

ADMISSIONS POLICY 2025 – 2026

THIS POLICY INCLUDES EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Policy Author:	Registrar – Mrs Sam Curling
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Governor sign – off		
Governor: Nick Creed	Date:	To be signed off

I. Introduction

Applications for admission

Applications for admission to Pennthorpe can be made at any time. However, there are limits upon numbers under the school's policy on class sizes, which depend upon the age group and the required ratios of staff to pupils. In the Early Years, numbers are limited due to room sizes and staff ratios. Therefore, in any age group, those who apply and satisfy the admissions criteria will be offered places on a “first come, first served” basis until the maximum class size has been reached. Pupils are encouraged to start at the beginning of a term, although if circumstances allow a mid-term start date can be arranged.

Offers

Offers of admission to Pennthorpe are made individually and at the discretion of the Head, who will consider not only the criteria noted below but also other matters that may be relevant in any individual's case. Offers of admission to the Early Years are made individually and at the discretion of the Head.

Equal Treatment

The Pennthorpe community welcomes 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 freedoms of others. All candidates for admission will be treated equally, irrespective of their, or their parents,' race, colour, language, gender, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, orientation, property, birth or other status. We expect all Pennthorpe pupils to attend School assemblies.

Disability

Pennthorpe will do all that is reasonable to ensure that the school's culture, policies and procedures are made accessible to children with disabilities. At present, Pennthorpe's facilities for children with disabilities are limited, however, we will do all we can to accommodate a child's needs. When a disability or special educational need is made known to us, we will consult with parents and make reasonable adjustments to our admission procedures and arrangements to enable a child, if he/she is able, to satisfy our admission requirements. In the Early Years, we adhere to the SEN code of practice.

If a pupil is disabled, we have a series of duties in respect to them. We will:

- Not discriminate against the pupil directly, indirectly or in relation to a consequence arising from the pupil's disability.
- Not victimise or harass the disabled pupil.
- Make reasonable adjustments to prevent the disabled pupil from being put at a substantial disadvantage. Such adjustments may include providing specific equipment or extra staff assistance and making changes to timetables to ensure all teaching rooms are accessible.

Educational Adjustments

In line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, we seek to ensure that those with special educational needs are not treated less favourably or put at a substantial disadvantage in admission matters. The school will take all reasonable measures to support a child and will make adjustments to ensure accessibility to the curriculum where required. Pennthorpe does not have the expertise on the staff team to provide for the needs of pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. However, the School does have a Learning Support Department who can work in conjunction with the teaching staff and the parents to support, in certain cases, a range of mild difficulties.

Pennthorpe aims to give support and understanding to any pupil who wishes to take, or has taken, the steps to present themselves in a gender different to the gender assigned to them at birth. Pennthorpe is committed to being fair and inclusive and will not discriminate against a pupil who is undergoing, or who has undergone, gender reassignment. Support will be given to those undergoing gender reassignment and will be agreed based on the individual needs of the pupil involved. Appropriate support will therefore vary on a case-by-case basis.

Additional support with specialist staff can also be arranged, at the parents' expense, in order for a child to maximise their potential or fully access the curriculum.

2. Procedures

Entry points

The usual entry points are at Honey Pot (EYFS) (2+), Reception EYFS (Pre-Prep) and Year 3 (Prep). Children may be accepted at non-standard entry points if places are available, subject to our entry requirements and with communication to the Local Authority (West Sussex County Council), within five days of entry on the admission register.

Admissions Procedures

These procedures apply for points of entry as shown below:

Nurseries: Honey Pot and Beehive (2, 3 and 4 years)

Children will be admitted in registration order first come, first served. Siblings of children already attending Pennthorpe will be given priority. Entry is non-selective.

In the weeks prior to entry, parents and pupils will be invited to join a 'stay and play' session in the Honey Pot and Beehive to meet the teachers, whilst familiarising themselves with the environment at Pennthorpe.

Honey Pot and Beehive have limited spaces, based on the staff ratios and room size. Children are encouraged to attend at least 3 sessions per week in Honey Pot and 5 in Beehive. Following confirmation of a place and agreement of a start date, the Registrar will contact the parents of the child to confirm sessions.

Reception: (4 to 5 years)

Entry into Reception (age 4+), is automatic for those moving up from the Beehive unless specific learning needs have been identified that cannot be met at Pennthorpe. Spare places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Children joining Reception who have not attended our nurseries are invited to attend a taster session prior to joining Pennthorpe, during which time their needs can be assessed. Places will be offered first come, first served at this stage. Where places are not immediately offered, a second taster session may be arranged, or further information from parents sought.

Pre-Prep and Prep School: (5 to 13 years)

Entry into Years 1-8 is automatic for those moving up from the year below. Any remaining places are then allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Entry to Pennthorpe remains largely unselective throughout the school. A combination of the following assessments and factors will be applied (depending on the child's age) to ensure Pennthorpe may be able to meet the child's needs:

- An assessment of their ability in core subjects: English, Mathematics, Spelling and Reading
- A CAT4 Assessment to assess their cognitive ability
- Feedback from staff on taster days;
- Confidential reports may be required from their previous school;
- Disability assessments (if applicable);
- The presence of a sibling already at Pennthorpe or a previous family connection;
- Positive, open conversations with parents;
- The family indicates a willing commitment to continue with their child's education all the way through Pennthorpe.

Children for entry to Year 1 and 2 must spend a taster day at the school. During this time at school, an assessment will be made of the prospective candidates' personal and social development and behaviour, as well as their progress to date in literacy and numeracy to ensure a smooth transition into these year groups.

Children for entry to Year 3 – Year 8 must spend a taster day and an assessment day at the school. During this time at school, an assessment will be made of the prospective candidates' personal and social development and behaviour and children will complete some informal assessments, details of which can be found below.

Taster sessions (in EYFS) and days (in Reception – Year 8) give us the opportunity to observe the pupil in the classroom setting (and administer entry tests for school age children). Importantly, these also give the pupil an opportunity to have a brief experience of the school, to meet his or her future classmates, and so to allay some of the anxieties that often accompany a move to a new school. A taster session/day incurs no obligation on either side, although it does require each child to be registered with the school.

Entry Assessments

School age children will complete assessments on their taster day, which will involve a review of the pupil's ability. These assessments are not entrance exams but allow the school to assess where the pupil will fit in the existing cohort.

These are designed to assess a pupil's literacy and numeracy skills, along with his or her academic potential. This is within the context of the Pennthorpe curriculum and, for older children, of the entrance examination requirements of the senior independent schools to which most of our pupils transfer. None of the tests administered require any special preparation.

Years 1-2

During their taster day, some informal testing will take place in Literacy and Numeracy. Each child will also be observed at work and at play.

Years 3-8

In years 3-8 pupils will undertake testing in a combination of the following areas; reading, writing, spelling, CAT4, English and Mathematics, to gauge how they will fit academically in the year group they are joining. Which assessments a child will sit will be determined by observations during their taster day, staff feedback and previous school reports.

Other Entry Requirements

The school sets other entry requirements in certain core/option subjects as appropriate.

Character Reference

The Head of the candidate's current school may be asked to provide a written reference as to the candidate's academic ability, attitude and behaviour, involvement in the school community, talents and interest, and any other special circumstances such as special education needs, or a disability. The reference may also include the results of tests taken at the school (such as NFER or SATs).

Candidate's Age

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

Special Circumstances

The school recognises that a candidate's performance may be affected by circumstances, for example:

- If he/she is unwell when taking tests or has had a lengthy absence from his/her school.
- If there are family circumstances like a recent bereavement.

- If there is a relevant educational history, for example education outside the British system.
- If the candidate has a disability or specific learning difficulties.
- If English is not the candidate's first language.

In any of these cases, the school 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 is considered necessary to make a fair assessment.

Awarding of Places

Places will be awarded following the criteria set out below:

- All children will need to perform to the required standard in the assessments and observations. Ultimately it is at the Head's discretion.
- Siblings of children already at Pennthorpe will be given priority in the order in which their registration forms and registration fees were received.
- Children without siblings will be awarded the remaining places in the order in which their completed registration forms and registration fees were received if they meet the remaining criteria.
- All enquiring families will be kept informed of the availability of places. Where a waiting list situation arises i.e., where the school anticipates all places will be taken up between transitioning children, those who have secured their place with a deposit as well as those who are already registered, parents will be informed at the time of their initial enquiry. They will be placed on a waiting list and will be informed when/if a place becomes available.
- A child's future place may be secured by a deposit, in which case a place will be held until such a time as the mutually agreed start date. Where a future place has been secured by a deposit, a waiting list situation may arise, even if the maximum number of children attending has not been reached, in anticipation of the future place being filled.

Disclosures

Parents must, as soon as possible, disclose any known or suspected circumstances relating to their child's health, allergies, disabilities or learning difficulties.

Failure to disclose this information could result in the offer of a place being withdrawn.

Additional Factors

If a year group is oversubscribed and we must decide between two or more candidates 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 sibling or parent is a former pupil at Pennthorpe.
- A child whose parent is a current member of our staff.
- A child with a particular skill, talent or aptitude seeking entry to Pennthorpe.

- Those parents whose child will progress from the Honey Pot and Beehive to the Reception class at the school.

3. Fee Assistance

The Head and Governors are committed to ensuring, through the provision of means-tested bursary assistance, that the education offered to the children of fee-paying parents is also made available to some children whose parents would not otherwise be able to send their children to Pennthorpe.

Entrance Bursaries

These may be offered to children on joining Pennthorpe for entry at Year 3 (7+) or above.

Bursaries are subject to annual means test review by the Bursar (including a home visit or Teams/Zoom call and financial background checks) and are conditional upon continued satisfactory conduct. The school uses Bursary Administration Limited to process its background checks.

Parents of current Pennthorpe pupils may also apply for a temporary hardship award if, unavoidably, they find themselves in difficulties with meeting the fees. Such awards are also means tested and subject to annual review as above. Further details can be sought from the Bursar and are available in the school's Means Tested Bursary Policy.

Sibling Discounts

Sibling discounts are available for families with three or four children. A discount of 10% will be offered for the third child and 20% for a fourth child. They are not means-tested. However, those parents whose financial situation is such that they are willing to forego a sibling discount will be invited to have the discount funds placed into a special Bursary Fund, the sole purpose of which will be to provide free places at Pennthorpe for children from the least well-off families.

No discount is offered for the second child.