

The purpose of this Admissions Policy is to set out and explain the Admissions Process at George Watson's College and the criteria that we will use when deciding whether or not to offer places at the School, to award Scholarships or offer financial assistance. This Policy applies equally to all applicants at all entry points in the Nursery, 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 legal 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.

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 their parents to satisfy themselves that Watson's is the right school for them.

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, gender, 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. The George Watson's Family Foundation funds a limited number of Foundation Places which are designed to enable pupils, who meet the School's admission criteria, but whose parents would not otherwise be able to fund their fees, to attend the School.

Admissions Procedures

Scope of Admissions Procedures

The 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 lessons as a pupil at Watson's. During that time responsibility for new pupil and the administration associated with them pass 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.

Nursery places are allocated approximately 15 months in advance of starting for children aged 3–4 years. Whilst progression is not automatic, it is anticipated that the majority of pupils will progress to Primary 1. The deadline for applications for Nursery places is therefore in the April of the year before the August when the applicant would start in the Nursery.

The dates for the next Admissions round can be found in Appendix B. Other than in the Nursery, the main entry points for new pupils in the Junior School are: Primary 1, Primary 6 and Primary 7. We also consider pupils for a limited number of places in other years as outlined in Appendix C. The deadline for applications for Junior School places (P1–P7) is in the November before the 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-appropriate, providing a supportive environment which will bring out the best in all applicants. Whilst progression is not automatic, it is anticipated that the majority of pupils will progress from Primary 7 (P7) to Secondary 1 (S1).

The main entry point for new pupils in Senior School is Senior 1. We also consider pupils for a limited number of places in other years should places become available. Places are only offered in Senior 4 in the most exceptional of cases as pupils are in the process of taking National Exams during the Senior 4. The deadline for applications for Senior School places (S1–S6) is in the November before the August when the applicant would start in the School.

Entry to Senior 1 (S1) requires applicants to attend the Entrance Assessment day, unless participating in a distance assessment (see below). The assessment includes English, Mathematics and Reasoning papers and an interview typically in a group situation with the Head of Senior School or one of his Deputies.

For entry to S2–S5 applicants are invited to an Entrance Assessment in English, Mathematics and a Modern Foreign Language.

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.

Submitting an Application

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 and for both parents (if passports are not up-to-date or not available – a copy of a Birth Certificate for the applicant and a Driving Licence for the parents will do);
- An up-to-date proof of address for both parents (to be updated in the event that the address changes) eg a copy of a Council Tax letter, utility bill or bank statement;
- A copy of any court order (final or interim) relating to parental responsibilities and rights affecting the applicant or their care and upbringing.

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.

Throughout the Admissions Process, we will 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 £40 payable on submission of the Application Form
- an Acceptance Fee of £250 payable when the offer of a place at George Watson's College is accepted. The Acceptance Fee must be paid on submission of the Enrolment Agreement.

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 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 Tier 4 visas 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 Tier 4 (Child) visa as specified by the Home Office.

International applicants should contact the Admissions Registrar to discuss a potential application.

Watson's offers Homestay Places for Senior 5 and Senior 6 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.
- Ability to live away from home for the duration of study, including emotional resilience.

Distance Assessments

If a pupil lives too far from Watson's 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 P4–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 extra-curricular 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).

In making a judgement, due regard is given to the age of the pupil and any particular personal or family circumstances which may apply, including the implications of any protected characteristic which may apply.

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 overriding 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);
- An applicant who has had a sibling at the School;
- An applicant who has:
 - A parent who is a former pupil of George Watson's College, George Watson's Boys' College, or George Watson's Ladies' College;
 - A grandparent or other close relative who is or was a former pupil of the above Schools, or of John Watson's School;
 - A parent or grandparent who is a member of the Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh.

Integrity of the Selection Process

The 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 donations, gifts or services to the School be allowed to influence the Admissions or the Selection Processes.

Offers

For key entry points at Primary 1 and Senior 1, 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. Offers for entry into Nursery will be made soon after the April deadline. 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 £250. 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 continue to consider the application to be 'live', if the parent wishes and will keep the applicant's name on a waiting list in case a place becomes available later in that school year. If no place can be offered during that year, 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.

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

Watson's 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, which come into force on 25 May 2018. 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.

Duties as a Sponsor for Tier 4 Visas

George Watson's College is a Tier 4 Sponsor and will discharge its statutory duties in line with the Sponsor guidelines issued by UK Visas and Immigration.

Edinburgh Independent Schools

George Watson's College 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.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance may be available to parents who cannot afford to pay some or all of the School's annual tuition fee.

Foundation Places

The George Watson's Family Foundation was established in 1997 to ensure that the spirit of the legacy left by George Watson continues. His views were clear; he wanted children from less advantaged backgrounds to enjoy the quality of education available to those more fortunate.

Watson's is proud to award Foundation Places which can offer a life-changing opportunity to children, whose parents, at the time of their child's entrance to the School, are unable to fund the tuition fees.

The Foundation is funded annually by donations from parents, staff, former pupils and other supporters, and by George Watson's College. Through the Foundation, means tested financial support is offered to eligible families in the form of a discount on fees. Owing to limited funds, the Foundation is unable to provide assistance to all eligible applicants, meaning that non-funded places may be offered to pupils whose parents have applied for financial assistance.

Applying for Financial Assistance

Foundation Places are available to applicants from the last year of Primary (P7) to Senior 6 (S6), with priority given to those joining Watson's at Primary 7 and Senior 1 (S1). Foundation Places are usually allocated through the main application process which closes in November each year and it is therefore unlikely that funds will be available for applicants requesting an in-year admission.

Applicants whose parents apply for help with paying fees through the George Watson's Family Foundation are assessed on exactly the same basis as all other pupils and are not in any way disadvantaged by an application for financial help.

To apply for a Foundation Place, the parents must tick the relevant box on the application form. The parents will then be required to complete a financial assessment form and submit documentary evidence of their capital, savings and income and will be invited to attend a meeting at the School with the Foundation Awards Manager.

Once the financial assessment is complete, the level of award is set by reference to a sliding scale. As a guide, 100% awards are available where total family income is below £15,000 per annum and it is unlikely that an award will be given where total family income exceeds £60,000. The level of award will be confirmed at the same time as any offer of a place.

Foundation Places are reassessed annually based on updated financial information, although the award will generally be maintained at the same level unless there is a significant change in the family's financial position.

All applications are dealt with confidentially by the Foundation Awards Manager and Foundation Places are awarded at the discretion of the Trustees of the George Watson's Family Foundation.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded on the basis of pupil merit and irrespective of parental income. Scholarships, including Music Scholarships, are available to pupils entering the Senior School in Senior 1, ranging in value up to 25% of the full tuition fees.

Academic Scholarships

The Academic Scholarships are awarded on the basis of the assessment taken for entry to S1, plus additional Scholarship papers in English and Mathematics. Only candidates who do well in the assessment will be invited to take the additional Scholarship papers. The Scholarship papers are set a few days after the S1 Entrance Assessment. It is not therefore necessary to apply for an Academic Scholarship award.

All awards are tenable for a maximum of six years subject to satisfactory progress in each year.

There are two types of Academic Scholarship:

- i) The Harold Oppenheim Scholarship and Wolfson Scholarship – awards of 25% of the full tuition fee.
- ii) The Stewart Lockhart Scholarship, Louis Gibb Scholarship and Merchant Company Scholarships – awards to the value of 3% of the tuition fee are invested annually by the School in the name of the pupil:
 - These are awards made directly to the pupils gaining the scholarships to build a fund to assist with funding higher education or a gap year project.
 - The pupil gains access to the fund upon leaving the School at the end of either S5 or S6, or at the age of 17, if the pupil leaves at an earlier stage.
 - This accumulated fund is established for a pupil regardless of whether the child is awarded a Foundation Place.

Music Scholarships

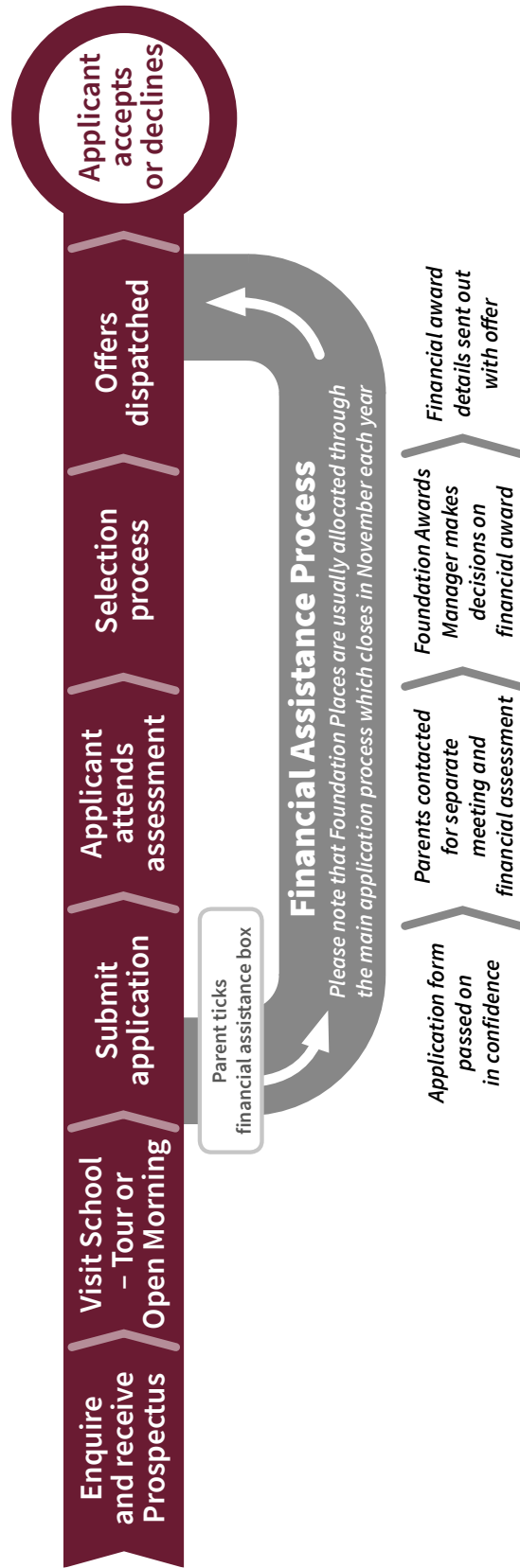
Applicants for entry to S1 who are musically talented can apply for Ferguson/Bruce Music Scholarships, which provide annual music tuition fees for two instruments or for voice and instrument. These are awarded on an assessment of a candidate's musical promise made at the time of, and in conjunction with, the assessments for entry to the School. To be considered for a Music Scholarship, applicants must tick the relevant box on the Application Form.

The awards are made initially for three years. Their continuation will then depend on satisfactory progress during S1 to S3 and a commitment to study Music as a main subject in School thereafter.

Applicants for these Music Scholarships may also be considered for an Academic Scholarship.

Appendix A

Parent Journey Through the Admissions Process



Appendix B

Deadlines for Applications

Nursery

30 April for entry in August of the following year

30 April 2018 for entry in August 2019

Junior School (P1 – P7)

30 November for entry in August of the following year

30 November 2017 for entry in August 2018

Senior School (S1 – S6)

30 November for entry in August of the following year

30 November 2017 for entry in August 2018

Appendix C

Number of Places Available

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

Entry point	Number of places
Nursery	88
P1	23
P2 – P5	As and when places become available
P6	27
P7	27
S1	At least 60, but not more than 80
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

George Watson's College 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 co-operatively 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.

Further information on provision and available support is outlined in the School's Accessibility Strategy.