Thistle Hill Academy Admissions Policy 2027-28

The Stour Academy Trust has adopted the following arrangements with respect to the admission of pupils to the school.

Pupils will be admitted to the Reception Year before their fifth birthday, usually entering at the start of the academic year.

The Published Admissions Number to Reception Year in September 2027 is 60.

Where the school is undersubscribed all applicants will be offered a place.

Before the application of oversubscription criteria, children with a statement of special educational need or Education, Health and Care Plan which names the school will be admitted. As a result of this, the published admissions number will be reduced accordingly.

Where applications for admission exceed the number of places available, the following criteria will be applied, in the order set out below, to decide which children to admit.

Oversubscription criteria

1. Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children:

A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school.

A previously looked after child means such children who were adopted (or subject to child arrangements orders or special guardianship orders) immediately following having been looked after and those children who appear to the admission authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

2. Sibling / Current Family Association

A brother or sister attending Thistle Hill Academy; in this context brother or sister means children who live as brother or sister in the same house, including natural brothers or sisters, adopted siblings, stepbrothers or sisters and foster brothers or sisters. The sibling link is maintained as long as the family live at the same address as when the first child applied, or has moved closer to the school than when the first child was offered a place, or has moved to an address that is less than 2 miles from the school using the distance measured by the method outlined in the distance/nearness of children's home to school criterion.

3. Medical / Health and Special Access Reasons

Medical, health, social and special access reasons will be applied in accordance with the school's legal obligations, in particular those under The Equality Act 2010. Priority will be given to those children whose mental or physical impairment means they have a demonstrable and significant need to attend Thistle Hill Academy. Equally this priority will apply to children whose parents'/guardians', physical or mental health or social needs means that they have a demonstrable and significant need to attend Thistle Hill Academy. Such claims will need to be supported by written evidence from a suitably qualified medical or other practitioner who can demonstrate a special connection between these needs and the school.

4. Children of staff at the school

Children of staff in either or both of the following circumstances: a) where the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post at the school for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

This priority will be applied to all staff at the school.

5. Distance / Nearness of children's home to the school

We use the distance between the child's permanent home address (defined in KCC's annual admissions prospectus) and the school, measured in a straight line using the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) address point. Distances are measured from a point defined as within the child's home to a point defined as within the school as specified by NLPG. The same address point on the school site is used for everybody. When we apply the distance criterion for the school, these straight-line measurements are used to determine how close each applicant's address is to the school. Where applications are made from properties or abodes that are not registered to the NLPG, including new build properties, KCC may be required to use planning sites or other relevant co-ordinates. In exceptional circumstances where alternative co-ordinates are not available, measurements will be determined by a Senior Admissions Officer and confirmed by Head of Service. Where partners live apart but share responsibility for the child, and the child lives at two different addresses during the week, we will regard the home address as the one at which the child sleeps for the majority of weekdays. A block of flats has a single address point reference, so applicants living in the same block will be regarded as living the same distance away from the academy. In the unlikely event that two or more children live in the same block and in all other ways have equal eligibility for the last available place at the academy, the names will be allocated a number and drawn randomly, this must be supervised by someone independent of the academy, to decide which child should be given the place.

How to apply

Applications for entrance should be made through Kent Primary Admissions Scheme, if applicants live outside the area at the time of application, these should be made through their home local authority. You will be required to complete the Reception Common Application Form (RCAF) online through the KCC website www.kent.gov.uk/ola National closing date for applications is 15 January and National offer days are 16 April. (These may be amended by KCC). Late applications will be placed on a waiting list and places allocated based on the above criteria.

Appeals

Parents have the right to appeal against any refusal to admit their child. Appeals should be directed to an Appeals Committee established within the terms of the Education Act 1996. Details of the appeals procedure can be obtained from the clerk to the Board of Directors of The Stour Academy Trust.

The Appeals Committee will notify the Appellant of the outcome:

- If your child is due to start primary, infant or junior school in 2027 you can appeal between (dates to be confirmed*) to guarantee that your appeal will be heard by (date to be confirmed*). For applications made in the normal admission round, appeals must be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals. For late applications, appeals should be heard within 40 school days from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within 21 school days of the appeals being lodged.
- The Academy will acknowledge an appeal within seven working days of it being lodged.
- Appeals relating to other admissions can be made at any time.
- *Please see the appeal dates on KCC Admissions

Applying for a deferred entry to school:

Parents offered a place for their child have a right to defer entry, or to take a place up part-time, until the start of the term beginning immediately after their child has reached compulsory school age. However, places cannot be deferred until the next academic year.

While most parents are happy for their child to start school in the September following their fourth birthday, some parents will have concerns about whether their child will be ready for school at this point and will consider delaying their entry until compulsory school age.

Whilst there are circumstances in which some summer born children will benefit from a delay, the majority will thrive in reception aged four. We do not believe it should become the norm for summer born children to begin reception at the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

The government agrees that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate, and that they should only be educated outside their normal age group in very limited circumstances.

If a parent of a summer born child makes a request for their summer born children to be admitted to reception rather than year one at the age of five, the Academy is responsible for making the decision about whether the child should be admitted out of their normal age group. This will require the Academy to take account of the child's individual needs and abilities and to consider whether these can best be met in reception or year one.

If you meet the criteria, you qualify for an interview with the Headteacher. Parents have to attend the school with their child and put forward their case. The Headteacher's decision is final.

Deferred applications cannot be made online and have to be made on paper. They are however not guaranteed a place following interview. Applications should be made through KCC following the usual procedure, KCC may not allocate the school which has given assurance for deferred entry.

Parents whose request for delayed entry is refused have no statutory right to appeal this decision.

Admission of children outside their normal age group

Parents may request that their child is admitted to a year group outside their normal age range, for instance where the child is gifted or talented or where a child has suffered from particular social or medical issues impacting on his or her schooling.

All such requests will be considered on their merits and either agreed or refused, on that basis. If a request is refused, the child will still be considered for admission to their normal age group.

The process for requesting such an admission is as follows:

With the application, parents should request that the child is admitted to another year group (state which one), and the reasons for that request. Parents will submit any evidence in support of their case with the application, for instance from a medical practitioner, Headteacher etc.

Some of the evidence a parent might submit could include:

- whether the child is 'summer born' and is seeking admission to a year group other than the Reception Year (or is seeking admission to the Reception Year rather than Year 1);
- information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
- where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional;
- whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and
- whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely.

The academy will consider each case on its merits, taking into account the individual circumstances of the request and the child's best interests. We will also ensure the parent is aware of whether the request for admission out of age group has been agreed before final offers are made, and the reason for any refusal. Requests for admission out of the normal year group will be considered alongside other applications made at the same time. An application

from a child who would 'normally' be a Year 1 child for a Reception Year place will be considered alongside applications for the Reception Year.

Right to Withdraw a Place:

After a place has been offered, Thistle Hill Academy reserves the right to withdraw the place in the following circumstances:

- When a parent has failed to respond to an offer within a reasonable time
- When a parent has failed to notify the school of important changes to the application information
- The admission authority offered the place on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application from a parent

Waiting Lists:

Parents of children who have not been offered a place at the school may ask for their child's name to be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list, which will be maintained until 31 July 2028, will be operated using the same admissions criteria listed above. Placing a child's name on the waiting list does not guarantee that a place will become available. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place. It is possible that when a child is directed under the Local Authority's fair access protocol they will take precedence over those children already on the list. Waiting lists will be re-ordered in accordance with the oversubscription criteria whenever a child joins or leaves the waiting list.

In-Year (Casual) Admissions

Applications for a place at the academy should be made via the school office at The Stour Academy Trust c/o Thistle Hill Academy, Aspen Drive, Minster-on-Sea, Kent, ME12 3UD Telephone 01795 899119 where you will be sent an application form. This form must be returned to the above address who will offer a place, if one is available and the child meets the criteria for admission. If a place cannot be offered, parents will be offered the opportunity of placing their child's name on a waiting list. This does not prevent parents from exercising their right to appeal against the decision not to offer a place.