

If a family feels that their concerns have not been addressed by the Headmaster they may appeal by writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o The Clerk to the Governors, The Lodge, 58 Beresford Road, Prenton, CH43 2JD within 14 days of the date of the Headmaster's written response, giving reasons for the appeal. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the request within 3 working days.

The Chair of Governors will either:

- Reply to the family, in writing, within 14 days of the Clerk's acknowledgement, with his/her decision, or
- Choose to convene and refer the matter to an appeals committee of Governors. Parents will be advised of this within 21 days of the Clerk's acknowledgement. Parents will then be invited to a meeting on a date to be agreed, or, failing agreement by the parents, on the date advised. Parents may bring a companion who must confirm at the outset of the meeting that they will keep all matters relating to the appeal confidential. No legal representation will be allowed. The Headmaster will be present. Notes of the meeting will be taken by the Clerk or another appointed member of staff. These notes remain the property of the appeals committee and will not be made available to the parties to the appeal.

After the appeals committee meeting, families will receive notification of the decision, and reasons, within 7 days.

Should a family's correspondence to appeal an admissions decision be received during the School's holidays, acknowledgement will be made within 3 working days of the start of the new term. Where the process extends into the School holidays, reasonable endeavours will be made to adhere to the timescales stated above, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Scholarships

Each year, a number of students who achieve outstanding GCSE results will be awarded honorary Sixth Form Academic Scholarships. A small number of Access Scholarships are also available each year to students entering the School from outside, who achieve outstanding GCSE results and have not previously had the opportunity of a secondary independent education. Further details are available on the School's website.

Principles of selection

In applying criteria for selection, the School intends to maintain and, if possible, to improve the educational and general standards for all its students commensurate with the ethos to which the School aspires. The School must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective student to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the student's peers, so that there is every chance that the student will have a complete, happy and successful School career. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the student's time at the School.

The School's policy is to apply these criteria to all students and potential students regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled student or potential student at a substantial disadvantage compared to any student who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability.

Parents of prospective students are asked to inform the Headmaster or the Head of Prep as appropriate, when they apply for a place at the School, of any disabilities or long-term medical conditions and the implications thereof which the School should consider, either in the selection process or once a student has been accepted. In assessing any student or prospective student and in considering any adjustments it might need to make, the School may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards to be appropriate. Subject to this, the School will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

Reasonable adjustments to the admissions procedure which the School will consider will depend on individual circumstances but might include, for example, provision of enlarged copies of examination papers, extra time allowance, use of personal computer, use of non-standard furniture, special arrangements to take medication during the assessment, or change of room to provide access to appropriate toilet facilities. Prospective and current parents should be aware that, in contrast to mainstream state schools, as an independent school Birkenhead School does not receive the Level 2 Top-Up as part of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) funding. This can mean that weekly Teaching Assistant hours provided are less than the support provided at a state school that can draw down the Level 2 Top-Up funding – approximately £6k per student per annum. Admission decisions are, ultimately, made by the School, subject to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Tom Whitworth 10th May 2024. To be reviewed September 2024.

