

Birthdate Admissions Policy

Site Specific Considerations

After some review of our current site the following have been found to be true of 7324 Kirkpatrick Way school site:

1. There are 14 classes from preschool to Grade 12
2. There are 12 classrooms
3. School district 48 follows provincial guidelines strictly: Kindergarten students are 5 by December 31st and are the age of 6 before December 31st for Grade 1.
4. Whistler Waldorf School supports developmental readiness and supports decisions that ensure students are turning 7 in Grade 1.

The circumstance that arise from the first two points above are that the school must have 2 combined classes at any given point, to work within our current site. Thus, the need for a Combined Class Policy if we are at Spruce Grove. The following points much also be considered:

- Every year two to three enrolments are lost due to a difference in the age cut off of our school and the local public schools
- Students who leave our school are required to skip a Grade
 - This means for an older Kindergarten student, they may have to skip Grade 1
 - This means for a Grade 6 student that they would be required to attend Highschool
 - This means for a Grade 11 student they may not meet graduation requirements

In this regard, our policies must reflect our geographic and social location as well as consider Waldorf developmental principles, for the best interest of our students.

Developmental Considerations

The College of Teachers has considered and studied Martyn Rawson's article, "The Yellow Book, 15 years On.", and Harlan Gilbert's "At the Source -The Incarnation of the Child and the Development of a Modern Pedagogy", as a basis for our Age Cut Off and Mixed Age policies. It is encouraged that if this policy is to be adapted in the future, that the school's policy makers are sure to read these texts.

"Human development from birth to adulthood and beyond is a complex blend of inherited genetic, social, cultural and individual factors that interact with each other. This fact alone accounts for individual variation. Development is never simply the unfolding of a model or the running of a software package. Development is always a complex interaction of factors and circumstances and it is usually not possible to understand all these factors. However, even recognising that there are so many factors and that some are invisible to us, helps us to shape our response. Not everything can be explained by (or blamed on) biological, family background, economic and social status. Each of these factors needs to be taken fully into account and not ignored or downplayed, particularly factors related to social injustice. Nevertheless, we always need an integrated perspective that takes the whole as much as possible into account" (Rawson).

Combined Class Policy

Considerations

Combined classes group students from two or more consecutive grades into one classroom. The Whistler Waldorf School combines classes for a variety of reasons. This includes organizing classes to meet student learning needs and combining grades to balance class size. All classrooms include students with a range of skills and abilities. Combined classes are neither better nor worse than single-grade classes. They are simply one of the many ways the school meet students' academic and social development needs.

Principals and staff consider a variety of factors when grouping children into classes, including developmental milestone, learning styles, social skills, academic needs, student numbers, classroom space restrictions, and provincial and local district age cut off policies. There are many factors to consider, and each year, the Head of School, and the Director of Advancement consult teachers, and the College of Teachers before making final decisions. All classrooms, whether single-grade or combined, include students performing at a range of achievement levels. In every case, we strive to create a classroom environment that will support the needs of all students.

Policy

Classes that have 12 or fewer students may be combined with classes above or below them, in any given year or for specific subject classes. For Grade 1 classes, every effort will be made to ensure that main lessons, and some English Language Arts and Mathematics track lessons, are separated for the majority of the first year.

The following factors need to be considered when combining classes:

1. This policy can be triggered when the number of students in a specific class are less than 12, or the sum of any two consecutive grades is equal to, or less than 24 students.
2. An aim for student age ranges will be no greater than 24 months when classes are combining. Most ideal is a range of 18-22 months.
3. An aim to not mix Grade 1 Main Lessons, unless necessary.

Special considerations and final decisions will be made by Head of School, in consultation with College and Operational Management Team. Some other considerations are PSOC, budgetary considerations, enrolment or classroom space, learning challenges and student suitability.

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Whistler Waldorf Schools admissions enrolment cut off does not align with the public system (Dec. 31st). In the 2018-2019 school year this affected approximately 60% of our school's enrolment applications. This is expected to be a continued trend as families from outside of Waldorf explore our school as an option. The school is committed to a developmental approach, as that is an underlying foundation and principle of being a Waldorf School, yet recognizes that the developmental process is connected to a variety of factors.

Historically at WWS:

If a student successfully completed a grade in another school, they would enter the next grade at WWS regardless of birthdate. This policy in combination with a direction in the last few years to administer a cultural change to a June 30th birthdate cut-off across the grades, but particularly in Grade 1 has led to the need to work with families on a case-by-case basis and has sometimes led to 15+ (up to 18 months) months age spread in the classes across the school.

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There are a variety of factors that are considered when a student enrolls. Determinations will be based on the following criteria with final approval from the Head of School:

1. Students' age at the time of admission.
2. Age ranges found in specific classes
3. Specific section considerations for Early Years, Lower School, Middle School or High School sections.
 - a. An enrolment for a specific class that contributes to a developmental spread of greater than 15 months, may be denied by the Head of School.
 - b. Students' birthdates should be no later than August 31st, and no earlier than April 30th.
 - c. For Grades 6 and up, students coming from other schools may enrol into the next consecutive year that they have completed. Exceptions to this would be students with learning challenges, and/or if the age ranges in a grade exceeds 20-24 months. In these cases, acceptance will be approved on a case by case basis, with consultation from the Lower School or High School Chair and approval from the Head of School.
 - d. Developmental readiness
4. If a class is a mixed aged class, then the Mixed Age Classroom Policy is implemented instead of the Birthdate Admissions Policy.

References

Rawson Martyn. *Waldorf Essentials: The Yellow Book, 15 years On*.
<http://bertkraai.nl/onewebmedia/Waldorf%20Essentials%20in%20English.pdf>

Gilbert, Harlan. *At the Source*. <https://www.waldorfpublishings.org/products/copy-of-at-the-source-the-incarnation-of-the-child-and-the-development-of-a-modern-pedagogy-1>