



EDINBURGH  
STEINER  
SCHOOL

## Offers of a place: How does the School decide?

Edinburgh Steiner School is a selective independent school. However, unlike almost every other independent school in Scotland we do not select our pupils on the basis of academic ability. Selecting by ability is relatively straightforward and, as such, transparent: a test is devised based on knowledge or skills and applicants either pass or fail. Our selection criteria are different: we select applicants based on an impression not only of the 'whole' child (which is of course difficult to define) but also on the child in the *context* of a particular Class group, in relation to the curriculum, and in the context of the resources currently available to the School.

The admissions process is explained in the Admissions Policy and Procedure and begins with a written application. If the School is in a position to offer a place, an interview is offered, usually conducted by two teachers (one of whom is normally the prospective 'Class Teacher' or 'Class Guardian' depending on the age of the applicant). Following the interview, the application will be discussed in detail and a decision is normally made within three weeks, often sooner.

The decision as to whether or not to accept an applicant is the responsibility of the College of Teachers, a democratic forum made up of a significant proportion of the longer-serving members of staff who are responsible for educational direction, staffing and admissions.

While College is normally minded to accept the recommendation of the teachers who conducted the interview (and will normally pay particular attention to the wishes of the Class Teacher or Class Guardian) it is not unknown for College to accept a pupil in spite of the reservations of the interview panel, or to turn an application down against the recommendation of the interview panel.

As a small school, we have a limited number of places in each year group (or 'Class'), and there are a number of factors which determine whether or not a Class is 'full'—it isn't just a question of numbers. Nevertheless, the age of a child isn't the only

criterion when considering which Class might be the most suitable: while a child might be 'age' for Class 4, the College of Teachers might, on balance, conclude that they are more likely to thrive in Class 3, or Class 5.

In the absence of a pass/fail entrance exam, it can sometimes feel as if our admissions process is opaque and there are times when intuition certainly plays a part. The dilemma we face is that in order to make the right decision, we need to get to know the family and the child. This requires a relationship to be built: informal initial conversations are common; an in-depth interview is essential; background research and consultations might be required between the members of the interview panel and specialist members of staff throughout the school. Having established this relationship, it is extremely hard to turn around to an applicant and their family and say 'no.'

While the majority of applicants to Edinburgh Steiner School are accepted, regrettably, from time to time, we do have to say 'no,' sometimes on the strength of the application form alone, and we are painfully aware of the effect that this can have on the applicant and their family.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that any decision not to offer a place should never be regarded as a reflection on the character of the applicant: they will not have 'failed'; instead, we will have concluded (reluctantly in most cases) that, for whatever reason, we are unable to meet their needs at this time.

Regrettably, following professional advice, we are unable to offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants. It is, however, possible to reapply to Edinburgh Steiner School. Reapplications (usually after a gap of at least six months) will be considered fairly and sincerely, although, as with all applications, an interview or place cannot be guaranteed.