

Admissions Policy



TAUNTON SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Authority and Circulation

This policy has been authorised by the Governing Body of Taunton School. Its status is advisory only. It is addressed to prospective parents and pupils and to all members of the teaching and administrative staff.

Charitable Objects

The Objects of the Charity are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by the provision of a school or such other means as the Governors shall from time to time determine provided always that:

- in admitting pupils to the School, the Governors must exercise (all other things being equal) a preference in favour of sons and daughters of members of the Churches; and
- in carrying out its objects, the Charity shall uphold the founding principles of the School which are rooted in the Christian faith and recognise the particular emphasis of its Free Church foundation on the importance of personal responsibility in the quest for faith, and respect for all religious traditions.

Policy

The Aims of the policy are

1. To ensure compliance with the School's charitable purposes. Taunton School is an independent school for girls and boys from 0 - 18 with boarding facilities for pupils aged seven and over.
2. To identify and admit those who will benefit from the academic education and who will contribute to, and benefit from, the ethos and activities of our school community.

Key principles

Equal Treatment

We welcome children from many different ethnic groups, backgrounds and creeds. Human rights and freedoms are respected, but must be balanced with the lawful needs and rules of our school community and the rights and freedom of others. All candidates for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of their or their parents' race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, orientation, property, birth or other status. We expect all of our pupils to attend our church services and school assemblies, which are of a Christian nature and fundamental to our Christian ethos.

Free Churches Preference

Notwithstanding the need for equal treatment, it is a requirement of our Charitable Objects, stated above, that admissions preference shall be given to the Free Churches (this was a requirement of the Charity Commission who, when the School's constitution was updated in 2000, insisted that this preference was retained in order to balance other educational foundations such as those giving a preference to the Catholic faith).

Christian Ethos

The Christian principles of the School are also contained within the Charitable Objects. The School is registered as being a school of special religious character and all pupils are expected to attend our church services and school assemblies, which are of a Christian nature and fundamental to our Christian ethos.

Public Benefit & Provision of Financial Support

The Governors of Taunton School are committed to broadening access to the school. The School offers Scholarship entrance at 11+, 13+ and 16+ for ability and potential in academic, sport, music, art, DT and IT. In addition to the recognition associated with a scholarship offer, a award in the form of a fee remission may be offered. Our scholarship programme follows HMC guidelines. Details and deadlines are available on the school website or from the admissions office. More information can be found in our **Scholarship Policy**.

In addition, to Scholarships which are based on the merit of the candidate, the School may offer to eligible parents means-tested financial support to help with the payment of school fees. These Bursary awards may be offered in conjunction with Scholarship awards or independently. Awards may be made for the full term of the pupil's time in the School or for a defined period due to short-term financial difficulties on the part of the parent. The School requires those parents who request bursarial support to fill in a Statement of Financial Circumstances. This information is treated sensitively. It allows the School to make a judgment on what would be a fair award to parents and also creates a properly accountable system to ensure transparency both to the public and to the Trustees. Other methods may also be used, for example extending the term over which fees may be paid. Means-tested awards are subject to annual review. Please refer to the **Bursary Policy** for full details and how to apply.

Special Needs

We do not discriminate regarding entry. We welcome pupils with special educational needs, providing that our Educational Progress Staff can offer them the support that they require to be able to thrive in our educational environment. We welcome pupils who have physical disabilities provided that our site is accessible them. Additional information is available in our **Accessibility Plan and Disability Policy (WS.011)**

We advise parents of children with special educational needs or physical disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with us before the offer of a place so that we can make adequate provision for him/her. Where possible, parents should provide a copy of an Educational Psychologist's report or a medical report. We will discuss thoroughly with parents the adjustments that can reasonably be made for their child if he/she becomes a pupil at the school.

Procedures

Entry Points

The usual ages for entry are:

0+, 1+, 2+ Nursery

4+ Pre-Preparatory School
7+, 11+ Preparatory School
13+, 14+ Senior School
16+ Sixth Form

It is possible to enter the school in other year groups if places are available, although entry to Year 11 or Year 13 would only be considered in extreme circumstances.

Entry Requirements

Pre-Preparatory entry is by key skills assessment during a day spent in the department. Reports from previous schools may also be sought, if applicable.

Preparatory school candidates entering all year groups sit standard assessment papers in English, Mathematics and Non Verbal Reasoning according to their age. In general terms, results should be at or above the national averages. In certain circumstances, children with low scores may be admitted if the Learning Success department feel able to provide the necessary support. In addition, reports and references are sought from a candidate's current school. Most children spend a full day in school.

Senior School places for pupils from Taunton Preparatory School are guaranteed in the vast majority of cases. Parents will be advised at the earliest opportunity if the educational provision at the Senior School is not deemed appropriate for their child's individual needs. Candidates joining from other schools at 13+ (year 9) or 14+ (year 10) are considered individually in the light of the reference from their current Head, their most recent school reports and an informal interview with the Head. There are no formal entrance examinations.

Admission to the Sixth Form is normally conditional upon the candidate obtaining a minimum of 5 GCSE passes at grades 5 to 9, usually including English and Mathematics with higher grades in the subjects the candidate wishes to take at A level or International Baccalaureate. A reference from the candidate's current Head, most recent school reports including predicted grades and an informal interview with the Head, are also important parts of the admissions process. Formal interviews with the Deputy Head Academic or the IB Coordinator may be appropriate.

International candidates or candidates for whom English is not their first language joining Taunton Preparatory School or the Senior School in Year 9 or Year 10, must demonstrate sufficient command of English to be able to benefit socially and academically from a place at the School. They also need to be able to cope with the academic subjects that they plan to study, in English. If their English Language ability is not of a high enough standard, an offer may be made on the condition of the candidate attending a Taunton School Summer School course or the candidate may be invited to apply for a place at Taunton International Middle School or Taunton School International, depending on their age. Candidates will be required to sit assessments in English and Mathematics and if appropriate in other subject papers (maximum of three tests).

Students who are entering Sixth Form in year 12, must also demonstrate a high level of fluency in English and will be tested in 2-3 subjects depending on their subject choice for the IB Diploma or A levels.

Assessments for entry into Preparatory School or Senior School can be taken in the candidate's present school or in an agent's office provided they are conducted under examination conditions. Candidates may also be required to write a personal essay (of about one A4 page in length) in their own handwriting; guidance will be given. Placement tests for the humanities subjects involve a written essay so a student's English can be assessed by this essay. Candidates will have an informal interview

with the Head and a formal interview with the IB Coordinator or the Deputy Head Academic as appropriate. If they cannot attend an interview at the school they must attend the TSI summer school. Skype interviews are permitted in exceptional circumstances. References and recent reports from the candidate's current school are also sought before an offer is made.

Under the UKVI Tier 4 Visa System we have the responsibility to assess the student's academic ability for the course they are applying for. It is, therefore, important that good assessment takes place as we need to say in our offer letter how we assessed a student's ability.

The School is able to provide EAL support to such candidates according to their individually assessed needs.

Candidates with specific learning needs may be required, in addition to the relevant admissions process outlined above, to take NFER Nelson Non Verbal Reasoning tests together with English and Mathematics assessments set by the School. Cognitive Abilities Tests may also be used and the School is able to provide support to candidates while at the School, according to their individually assessed needs.

Taunton School International Middle School accepts international pupils from Year 4 to Year 10. English language ability is not a requirement of entry to TSIMS. Candidates will be asked to sit assessments in English and Mathematics according to age group. A written essay may also be requested. Applications are also considered on the basis of school reports and references. Conduct and motivation are generally more important than English language ability. However, as places become scarce through the academic year, English testing is used more widely to ensure students' abilities correspond to the availability of places in particular classes. A broad mix of nationalities is preferable for the success of all the students. There are a limited number of places for different age groups.

Taunton School International accepts international pupils in Year 11 for a one year GCSE course. Candidates will be asked to sit assessments in English and Mathematics and a written essay in English may also be requested. School reports and references are also requested. A broad mix of nationalities is preferable for the success of all of the students.

Reports and References

All candidates will need to provide reports and references from their current or most recent school. The Head of the candidate's current school will be asked to fill in a questionnaire or write a reference commenting on the candidate's academic ability, attitude and behaviour, involvement in the school community, talents and interests, and any special circumstances including any known child protection issues or concerns. The report may also include the results of tests taken at the school (standard assessment, SATs etc) and predicted grades at GCSE, and any significant disciplinary matters. Previous schools may also be asked to provide information about outstanding debts or in all parts of the School, this reference will be taken into account in deciding whether or not a place is offered. In the case of pupils from different education systems in other countries, this information may already be provided on a school report and is acceptable if of sufficient detail.

The School reserves the right to establish from any previous school that all outstanding fees have been paid. The Governors of Taunton School owe a duty to the school to ensure they are not taking on a risk of bad debts unnecessarily and wish to avoid the disruption to the education and welfare of a child who has to be excluded for non-payment of fees very soon after arriving at a new school.

Candidate's Age

We may offer places to pupils one year behind their standard year group, if we consider, as a matter of professional judgement based on academic criteria and maturity, that this would be in the best interests of the pupil and the school. Very occasionally we may offer places to pupils one year ahead on the same basis.

Special Circumstances

We recognise that a candidate's performance may be affected by particular circumstances, for example:

If he/she is unwell when taking the assessments or has had a lengthy absence from school.

If there is a particular family circumstance such as divorce or bereavement.

If there is a relevant educational history, for example education outside the British system or frequent changes of school.

If the candidate has a disability or specific learning difficulties.

If the candidate finds spending the day in a new environment especially stressful.

If English is not the candidate's first language.

In any of these cases, we may request further information such as a medical certificate or Educational Psychologist's report and any associated correspondence or details from the pupil's current school [including samples of work] or any family history of dyslexia, as we consider necessary to make a fair assessment.

Disclosures

Parents must as soon as possible disclose any known or suspected circumstances relating to their child's social, emotional and mental health, development, behaviour, allergies, disabilities or learning difficulties. Any child protection issues or reports should also be fully disclosed. Should an undisclosed condition or issue subsequently become apparent, and the school cannot fully meet the needs of the pupil, or current pupils may be at risk as a result, parents may be required to withdraw the child from school.

Over-subscription

Some year groups in the school may be oversubscribed. If we have to decide between two or more candidates of equal academic ability who meet our admission requirements after all appropriate allowances and special consideration has been given, we may give preference to:

- A child who already has a sibling in the school or whose mother or father was a former pupil here.
- A child with a particular skill, talent or aptitude.
- A child whose parents will pay full fees.
- A full boarder.
- A child who has been registered for a considerable period of time.
- A child whose parents are members of a free church.

This list is not in order of priority.