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## FOUNDATION STAGE ADMISSIONS POLICY

### 1. Introduction

The Topsham School has a Foundation Stage Unit of 26FTE places (equivalent to 52 part time sessions) open to 3-5 year old (known as Little Acorns) and 30 full time places for children of school age. The admissions policy for statutory school aged children is found within the whole school admissions policy and all applications for a main school place are made to the Local Authority. This policy covers the admissions arrangements for the pre-school children only (Little Acorns).

### 2. Applications for places

All applicants must complete the application form, which can be found online or obtained from the school office. This form must be returned to school as follows to be timed with one of the 6 admission points. We admit children into the Nursery (Little Acorns) six times during the year. This enables the school to ensure our carefully thought out induction programme takes place and enables children to make a happy and successful start. Admission at other times will only be considered for children who have moved into the area or who special circumstances such as being in the Care of the Local Authority.

For child to enter into the FSU	Application letter to be submitted by
	<b>Ideally all applications should be submitted in the term before starting. The latest date is shown below, please be aware that allocations are made on a first come first served basis.</b>
Autumn term 1 <sup>st</sup> half (September)	Last day of the May half term
Autumn term 2 <sup>nd</sup> half (October)	31 <sup>st</sup> August
Spring term 1 <sup>st</sup> half (January)	Last day of the October half term
Spring term 2 <sup>nd</sup> half (February)	End of the Autumn Term
Summer term 1 <sup>st</sup> half (April)	Last day of February half term
Summer term 2 <sup>nd</sup> half (May)	End of Spring Term

Any sessions offered, including purchased sessions, will be guaranteed for the duration of the child's time in the nursery providing the parent completes and returns the termly contract. If the nursery is not full, we will always try to meet parents' needs.

*Note: only one contract is issued for the duration of the child's time in the Nursery Unit.*

### **3. Allocating places**

Parents will be advised of a place in Little Acorns by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in the half term before they are due to start.

Decisions about the allocation of places/sessions will be made based on the following criteria:

- If the school receives either less or the same number of applications for the places available, these places can be offered to all on the waiting list.
- If the school receives more applications than are places, the school will offer places to children based on the current Devon County Council over-subscription criteria, which are as follows and can also be found in the *Stepping Out* booklet.
  1. children in public care
  2. children with Special Educational Needs
  3. children living in the schools designated area with a sibling at the school
  4. other children living in the designated area
  5. children living outside the designated area with a sibling at the school
  6. other children living outside the schools designated area
- If it is necessary to distinguish between children in a particular category, priority will be determined on the basis of distance between home and school as a direct line from the entrance of the property to the nearest available official entrance to the school (i.e. the shorter the distance, the higher the priority).
- The school may, in exceptional circumstances e.g. for children in care or at risk, offer a child a full time place, if it is felt that the child would benefit. In these cases the school would liaise closely with social services.

In the event of over subscription for places/sessions the Admissions Panel will meet to consider all applications. The Admissions Panel is to be made up of up to 3 people comprising of the Headteacher and/or Deputy Head, a member of the administration team, a School Governor, Foundation Stage teacher and, if appropriate, local Health Visitor.

*Note: the panel does not need to meet if the over-subscription criteria can be applied correctly. In which case no more than two people (e.g. HT/DeputyHT and Admin) will confirm the places allocated.*

### **4. How will parents be advised of a place?**

All parents being offered a place at the FSU will be advised in writing within 3 weeks of the Admissions panel. The letter will include the child's details, details of the sessions being offered, when the place will become available and who to contact in case of any queries.

### **5. How will parents be advised of not having a place?**

If the school has to refuse places, after having applied the oversubscription criteria, a letter would be sent to parents advising them of the refusal. Appeals against decisions will be dealt with by the Governing body and should be addressed to the Chair of Governors at the school within two weeks.

### **6. Entitlement**

Each child will be entitled to 5 sessions of 3 hours (15 hours in total) funded sessions. Allocation of sessions will depend on the overall subscription and whether the school can

respond to individual requests. Parents can buy sessions if they are using all/part of funded sessions elsewhere or to add to funded sessions up to 32.5 hours a week including 3 O'clock club.

For some children, it may be appropriate to arrange a gradual integration, which may involve attendance for fewer sessions initially. Any hours not taken up can be allocated to another child on a term-by-term basis only.

Funded places cannot be claimed in sessions less than 1.5 hours.

## **7. Charges**

Governors have determined that blocks of 3 hourly sessions may be purchased for £12. Sessions at the '3 O'clock Club' may be purchased at £2 per session. Governors will review these charges annually (April committee meeting).

## **8. Places/Sessions for Rising 3s**

Parents whose Nursery funding has not yet started will be able to purchase sessions in Little Acorns, if there are spaces on a term-by-term basis. However, these sessions are not guaranteed beyond the termly contract. Once Nursery funding starts, the children would be allocated places along with the other new starters.<sup>90</sup> Changing session requirements mid-term

It is not best practice to make changes to Nursery numbers mid-way through a term as it is not in the interest of the new children, the existing children within the Unit, or indeed the staff, to have changes in their routines and planning. We would advise that changes are made at the end of a term in readiness for the following term. However, if it is essential that changes are made mid-term parents are asked to put their request in writing. The school will respond to the request within 5 working days.

## **10. Requests for additional time under exceptional circumstances**

Requests for one off additional hours under exceptional circumstances would need to be considered individually by the Head teacher in consultation with the Chair of the Governing Body and/or members of the Governing Body, dependant on the circumstances. Exceptional circumstances would include: critical illness of a parent or sibling; bereavement of a parent; a child moving into the area; and/or some other extenuating circumstance, which would be identified by a recognised professional.

## **11. Transition to school**

It needs to be made clear that once the child has a place at the FSU, this does not ensure a place at the school. All children attending the FSU will need to apply for a full time place in the school using the usual primary admissions policy. Children at the FSU have no higher priority for admission to the school than any other applicant.

Devon operates a 1 point entry into school (September). However, parents can legally defer entry into school until the term following or before the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. In some cases this may mean that some parents want their child to stay in the FSU for longer. To ensure continuity and stability for the children and the FSU, staff within the FSU will endeavour to establish transition arrangements early on.

## **12. Admission and Induction arrangements**

**We want to ensure all children get off to a good start in our Nursery and therefore the following is part of our induction process;**

- All children who starting at one of our six admission points are offered a home visit, enabling staff to get to know the children in their own environment.
- Parents are invited to attend a 'Welcome session' without their child, usually early evening to find out admission and starting arrangements.
- Children are invited to stay and play sessions, these usually take place in the half term before a child's sessions are due to commence, parents are welcome to stay with their child for some or all of these sessions.

We request that parents attend either the welcome meeting or a home visit prior to the child starting, ideally both.

That all paperwork is returned to the school office prior to starting, including copies of birth certificates.