Admissions Policy

Document control

Policy title	Admissions Policy
Policy category	Governance
Policy owner	The Head
Senior leader responsible	The Head
Effective date	1 September 2026
Review cycle	Annual
Next review	September 2027
Version	2026SeptV3
Statutory status	Required under Part 6 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
Applies to	All applicants and their parents, and all staff involved in admissions
Availability	Published on the School website and available in hard copy on request

Policy summary

This policy explains how Cokethorpe School admits pupils: our points of entry, entrance assessments, interviews and references, how we treat candidates fairly and support those with disabilities or special educational needs. It includes our arrangements for scholarships and awards, bursaries and financial information, and how we handle applicants' personal data.

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1. Why this matters

Choosing the right school is one of the most important decisions a family makes. We want every child who joins Cokethorpe to flourish - academically, personally and socially - within a community shaped by our commitment to a broad and balanced education. This is the principle that guides our Admissions process. Although we are a selective school, we believe that finding the right fit between a child and the School is more important than achieving a particular score in an assessment, as it is this partnership that enables a child to flourish. Our admissions process is therefore designed to identify children who are likely to benefit from and contribute positively to the opportunities and community life of the School. This policy explains how we work with children and families to try admit pupils fairly, consistently and lawfully, and what families can expect from the admissions process.

2. What we are seeking to achieve

The aims of this policy are to explain how we:

- identify children for whom the School is well suited, and who are likely to benefit from our educational provision while making a positive contribution to, and gaining from, the ethos and wider life of the School;
- apply our admissions arrangements fairly, consistently and transparently, and in line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010;
- support the School's charitable purposes;

3. Scope, authority and application

Cokethorpe School is a co-educational independent school for pupils aged four to eighteen. This policy is a requirement of the Independent School Standards and the policy has been authorised by the Board of Governors of Cokethorpe School.

It applies to all applicants and their parents and to all members of the teaching and support staff. It is published on the School's website and made available to prospective families.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Governors	Approval of this policy and oversight of the School's admissions arrangements.
Head	Ownership of this policy; admissions decisions, including interviews and the exercise of discretion in individual cases.
Registrar	Day-to-day management of the admissions process, registration, assessment arrangements, references, offers and applicant records.
Head of Prep School	Assessment and admission arrangements for the Prep School, including taster days.
Head of Learning Development	Advice on reasonable adjustments and on the School's ability to meet a candidate's identified needs.
Bursar (designated data protection contact)	Financial information requirements and the handling and retention of applicants' personal data.

5. Equal treatment

We welcome applications from children of all backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths and none. A diverse community enriches school life and helps prepare our pupils for the wider world.

We are committed to treating every candidate fairly and are mindful of our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 throughout the admissions process. All candidates are treated equally, irrespective of their own or their parents' race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability, property, birth or other status, while always having regard to our overriding duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.

6. Working together during the admissions process

Admission works best as an open, respectful partnership between families and the School. We expect applicants and their parents to engage with the process honestly and courteously, and to act in accordance with our ethos and values.

7. Disability and special educational needs

We welcome applications from pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and we will make reasonable adjustments so that, wherever possible, these pupils can take full part in the life of the School. We will comply with our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and have regard to relevant statutory codes of practice and guidance.

Our facilities have some limitations, and our related arrangements are set out in the School's Accessibility Plan which is available on request.

So that we can consider a child's needs properly, parents must share full written details of any known or suspected SEND at registration, or as soon as it becomes known, and in any event before accepting the offer of a place. This enables us to assess those needs and to discuss with parents the reasonable adjustments that can be made both during the admissions process and, if a place is offered, during the child's time at the School.

Where parents feel their child requires adjustments, they should raise this with us at the outset. We may request further information or assessments (e.g. an educational psychologist's report or a medical report). We will discuss with parents and, where appropriate, their child's advisers, whether the adjustments identified can reasonably be made.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which we cannot offer a place for reasons relating to a child's wellbeing, special educational needs or disability. An example would be where, despite reasonable adjustments, a child would not be able to access the education we offer, or where the wellbeing or health and safety of the child, other pupils or staff would be put at risk. Where a child's circumstances change materially between an offer and starting at the School, parents must keep us informed promptly; in the great majority of cases this will not affect the place, but in exceptional cases the School may need to reconsider an offer.

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care needs Plan (EHCP, or equivalent), whether in draft or final form, this and the supporting documentation must be shared with the School promptly. The School must be kept up to date with any relevant decisions of the Local Authority.

8. Our admissions procedure

Our admissions procedure is designed to get to know each child as an individual and to identify potential. Our aim throughout the process is for prospective pupils to feel as comfortable as possible, so that they can be themselves.
We get to know candidates through a combination of:

- meeting in person (usually an interview, for senior school pupils)
- references from their current school
- asking candidates to complete an assessment (cognitive ability tests).
- considering any disability or additional needs, where applicable.

For the main points of entry, we incorporate assessments alongside other age-appropriate activities during an Assessment Day, where children have opportunity to meet each other and staff and experience a taster of Cokethorpe. Details of Assessment Days are provided below.

No specific preparation is needed for our assessments, as the tests are designed to assess a child's underlying ability rather than the amount of preparation they have undertaken. However, we recognise that familiarity with online tests of this sort can be important. To this end, we share a practice test with families so that children can become familiar with the set-up.

Points of Entry

The main points of entry are at Reception (age 4y+), Year 7 ("First form", age 11y+), Year 9 ("Third form", age 13y+), Year 10 ("Fourth Form", age 14y+) and Year 12 ("Lower Six", age 16y+). We are happy to consider candidates for other year groups, subject to places being available. Please contact the Registrar for further details and registration dates.

Assessment Activities

- For Reception entry (age 4y+), children take part in a stay-and-play session. The aim is to explore whether the child is ready to learn in a classroom setting.
- For Senior School entry points (Years 7, 9 and 10), candidates sit online Cognitive Ability Tests, in Mathematics, English, Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning.
- For Sixth Form (Year 12, age 16y+), offers are based on GCSE performance. For A Level courses in the Sixth Form we are looking for an average of at least 5.5 points across the top eight GCSEs. For BTEC courses in the Sixth Form, we are looking for an average of at least 5 points across the top eight GCSEs, together with any subject-specific requirements.

For admission to other year groups, Prep School candidates take online assessments in Mathematics and English and meet the Head of Prep School during a Taster Day. Senior School candidates take online Cognitive Ability Tests in Mathematics, English, Verbal Reasoning and Non-Verbal Reasoning and meet with the Head.

Assessment days

We run assessment days for entry into Year 7 (First form, age 11y+) and Year 9 (Third form, age 13y+).

During the assessment day, candidates will take part in a number of activities. These include (in no particular order):

- **A one-to-one conversation/ interview** with a member of staff. The conversation is to allow us to know the child individually; candidates often talk about their interests or a hobby, particular subject or sport that they enjoy.
- **Cognitive Ability tests,** administered online in a classroom and invigilated by a member of staff.
- **Head's Activity,** a small group discussion or activity with the Head, which is also an opportunity to work with other children.
- **Other activities** such as sporting or creative activities, a group challenge and activities with Sixth Form students.
- **Lunch and refreshments!**

School Reference

The Head of a candidate's current school will be asked to provide a written reference covering all aspects of school life, including academic ability, attendance, attitude and behavior, involvement in school life, talents and interests, and any special circumstances including SEND. A reference may include test results and predicted GCSE grades. Any offer of a place is conditional on receipt of a satisfactory reference. We may also seek recommendations for scholarships and awards.

Candidate's Age

Very occasionally we may offer a place a year ahead of or behind a candidate's standard year group where, as a matter of professional judgement, we consider this to be in the best interests of the pupil and the School.

Special Circumstances and Disclosure of information

We recognise that a candidate's performance may be affected by particular circumstances. Parents are strongly encouraged to share any such circumstances with us that may be relevant. This is in order to support the child through the assessment process and also to help us to understand how a candidate's performance might be affected. Examples of such circumstances might include:

- illness at the time of assessment, or a lengthy absence from school;
- family circumstances such as a recent bereavement;
- a relevant educational history, for example education outside the British system;
- a disability or specific learning difficulty;
- English being an additional language. (Candidates for whom English is an additional language can sit adapted online assessments in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR).

In any of these cases we may request further information, such as a medical certificate, an educational psychologist's report, correspondence or samples of work from the current school, so that we can make a fair assessment.

Parents must disclose, as soon as possible, any known or suspected circumstances relating to their child's health, allergies, disabilities and emotional or learning needs. Full, accurate and timely disclosure allows us to plan the right support. A failure to disclose relevant information, or the provision of inaccurate, incomplete or misleading information, may in some cases lead to an offer being withdrawn or, after admission, to action under the Parent Contract.

Additional information

Admissions decisions are based on a holistic consideration of each applicant. Where there are more applicants than places available, the School reserves the right to consider a range of factors, including:

- the extent to which the School is able to meet the child's educational, pastoral and wider developmental needs;
- the extent to which the child is likely to benefit from, and contribute positively to, the opportunities and community life of the School;
- family connections with the School, including a sibling currently attending, a parent who is a former pupil, or a parent who is a current member of staff, where this is considered to support the child's integration into the School community.

9. Scholarships and Awards

Scholarships and Awards recognise and celebrate exceptional talent. In the Senior school, Cokethorpe offers scholarships for excellence in academic subjects, and awards for excellence in each of drama, music, DT, Art and sport. Parents are asked to indicate on the Registration Form if they wish to apply, and details are sent to all who express an interest. A scholarship or Award may be withdrawn in accordance with the terms on which it is awarded or with the Parent Contract. Families who anticipate difficulty in meeting the balance of the fees are encouraged to apply at the same time for a means-tested bursary (see below). Scholarships and Awards attract a small fee concession (approx. £200-£300) awarded annually.

10. Bursaries

The school does not have material endowments. Bursaries are funded by the School's operational budget. Availability is limited and priority is given to pupils in the Senior School. Where bursary funds are available, means-tested awards are intended to make a Cokethorpe education possible for as many families as possible who meet our entry criteria, although eligibility does not guarantee a bursary offer. Bursaries are means-tested against published criteria, require evidence of income and assets, may involve a home visit, and are reviewed annually. A bursary is normally expected to be in place throughout the pupil's time at the school but may be withdrawn in accordance with the terms on which it is awarded or with the Parent Contract.

11. Financial information

Any applicant, including those applying for financial support and overseas applicants, may at the School's discretion be asked to provide additional financial information to confirm the ability to meet the fees (or any balance payable where a scholarship or bursary is granted). We ask parents to be open with us about any concerns regarding their ability to meet their obligations under the Parent Contract.

12. Overseas applicants

Where the School admits overseas pupils, they must have the legal right to enter, live and study in the UK, and appropriate arrangements for their care in this country as set out in the Parent Contract.

13. Fluency in English

Because our teaching and school life are conducted in English, pupils need to be able to access the curriculum in English. Support in English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be arranged where appropriate and is chargeable, normally delivered by school or peripatetic staff during the school day subject to availability.

14. Religious beliefs

Cokethorpe welcomes applications from prospective pupils of all faiths and of none. While the School has a joint Roman Catholic and Church of England foundation, it does not select for entry on the basis of religious belief.

15. Terms and conditions (Parent Contract)

The terms on which the School educates each pupil are set out in the School's Parent Contract, which is made available to parents as part of the admissions process. Families should read this policy alongside the Parent Contract; where a question of interpretation arises, the Parent Contract prevails.

16. Complaints

The School's Complaints Procedure is published on the website and can be sent to prospective parents on request. As is usual for independent schools, the Complaints Procedure is not available for use by prospective parents in relation to admissions decisions.

17. Records, data protection and retention

We handle applicants' personal data in accordance with data protection law. Please see the School's Privacy Notice for details of how we collect, use and protect personal data.

We keep unsuccessful applicant data no longer than necessary, generally 12 months in accordance with our Retention of Records arrangements, retaining information for longer only where there is a lawful reason to do so.

18. Training and communication

This policy is published on the School website and is made available to prospective families. Staff involved in admissions, including those who interview candidates, invigilate assessments or handle applicant records, are briefed on this policy, on the School's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and on the confidentiality expected of them.

19. Monitoring, review and publication

The Head, supported by the Registrar, keeps the admissions arrangements under review to confirm that they are applied consistently and fairly and that they continue to meet the Independent School Standards. This policy is reviewed annually, and sooner if the law, authoritative guidance or the School's arrangements change.

20. Related School policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies and procedures

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- Learning Support Policy
- Accessibility Plan (available on request)
- Guidelines on the Storage and Retention of Records
- Parent Contract (Terms and Conditions)
- Separated Parents Policy

21. Legislation, regulation and guidance

Relevant authoritative sources include:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), Part 6
- Equality Act 2010
- EHRC Technical Guidance for Schools in England (admissions, Chapter 2)
- DfE guidance on the Independent School Standards
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force 1 September 2026), via the linked Safeguarding Policy