



The Abbey

Admissions Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Director of Marketing and Admissions and Head of Finance and Resources	April 2024
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	April 2024
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Girls' School Association

Leading Independent Schools



Admissions Principles

The Abbey School is an independent (fee-paying), academically selective day school for students aged 3 to 18 years. The Abbey is a remarkable community of learning and provides exceptional opportunities to prepare our students to live with confidence, purpose and joy. The school has played a leading role in the education of students for over 130 years and has adapted over time to prepare students for the ever-changing world that lies ahead of them.

Most students join The Abbey following age-appropriate assessments and are not usually considered for assessment outside their UK chronological year group. The purpose of assessment is to consider a best fit for students who join the school and our community, who 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 students might contribute to school life and, in particular, their capacity to engage as self-aware, confident and active learners.

The Abbey does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, disability, sexuality, national or ethnic origin in its admissions procedures. The school welcomes students 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.

When making an application to join our school we ask that parents share with us any additional learning needs or adjustments that may be required so that we can consider how best to support these.

If the student has an EHCP the school will liaise with parents and, where appropriate, the local authority to consider how best to support the student.

Admissions Procedure

The deadline dates (where applicable) for applications are published on the school website and can be requested from our Admissions Team via email admissions@theabbey.co.uk.

We welcome and encourage all families to visit the school for an open event or make an appointment to visit the school for an individual tour and to meet the Head.

When making an application, a non-refundable registration fee of £100 is required. This does not apply to students transferring from the Junior School to the Senior School. Parents will receive an acknowledgement of their registration and will be advised of the next steps in the admissions process, which depends upon the age of the child.

The Head's decision in accepting or refusing a child into The Abbey is final. In order to ensure fairness and to protect the integrity of the system, the detailed outcomes of assessment are not discussed with parents or made public.

Places are offered taking into account the optimum capacity of the year group in question.

Entry to the Nursery

Entry to the Nursery occurs from when a child turns three years old, during the academic year in which a child will have their fourth birthday. Families are invited to visit the Nursery where we will informally assess the child's readiness for our Nursery environment and discuss any needs as may be required. Where necessary, remote virtual meetings with a one-to-one focused activity with a teacher can be offered.

Entry to the Junior School

A child may apply to join the Junior School at any age although common entry points are Reception, Year 3 and Year 5. Entry into Year 6 is available under exceptional circumstances. Assessments are fairly informal and are age-appropriate with written and/or online assessments completed by a child for Year 3 and above. The child will spend some time with their peer group and there will be an opportunity for us to begin to get to know them and to understand if they will flourish in our environment. Where necessary, remote virtual assessments consist of one-to-one focused activities with a teacher or an informal meeting with a teacher. For Year 1 and above we request sight of a child's most up-to-date school report.

Entry to the Senior School

Most students apply to join the Senior School in Year 7, which is the largest single-entry point to the School.

All children (excluding those from The Abbey Junior School) sit the entrance examination, which comprises papers in English, Mathematics and Reasoning (verbal and non-verbal). Basic familiarity with reasoning tests is advisable, but we strongly recommend against any formal preparation.

In addition, all children will be invited in for activities and have a short informal interview, which enables us to get to know them and to understand if they will enjoy themselves and flourish in our school community. A reference is also requested from the child's current school.

Entry at 13+

Students can apply to join the Senior School in Years 8 and 9.

Deferred entry may be considered for students at Prep Schools that extend to Years 7 and 8. In this case children are invited to sit the entrance exam at the same time as those children applying to join in Year 7. They may be offered a confirmed deferred place or invited to re-apply in Year 8 for a Year 9 place.

All students sit the entrance examination which comprises papers in English, Mathematics and Reasoning (verbal and non-verbal). Basic familiarity with reasoning tests is advisable, but we strongly recommend against any formal preparation.

In addition, all students have a short informal interview, which enables us to get to know them and to understand if they will enjoy themselves and flourish in our environment. A reference is also requested from the student's current school.

Entry to Years 10 and 11 is generally precluded as The Abbey commences GCSE studies in some areas in Year 9. Any exceptional applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Entry to the Sixth Form

The majority of our students in Year 11 remain at The Abbey for Sixth Form where they may choose between the A level and IB Diploma pathways. There are no specific grade requirements for Abbey students' entry to either pathway, although the School gives advice about subject choices.

All external Sixth Form students sit the entrance examination which comprises a general paper as well as two subject papers. In addition, all students will have an informal interview and a reference is requested from their current school. Candidates who are

successful in this process are then expected to gain eight GCSEs at grade 6 or above with grade 7 or above in the subjects chosen at IB/A level as admission criteria for these programmes.

Additional Factors

The School may be oversubscribed in many year groups. If we have to decide between two or more students who meet our admissions criteria after all appropriate allowances and special considerations 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 students
- Date of registration

Acceptance of a Place

Any offer of a place is accepted by the return of a completed Parent Contract (signed by those with parental responsibility for the student) by the advised date and accompanied by an acceptance deposit. Half of the acceptance deposit is deducted from the first term's fees and half is retained until the student 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 students 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 fees as are liable after any Scholarship or Bursary is taken into account.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded in the Senior School to recognise excellence and to encourage leadership. The prestige in recognition of a student's ability is considerable and Scholars are expected to demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm throughout their school life.

Academic Scholarships

Academic scholarships are available at three points: on entry into Year 7, when moving into Year 10, and when moving into or applying to Sixth Form (Year 12). Academic scholarships attract a remission of 10% discount per year on fees.

Scholarships awarded in Year 7 are reviewed at the end of Year 9. If confirmed they are then valid for the remainder of a student's time at the school. Scholarships awarded when moving into Year 10 or Year 12 are also valid for the duration of students' school careers.

Entrance scholarships are not available for students who join the School in Years 8 and 9 may they apply for an award when moving into Year 10.

All Sixth Form students may in addition choose to apply for a scholars' award at the end of Year 12: a project-based award recognising independent study and academic curiosity.

Specialist Scholarships

Specialist scholarships in Art, Drama, Music and Sport are available at entry into Year 7 and are valid for three years (Years 7-9). There is a new internal application round at the end of

Year 9 for Years 10 and 11 and a final application round for the Sixth Form for both internal and external applicants.

Much of the vibrancy of our community comes from the outstanding contribution our students make to sport and the arts, and the School provides exceptional opportunities for talented students to develop their skills and grow their enthusiasm alongside others who share their passion.

Information about our scholarships is available on the School website. In addition, families of internal students are advised directly about relevant scholarship opportunities.

Bursaries

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

The School offers parents the opportunity to apply for financial assistance at entry into the Senior School for Year 7 and Sixth Form. Applications made at other points of entry or for existing students will be considered under exceptional circumstances.

The Abbey uses a specialist agency, Bursary Administration Ltd, to assess the need for financial assistance. The assessment will include a home visit or video call 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, a combined income of more than £100,000 is one threshold for assessment but this is not viewed in isolation, with other factors taken into consideration.

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

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

Clergy Bursaries

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

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 students – the value and duration 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 two years of a student 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 Head of Finance and Resources 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.

Application for Bursaries and Other Financial Assistance

Bursary applications are made through an online portal, access to which can be obtained from the PA to the Head of Finance and Resources. Access 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 September** for bursaries to start the following September. Applications after this date will be restricted by the availability of limited funds.
- 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 application process requires full disclosure of the family's circumstances and failure to provide relevant evidence will result in the application being refused.
- 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 the Autumn Term**.

The School is aware that family circumstances may change significantly during a student'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 and the timescales for review and confirmation of an award are managed on a case by case basis.

The Case for Assistance

The Head, together with the 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 student's suitability for the School is the first consideration in granting support.

Suitability

In assessing a student's suitability, attention will be given to the academic assessment results for each student, 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 student 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 their work and benefit from participation in the wider, extra-curricular activities on offer at the School. In normal circumstances, each student

should meet the School's normal academic requirements. Previous school reports will be consulted for evidence of good behaviour.

Financial limitations

The level of the bursary award is influenced 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 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 both parents.
- Contribution to household costs by other, wider, family members, any adults unrelated to the student 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 are unlikely to be consistent with the receipt of a bursary:
 - frequent / expensive holidays;
 - new / luxury cars;
 - paying full school fees for a sibling at another school;
 - 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 student has siblings at the school.
- Where the social needs of the student are relevant.
- Where a parent/guardian is terminally ill or is unable to secure permanent employment due to poor health.
- Where difficult family circumstances may apply.

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 required to complete an annual online update application 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, together with the Head of Finance and Resources, in making their joint recommendation to the Governors, have the discretion to recommend to the Governors the reduction or withdrawal of an award not only where a student'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.