

2019-2020 Admissions Policy

Last updated 05/4/2018

Mission

West Sound Academy is a college preparatory school that graduates accomplished, creative, intellectually curious young adults prepared to contribute responsibly to the world.

It is the mission of the Admissions department to recruit, inform and admit new, qualified students to West Sound Academy in a professional and forthright manner, while maintaining the integrity of the school, the students and their families.

We aim to ensure that prospective families understand the school's mission, philosophy, and community. We also strive to give them a good initial understanding of the IB Programme.

Admissions decisions are made by the Admissions Committee which includes the Head of School, Director of Admissions, Director of Studies, and two or three faculty members.

WSA enrolls students through an admissions process described below. Students are offered admission if they are identified as a "mission-appropriate" student. Mission-appropriate students usually demonstrate the qualities of the Learner Profile and:

- The desire to learn and be surrounded by peers who want to learn;
- Have demonstrated the ability to meet the academic skills sets required for success;
- Have demonstrated the ability to meet the good citizenship qualities required for success;
- Have the intention of applying to college;
- Do not negatively impact the learning of peers.

Special Needs/Accommodations

Special Needs/Accommodations are disclosed at the time of application. It is the parent's responsibility to act in advance concerning a student's access needs and/or learning support needs, and to be cooperative concerning professional documentation. Admission requirements and implementation of an individualized special needs/accommodations plan for students of special needs/accommodations are met if:

- All of the above criteria are indicated;
- Appropriate documentation, dated within the last three years, from a licensed therapist, counselor, doctor or nurse practitioner in support of specific recommendations is provided;
- The family has the resources for any required additional support (interpreters, etc) or the logistics of receiving that support through the Special Education office of the student's home school district are feasible.

West Sound Academy also works in partnership with the Special Education offices of the local school districts in order to provide access and support to students enrolled at WSA. However, logistics and limited resources of the school district may result in the need for some private support services at the cost to the parents.

Admissions Process

Required Application Materials

Before a student may be admitted to WSA, all of the following must be submitted:

1. Application fee (non-refundable).
2. Student Application Form. This is an online form available on WSA's website. This should be completed and signed by the parent or legal guardian and accompanied by one passport-sized photograph. The following are part of this online application:
 - a. Parent Questions: To be completed and signed by the parent or legal guardian.
 - b. Applicant Questions (Grades 6-12): This should be written in the student's own handwriting and scanned for upload or hard copy submission *
 - c. Applicant Essay (Grades 9-12 only): This should be written in the student's own handwriting and scanned for upload or hard copy submission*
3. Two full years of school transcripts or reports. These should cover two complete years (the most recently completed academic year and the previous one) as well as the year in progress, if applicable.
4. Recommendations: requests for a confidential recommendation are made through the online application. Parents are responsible for facilitating the completion of recommendations. Three are required:
 - a. Math teacher
 - b. English teacher
 - c. Non-related adult
5. A photocopy of the applicant's passport for international F-1 applicants.
6. School reports/transcripts and recommendations must be in English, with official translations provided when originals are written in another language
7. Immunization Records

In cases where it is impossible to obtain a given application document, the Admissions Committee will make a collective decision as to whether or not they have sufficient information in the documents presently available to make an informed decision on the candidate's admission. Information from other sources may be requested in such instances (for example: work samples, obligatory interview).

WSA staff members wishing to enroll their children at the school must follow the usual application procedure. Further information, including details of fee arrangements for staff members, can be found in the Staff Handbook.

* If a student has accommodations for writing they should inform the Director of Admissions for accommodations on this portion of the application.

Personal Interviews and School Visits

Families initially learning about the school are encouraged to make an appointment with the Director of Admissions for a personal meeting and tour. In addition, WSA hosts three Open House events per year in December, January, and May for prospective students and their families. While it is not always possible for overseas families to arrange a visit to the school, it is always preferable to do so.

Visit Day

When school is in regular session, a visit day is required for applicants with either the current grade level or the rising grade level. These visit days are scheduled in late January and early February: 1/31, 2/1, 2/6, 2/7, and 2/8. The applicant is assigned a student guide who will help facilitate the student attending classes for the day. Wherever possible, the applicant is expected to engage in the activities and demonstrate their curiosity about the school.

Interview

The school reserves the right to request to meet in person any applicant in cases where this is considered necessary (for instance, if the candidate has never attended school before, has had a lengthy absence, or school is not in session, etc.). Furthermore, a compulsory interview with parents may be required in cases where it is deemed necessary to discuss a candidate's application in more depth in order for a decision to be made. All international applicants are required to attend a Skype interview when an in-person interview is not feasible.

Deadlines

The deadline for new applicants is February 15th. The school will continue to accept applications beyond that date as space allows. If space is not available, applications may be submitted for placement in the wait pool.

The Admissions Committee reviews applications after the application deadline of February 15th. Once all the application materials and requirements have been met, the committee notifies families of the admission decision on March 15th, whether that is accepted, wait pooled, or declined.

Criteria for admission

Students are offered admission if they are identified as a "mission-appropriate" student as defined above. Each candidate's application materials are carefully studied in order to assess suitability for admission.

We look for candidates:

- Who are motivated/determined
- Whose academic performance is good to excellent
- Whose conduct is good overall, and who are respectful to others

- Who are, and whose parents are, committed to the school's vision, mission, and philosophy
- Who are internationally-minded
- Who would benefit from the curriculum
- Whose qualities would enrich the West Sound Academy community and be a positive contribution to it.

Previous experience with the IB programs can also be an advantage but is not a prerequisite for admission.

If a student broadly corresponds to West Sound Academy's admissions criteria but is currently having difficulty reaching his or her full potential, the student may be admitted, in certain cases, pending his or her (and his or her parents') agreement to engage in a program of additional support. This may include, for example, an Accommodations Plan, Counseling, Tutoring, and/or other kinds of learning support as appropriate. Such decisions remain, however, entirely at the discretion of the Admissions Committee.

Proficiency in English is a criterion for admission. Students for whom English is not their best language will be assessed to determine if WSA has the resources to support their language fluency. Students enrolling in Grades 9-12 need to have an advanced level of English. Students must demonstrate a score of 85 or better on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to be exempt from ELL designation and be an IB Diploma Course student, and a score of 100 or better to be a full IB Diploma Candidate. Students designated as ELL require additional pedagogical support, will have ELL appear on their transcript, and will possibly be required to have tutoring at additional cost.

The Admissions Committee has the right to accept or refuse any applicant based on their assessment of the applicant's suitability.

Grade Placement

In general, students will be placed according to their age on August 25th of their year of entry. Where it is considered to be of benefit to the student, he/she may be placed in a lower grade. Only under exceptional circumstances will a student be placed in a higher grade than his/her age group. Factors to be considered for such a placement include a transcript or report cards from the previous year demonstrating exceptional academic performance and social skills. If a student is placed in a grade higher than his/her age-group, the parents are clearly informed that this initial placement is tentative and that the school may advise a change of grade after the student's abilities have been thoroughly observed. Any change of grade would normally take place within the first two months after the student's entry into the school.

Grades 11 and 12

To successfully transfer into Grade 11 or 12, students must coordinate their choice of subjects with the IB Coordinator and/or the Head of School, as they have an overall picture of the courses offered and the space available in each class.