

ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1. Downside School's Admissions procedure aims to ensure that boys and girls who join Downside School are able to be happy, successful and secure within its academic, cultural, pastoral and spiritual environment, whether they are boarders or day pupils.

2. Application criteria

2.1. Downside School welcomes applications for admission from all sections of society and is non-discriminatory in line with the Equality Act (2010) and Equal Opportunities Policy.

2.2. This applies to all pupils and includes inappropriate discrimination on the grounds of: gender; religion or belief; physical ability or disability (including HIV status); learning ability; other special educational needs or academic or sporting ability; race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity, family, cultural or linguistic background); sex; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity.

2.3. These factors are taken into account in the care of our community members so that care is sensitive to different needs. Those intending to join Downside School are expected, however, to be comfortable with the demands set by our Catholic and Benedictine foundation and character.

2.4. Downside is inclusive and welcomes applicants with disabilities and special educational needs. The School maintains a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people and those with special educational needs and it will not treat an applicant less favourably on these grounds without justification. At present, its facilities, physical and otherwise, for the disabled and those with special educational needs are limited. Nevertheless, the school will do all that is reasonable to comply with its legal and moral responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2010) in order to accommodate the needs of applicants who have disabilities for whom, with reasonable adjustments, the School can cater adequately.

2.5. Parents or guardians of an applicant who has any disability or special educational needs should provide the Director of Admissions & Marketing with full written details when submitting a Registration Form. This will enable the school to assess those needs and ensure the School can provide adequately for them throughout the admission process. The School will consult with parents or guardians about the adjustments which can reasonably be made for the applicant both during the admission process and later as a pupil.

3. Admissions criteria

3.1. The admissions criteria are determined and reviewed from time to time by the Head in consultation with the Director of Admissions and Marketing

3.2. Admission to the School is at the discretion of the Head.

3.3. The preconditions for admission are that:

- The applicant is of the appropriate age and sufficient maturity.
- The School is able to provide adequately for any special educational needs the applicant may have following an assessment of the pupil by the Head of Learning Support, if required.
- The School, having made reasonable adjustment, has the capacity to cope with any disability the applicant may have.
- The pupil's level of English, if not a first-language English pupil, is of a standard compatible with the entry levels required for that pupil's proposed year group of entry.
- The applicant fulfils any conditions set out when offered a place.
- Fees (if applicable) at the present school have been paid.

4. Selection Criteria

4.1. The selection criteria are determined and reviewed from time to time by the Head in consultation with the Director of Admissions and Marketing.

4.2. The selection criteria to be fulfilled by the applicant will be determined by the School. The selection criteria aim to identify applicants whose academic and other abilities appear to match the ethos and standards of the School and whose personal qualities suggest they have the potential to contribute sufficiently to the School community and benefit from the many opportunities that are offered at the School.

4.3. The selection criteria include provision of satisfactory evidence of academic ability sufficient to access the school curriculum, assessed by Downside's own age-appropriate entrance exams, together with an interview and school reports for the last two years, and a satisfactory reference from the applicant's current school. The School is academically selective to ensure that every pupil who enters the School can fruitfully access the School's curriculum. It also recognises the central value of Art, Drama, Music, Sport and other co-curricular activities, and enthusiasm in these fields is expected and encouraged.

4.4. The School values its connections with Old Gregorians (alumni) but is also keen to foster new associations and links. The School intends to widen access to the school to boys and girls who can clearly and substantially benefit from a Downside education regardless of their parents' or guardians' financial circumstances.

The School is therefore committed to offering to eligible parents or guardians means-tested financial support with the payment of school fees. Such support is known as a bursary and these may be awarded in the form of a discount, depending on the financial, compassionate or other pertinent circumstances of applicants. Bursaries of 50% of fees should normally be considered to be the likely absolute maximum, though higher awards are possible, in exceptional circumstances, of up to 100% of fees.


5. Entry Points

5.1. The main entry points are at 11+, 13+ and at 16+. Pupils may be accepted at other points if places are available.

5.2. Occasionally, an applicant may have fallen behind in his/her education due to illness or other problems. In such a case, the School may offer a place in a year lower than the applicant's normal age range. Parents or guardians will be consulted before such an offer is made, but the decision as to the appropriate year for the applicant, taking into account all the relevant circumstances, is a matter for the Head, whose decision is final.

6. Admissions Records

6.1. Confidential records will be completed for each applicant in line with the School's GDPR policy.

<i>Downside School Policy Approval Record</i>	
Reviewed by	Director of Admissions
Date	February 2022
Authorised by	Chair of the Board of Governing Body
	
Date	May 2022 (December 2021 by former Chair of Governing Body)
Next Review	March 2023
Circulation	Governors / all staff / [volunteers] automatically Parents on request Published on the School's website
Status	Complies with ISI regulatory requirements September 2021