



# The Abbey

The independent school for girls aged 3-18.

## Admissions Policy and Procedure

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### The Abbey School, Reading



17 Kendrick Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5DZ  
Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England No 133676.  
Registered Charity No 309115. The Abbey School exists to educate academically able girls.



## Admissions Principles

The Abbey School has a long and impressive tradition of providing the very best education for girls. It is an independent (fee-paying), academically selective day school for girls aged 3 to 18 years. Most girls are admitted to The Abbey following age-appropriate assessments at 3+, 4+, 7+, 11+, 13+ and 16+. Girls are not accepted for assessment outside their UK chronological year group. The purpose of entry assessment is to ensure that the girls who enter the school can fully access the curriculum and have the potential to thrive in, and to contribute to, The Abbey environment. In addition to academic ability and potential, we look for a range of qualities and skills which girls might contribute to school life.

The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, disability, sexuality, national or ethnic origin in its admissions procedures. The Abbey School welcomes girls of all faiths and of none. A Church of England school in its traditions, it fosters Christian values of spiritual awareness, understanding and respect for others as a fundamental part of the School's ethos.

It is of great importance that a parent informs the School on the application form should a candidate be disabled under the definition of the Equality Act 2010 or the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and thereby require special arrangements or consideration. The School needs this information so that in the case of a child with particular needs, we can assess those needs and consult with parents about the adjustments that can reasonably be made to cater adequately for the child's needs both during the admissions process and if an offer of a place is made. Similarly, if special educational needs or a disability become apparent after admission, the School will consult with parents about reasonable adjustments that may allow their child to continue at the School.

## Admissions Procedure

The closing dates (where applicable) for applications are published on the School website.

All families applying are encouraged to visit the School on an Open Day/Evening or make an appointment to visit the School during a working day.

An application will only be considered if accompanied by the non-refundable registration fee, the level of which will be stipulated on the registration form. Girls transferring from the Junior to the Senior School are not required to pay a second registration fee. Applicants will receive acknowledgement of their registration and will be advised of the next steps in the admissions process which depends upon the age of the applicant.

The Head's decision in accepting or refusing a candidate into the School is final. In order to ensure fairness and to protect the integrity of the system, results of assessments are not discussed with parents or made public.

Places are offered in line with the number the School can accommodate and the form of assessment depends on the age of the applicant.

## Entry to the Nursery School

Entry to the Nursery occurs during the academic year in which a girl will have her 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Upon application girls will be invited to come into the Nursery where we will evaluate their readiness for our Nursery School environment.

## **Entry to The Junior School**

Girls join at different ages through the Junior School with key entry points being 4+ and 7+. Only in exceptional circumstances are girls accepted into Lower III (Year 6). Formal tests are based on National Curriculum requirements, so extra preparation is not necessary. In all cases, the expectation is that girls will be functioning at a level significantly above the average for their age. In addition, girls will spend some time with their peer group and there will be an opportunity for us to begin to get to know them.

## **Entry to the Senior School**

This is the largest single entry point to the School and all girls (including those from The Abbey Junior School) wishing to enter Upper III (Year 7) sit the entrance examination which forms a key component of the entrance process. As well as forming the basis for offers of places and Academic Scholarships, this provides a base line for tracking of progress.

English, Mathematics and Reasoning (verbal and non-verbal) are assessed and the papers are designed and marked by The Abbey's academic staff. Basic familiarity with reasoning tests is advisable but we strongly recommend against 'cramming' or tutoring.

All girls have a short interview which normally takes place during their Abbey Experience Day. This allows us to build a more detailed picture of the girl's character, maturity and interests and a report is also requested from the girl's current school.

## **Entry at 13+**

If parents would prefer their daughter to remain at a prep school until the end of Year 8 their daughter is encouraged to sit for a place when they are in Year 6 and explain to the Admissions Office that they would like to defer the place to Upper IV (Year 9) if offered. Some additional places may be available for entry into Upper IV and applicants will be invited in to sit an examination and have an interview.

Entry to Lower and Upper V (Years 10 and 11) is not usually possible as The Abbey commences GCSE study in (Year 9) Upper IV.

## **Entry to the Sixth Form**

The vast majority of the girls in Upper V (Year 11) at The Abbey remain for Sixth Form.

Potential new Sixth Formers sit a Sixth Form Entrance Examination (comprising of 2 subject papers) at either Scholarship or Standard level. References are obtained from current schools and candidates are invited in for interview. Offers are then made subject to candidates meeting GCSE requirements which are typically:

8 subjects at grade B or above with a minimum of 6 at A or A\* including any subjects to be studied at A level or Higher Level IB. If the subject is only available in the Sixth Form, a grade A or above in relevant subjects will be expected e.g. in Maths and English for Economics.

## **Additional Factors**

The School is oversubscribed in many year groups. If we have to decide between two or more candidates who meet our admissions requirements after all appropriate allowances and special consideration have been given, we may give preference to:

- Daughters or close relations (e.g. niece, granddaughter) of Abbey Alumnae and others actively or closely associated with the School
- Siblings of current or past pupils
- Date of registration

## Acceptance of a Place

Any offer of a place is accepted by return of a completed acceptance form (signed by those with parental responsibility for the child) by the stipulated date and accompanied by an acceptance deposit. The acceptance deposit will be refunded after a girl leaves the School, less any extras which have been incurred and not paid for via the standard billing process.

## Financial Considerations

At all stages in the process, the school reserves the right not to admit pupils where there is sound reason to believe that there are insufficient funds or where there is an unwillingness to pay the fees or such portion of the fee as is liable after any Scholarship or Bursary is taken into account.

## Scholarships

### Senior School Scholarships

The Abbey School recognises excellence through our scholarship scheme. There is a 10% fee remission associated with an academic scholarship and the prestige in recognition of a girl's ability is considerable. Academic scholarships are awarded to the top performers in the 11+ entrance examination. Internal and external candidates must apply to be considered for a Sixth Form Academic Scholarship. There is a specific scholarship examination (with one logic-based paper and a discursive essay) and a subject-specific interview.

Specialist Scholarships in Music, Art, Drama and Sport are offered to those who show exceptional talent in their chosen field. Only one Specialist Scholarship can be held as the scholars are expected to be very involved in the life of that specific department. For entry at Upper III (Year 7), applicants must complete the scholarship application and submit with supporting references by the required date. Specialist Scholarships are awarded for three years and then girls re-apply for Fifth Form (Years 10 and 11) and Sixth Form.

A Specialist Scholarship entitles the holder to a £500 reduction in annual fees as well as participation in an enrichment programme run by the relevant department. In addition, Music scholars are entitled to free instrumental tuition at the School.

## Bursaries

The governors of The Abbey School are committed to broadening access to the school by offering to eligible parents/guardians means-tested financial support with the payment of Senior School fees, known as bursaries.

The School offers parents the opportunity to apply for financial assistance at entry into the Senior School at Years 7 (U11) and 12 (L11). Applications made at other points of entry will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. The Bursary Procedure documents the application procedure for bursaries and other financial assistance.

The Abbey School uses a specialist agency, Bursary Administration Ltd, to assess the need for financial assistance. The assessment will include a home visit by the agency and considers parents'/guardians' circumstances (e.g. their savings, investments and realisable assets as well as their income, the size of their family, any other persons dependent upon them, compassionate or other pertinent considerations). As a rough guide, parents/guardians with a combined income of more than £70,000 are unlikely to qualify for assistance.

The scale of awards is reviewed annually, and they may be varied upwards or downwards depending on the individual circumstances.

Every case will be taken on its individual merits but, among those who qualify financially, the academic potential of the pupil will be the overriding factor.

### **Sixth Form Bursaries**

These are means tested, the resources being allocated first to those applicants who qualify financially and who are highest up the academic ranking, the measure usually being actual mock results or predicted GCSE results. School reports and/or behaviour will also be taken into account. The Sixth Form Bursary scheme is more generous than for Key Stages 3 and 4 and information is available on request.

### **Clergy Bursaries**

As a registered faith school with Church of England origins, The Abbey School wishes to enable clergy of all Christian denominations to access our education, for daughters who would benefit from it. Such awards are subject to the availability of funding.

## **Other Financial Assistance**

Within overall budget funding, the school will in normal circumstances set aside each year a hardship fund, for cases of sudden, unforeseen need or where applications meriting bursary assistance are received out of the normal calendar cycle for bursary submission, scrutiny and award.

Temporary financial assistance may be awarded to existing pupils for a maximum of two terms only, the value of which is dependent upon the family's financial circumstances. Such awards are subject to the availability of funding and cannot be guaranteed.

Parents should be aware that the School would not expect to provide financial assistance within the first 2 years of a girl joining (other than being in receipt of a bursary on entry), since it is expected that sufficient financial resources exist to cover school fee commitments during this period.

Parents or guardians are encouraged to contact the Bursary as soon as they anticipate a change in their financial position. Staged payments on a Direct Debit scheme may be available to help in some circumstances.

### **Confidentiality**

The school respects the confidentiality of bursary awards made to families and recipients are expected to do likewise.

## **The Application Procedure for Bursaries and Other Financial Assistance**

Bursary application forms can be obtained from the PA to the Head of Finance and Resources, these will only be made available once a parent has registered their interest in a place at the school and paid the non-refundable registration fee. Timescales for the application for bursaries reflect those of the entrance selection process.

- Completed application forms and supporting documents are to be submitted to the Head of Finance and Resources, by the **last Friday in November**, for bursaries to start the following September.

- An earlier deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October for sixth form bursaries applies
- Applications are passed to Bursary Administration Ltd to undertake a home visit, conduct a full assessment and report their findings and recommendations to the Head of Finance and Resources.
- The Head and the Head of Finance and Resources consider the assessment and make a joint recommendation to the Governors.
- The Governors' decision is final and not subject to appeal. Outcomes of the bursary application process are communicated to parents when offers are made for entry into the school, usually by the **end of February**.
- Parents are required to sign a letter accepting the place at the school and an acknowledgement agreeing to any conditions relating to the bursary.

The School is aware that family circumstances may change significantly during a child's school life, so requests for applications at other times will be considered sympathetically if funds are still available. The application process is the same but the timescales for review and confirmation of an award are managed on a case by case basis.

### **The Case for Assistance**

The Head and Head of Finance and Resources will consider a number of factors when making the judgement as to the justification for support and the extent of such support. In the main, the child's suitability for the school is the first consideration in granting support.

- **Suitability**

In assessing a child's suitability, attention will be given to the academic assessment result of each applicant but potential will also be considered as well as actual achievement. Bursary funds are limited and those judged most suitable will be given priority as those likely to gain most from the educational provision. Each pupil to whom support is offered must, in the opinion of the Head, be likely to make sound academic progress following admission and possess the potential to develop the quality of her work and benefit from participation in the wider, extra-curricular activities on offer at the school. In normal circumstances, each applicant should meet the school's normal academic requirements. Previous school reports will be consulted for evidence of good behaviour.

- **Financial limitations**

The amount of the bursary award is not influenced by the level of the academic ability of the child but by the extent of need. Each case is assessed on its own merits and awards are made accordingly, subject to the school's ability to fund these within the context of what is viable within the context of its overall budget. It is recognised that judgements about what sacrifices a family should make to pay school fees will be personal. However, the school has a duty to ensure that all bursary grants are well focused and so, as well as current earnings, other factors which will be considered in determining the necessary level of grant will include:

- The ability to improve the financial position or earning power of the family. For example, where there are two partners, both would be expected to be employed unless one is prevented from doing so through incapacity, the need to care for children under school age or other dependents or the requirements of their partner's work.

- Opportunities to release any capital. Significant capital savings and investments would be expected to be used for the payment of school fees as would equity values in houses.
- In cases of separation, the contribution made by the absent parent.
- Contribution to household costs by other, wider, family members, any adults unrelated to the child or by outside sources.
- Where fees are being paid to other schools (or universities) the school's grant will take into account all these outgoings.
- Acknowledging that others might have a different view, the school considers that the following would not be consistent with the receipt of a bursary:
  - frequent or expensive holidays;
  - new or luxury cars;
  - investment in significant home improvements;
  - a second property/land holdings.

• **Other factors**

It is recognised that, in addition to academic ability and financial constraints, there may be other circumstances which should be considered. These include:

- Where a child has siblings at the school.
- Where the social needs of the child are relevant (e.g: may be suffering from bullying at their present school).
- Where a parent/guardian is terminally ill or is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.
- Where a separation has resulted in the child having to be withdrawn from the school adding to the stress of coping with the parents/guardians separating.

**Annual Review**

All bursary awards are subject to repeat testing of parental means each year and may be varied upwards or downwards depending on parental circumstances. Current bursary holders will be issued with repeat means-testing forms during the Autumn Term each year for return by the start of the following Spring Term. For those previously in receipt of bursaries, the Head and the Head of Finance and Resources, in making their joint recommendation to the school governors, have the discretion to recommend to the governors the reduction or withdrawal of an award not only where a pupil's progress, attitude or behaviour has been unsatisfactory but also where the parents/guardians have failed to support the school, for example by the late payment of any contribution they are making to the fees.

For further information regarding bursaries please email [bursaries@theabbey.co.uk](mailto:bursaries@theabbey.co.uk)

<b>Authorised by</b>	resolution of the Governing Council
<b>Date</b>	[September 2016]

<b>Effective date of the policy</b>	[September 2016]
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