

Enrolment Policy for Families

Values

- The Small School fosters the wellbeing and safety of children and staff.
- Commitment to relationship building within the school community and the community generally is highly valued at The Small School.
- All adults at The Small School model respectful relationships and conflict resolution practices.
- The Small School deeply values procedural fairness as a fundamental right in a democratic society.

Purpose

- To provide information to parents and carers who are considering enrolling their child at The Small School.
- To make explicit the criteria on which offers of enrolments are determined with the aim of ensuring a good match between parents/carers, students and the school.
- To conduct enrolments in a manner which complies with all state and Commonwealth laws relating to privacy, immunisation, discrimination and equal opportunity.

Introduction

The Small School (TSS) offers a democratic and family-centred learning environment for children from Kindergarten to Year 7.

TSS has a carefully considered educational approach and six guiding principles, which include:

1. Relationships with each other and with the environment are of paramount importance.
2. Learning is theme-based (integrated and emergent curriculum) and real-world focused (experiential).
3. Children thrive when they have some say in how they spend their day and what they learn (Democratic Education).
4. Families are part of the school (family-centred education).
5. We learn cooperatively not competitively (non-competitive environment).
6. Playing is learning too (free play and play-based teaching and learning).

The Small School's guiding principles and broader educational philosophy need to be understood and carefully read by parents and carers so that they can gauge if the school represents a good match for themselves and their child. This is the foremost consideration in the enrolment process. We believe when families appreciate and support these principles that the foundation is created for a good match between a child/family and our school.

Enrolment Process

Families are invited to make enquiries about enrolling at the school at any time. Interested parents are asked to engage with the following enrolment process:

1. **Read the educational philosophy and guiding principles** on our website to ensure that TSS provides an approach that aligns with your family and child/ren's needs. You are invited to call or email our office on (02) 6672 1018 to ask any initial questions.
2. **Fill in and return the online Expression of Interest (EOI) Form.** This is a simple form that lets us know you are interested in a place and provides your contact details so we can be in touch with you.
3. **We will contact you to confirm receipt of your EOI** and discuss any specific questions. If needed, we can schedule a phone call with the Principal. If you haven't had confirmation from us that your EOI has been received, please check your spam folder.
4. **Visit the school for a tour and information session** with the Principal. These are scheduled periodically through the year or can be made by arrangement with the Principal.
5. **Complete an Enrolment Application Form** and return to the school. The Enrolment Application Form provides important information about your child. It allows us to exercise our duty of care and to support your child, emotionally, physically and socially in their education. Accurate completion of the Enrolment Application Form is required.
6. **Participate in an Enrolment Interview.** After receiving your Enrolment Application form, we will call you to arrange an enrolment interview. This is usually done with the relevant teacher and/or the Principal with the parents and child/ren, if appropriate.
7. **An offer of enrolment will be made** if it is agreed that TSS is likely to be a good fit for your child or, if no enrolments are available, the school will place your child on our waitlist. There are no fees to undertake the enrolment process or to go on our wait list. If you are offered an enrolment, an enrolment deposit and an enrolment bond will be payable (see *TSS School Fees Policy*) within 7 days to secure the offer.

Factors Determining an Offer of Enrolment

All schools have a selection of factors that help them determine enrolment. At TSS children are not selected for enrolment based on their ability or achievement. The Principal has the discretion to select families to progress in the enrolment process based on potential places in Year levels and the child and family's readiness to start school.

The Principal and teaching staff consider several factors when assessing an enrolment application including:

- Age of the child. A child can be enrolled in school if they turn 5 years of age on or before 31 July in that school year. Preference may be given to a child beginning in Kindergarten who is already 5 years old.
- Availability of a place in the school, which may include the Year Level that aligns with the child's learning progress and readiness.
- Siblings enrolled at the school / children of TSS staff and Board Members.
- Parents (and children) strongly identify with the learning philosophy, day to day functioning and culture of TSS as a democratic school. This includes consideration of whether the child's learning style matches the educational approach of the school.
- The child is demonstrably socially and emotionally ready for school, with a capacity and potential to integrate and participate in a democratic learning program and culture. This may include (but is not limited to) a developmentally appropriate consideration of the child's communication, coping and competency to confront challenges, independence, focus and concentration. This also includes consideration of how the family and school can collaborate to support the child's transition and ongoing engagement.
- Parents are willing to proactively communicate and engage (with support if needed) in an ongoing collaborative partnership with TSS staff to ensure the best engagement and learning outcomes for the child.
- Parents are willing and able to participate in the school community, including regular volunteering and in-school engagement.
- The school may also consider whether families reside or intend to reside within reasonable driving distance of TSS for reasons of environmental and personal sustainability and to ensure the school can serve local families.

Note: An interview and completed EOI do not guarantee a place at the school, even if there are classroom places available. In most years we have more applications for places than we can accommodate.

Students with disabilities and impairments will be enrolled along with all other eligible children. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Standards)* apply to a school's dealings with all students with disabilities and also prospective students with disabilities. These guidelines provide a structure to help schools comply with the *Standards* in the context of the enrolment process for students with a disability as defined under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

When considering an application for enrolment for a student with a disability, a determination should be made regarding the school's capacity to address the student's individual needs. If the school cannot meet the student's needs, the school will work through an individual planning process to identify whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to facilitate the student's access to and participation in the educational opportunities provided by the school.

Under the *Standards*, The Small School has three main types of obligations, including:

- **Consultation** with the family (and medical professionals where necessary and with permission) to understand the impact of a student's disability and to determine whether any adjustments or changes are needed to assist the student.
- **Making reasonable adjustments** to the school, drawing upon additional resources to improve accessibility of the school if required.
- **Eliminate discrimination** - Harassment and victimisation of students with disability is unlawful and The Small School must take all reasonable steps to prevent this from happening.

Other Enrolment Guidelines

As an independent school, TSS relies on a combination of government funding and tuition fees paid by parents or carers in order to cover its operating expenses. Our current School Fees Policy does not include discounts for two children enrolled from a single family or for personal financial hardship. However, a discount will be considered for the third child enrolled from a single family.

Every effort will be made by the school administration to assist any accepted enrolled student to maintain their enrolment. It is part of the Principal's role to facilitate regular communication with parents and carers about any issues which may impact a student's continued enrolment. However, it is possible that a student's enrolment may be cancelled due to the non-payment of school fees, as a result of the implementation of the school's Behavior Management Policy, or with the agreement of the parents. Please see the *School Fees Policy* for more information.

The Enrolment Application Form must be completed in full including the immunisation status of your child. It is a legal requirement that a parent/guardian declare their child's immunisation status on enrolment and we ask families to do this by providing an immunisation history statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

The final decision regarding acceptance / non-acceptance of each enrolment application is with the Principal. Parents may refer to the school's *Raising a Concerns or Complaint Policy* should they choose to appeal the decision.

Continuing enrolment is subject to the student's and family's adherence to all of The Small School's Policies, but in particular the *Behaviour Management Policy*, *Code of Conduct Policy* and the *Transport Policy*.

Related Documentation

- Expression of Interest Form
- Enrolment Application Form.

Related Processes and Policies

- School Fees Policy
- Raising a Concern or Complaint Policy
- Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure
- Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure
- Transport Policy and Procedure.