

## Special Education FAQ

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### Independent Schools

WWS is a non-profit and considered a Group 1 independent school. Independent schools employ B.C. certified teachers, have educational programs consistent with ministerial orders, provide a program that meets the learning outcomes of the B.C. curriculum, meets various administrative requirements, maintains adequate educational facilities, and complies with municipal and regional district codes.

Unlike a public school, Group 1 independent schools receive only 50 percent of their local boards of education per student operating grant on a per FTE student basis. Likewise, independent schools do not receive grants for land, buildings, and equipment. Independent schools themselves must buy their own property and pay for the construction of buildings and all the equipment found within them.

In addition, WWS awards over \$200,000 in financial support to around 35% of its students. This level of financial support is extraordinary and a key feature of the culture and overall success of our school community who highly values Waldorf education. As with any small non-profit, limited financial resources impacts the services we can provide all our students and the number of students we can serve. We see it as our responsibility to ensure that parents understand what their children may or may not receive when enrolling with us.

### Right to Education

We are fortunate in Canada that children have both access to public school education as well as protection from discrimination. While not a public school, WWS is committed to meeting its obligations under human rights laws to ensure non-discriminatory access to education and reasonable accommodations in education short of undue hardship. WWS is also committed to being as inclusive as possible across all measures, as we see a diverse population of both pupils and staff as one of the School's strengths. We enrol students with a variety of unique academic, social, behavioural and financial needs annually.

### Student Supports offered at WWS

Due to its small size and resource availability, our school is not able to provide the same diversity or level of student support offered by the public school district which often includes teachers of students with visual impairment, hearing resources, speech and language pathologists, behaviour interventionists, psychologists, assistive technology support, etc. Our student support department is comparably smaller and less diverse. Student support commonly offered at WWS includes weekly support within the classroom and group pull-out support provided by Teacher Assistants (TA). Our TAs do not generally have specialty training (ASD, Orton Gillingham, etc). WWS does not employ a school-based psychologist. As such, psycho-educational assessments used to inform Individualized Education Plans must be obtained privately.

### Funding for Student Support

No additional funding above the basic allocation (50% for independent schools) is given to support the learning needs of students who are identified as having learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, students requiring moderate behaviour supports and students who are gifted.

Additional supplementary funding may be available for students with special needs in the following categories: dependent handicapped, deafblind, moderate to profound intellectually disabled, physically disabled or chronic health impaired, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and intensive behaviour interventions or serious mental illness. In these cases, the student must be appropriately assessed and identified, and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in place.

### **Admissions Decisions**

The WWS admissions process is intended to help ensure a good fit for students and their families, in support of our school's Mission, Vision, and Values.

Several of our classes are at maximum capacity at any given time and, as such, admission into our school is competitive. The School treats every application for admission in a fair and equal way and accepts applications from and admits students irrespective of any protected characteristic. Enrolment decisions are made based on space availability and the school's perceived ability to meet the needs of the applicant. This includes a thorough examination of class dynamics and existing student need, and a consideration of how new students would likely fit into those dynamics. Applications are evaluated on a composite of information including parent and student interviews, previous school reports, academic assessments, observation of class visits, previous experience with the extra curriculars offered at Waldorf (e.g. music) and with consideration of the school's available human and physical resources.

Recognizing that each student's learning needs and each class' composition varies, WWS does not employ firm caps on the number of students with IEPs and will review all applicants based on WWS' evaluation criteria (above) and in alignment with our Admissions Policy.

Due to our lack of physical space, however, the enrolment of students who require 1:1 support outside the classroom is reassessed on an annual basis. In the event it is determined that 1:1 support is required to meet a student's needs within the classroom, the following conditions apply based on physical classroom capacities:

- EY programs: No more than one 1:1 educational assistant + teacher + teacher assistant
- K program: No more than one 1:1 educational assistant + teacher + teacher assistant
- Grades 1-12: No more than one 1:1 educational assistant or teacher assistant + teacher

In addition to the Director of Advancement, Faculty Chairs/faculty, our Student Support Team is also consulted as part of the admissions process for applicants with identified or suspected learning needs. This consultation may result in an additional admissions meeting intended to help us fully understand the scope of the student's needs.

Upon issuing letters of acceptance to prospective students, we provide as much clarity as possible regarding what families can expect regarding the student supports offered so that families can make informed decisions regarding their child's enrolment.

WWS will not offer a place to a child if, after all reasonable accommodations have been considered, the School believes it cannot adequately cater for and/or successfully meet their unique needs.

### **Admissions Process:**

1. Submit completed application package including all supporting documentation (professional reports, IEPs, etc.)
2. Participate in admission interview parent + child (conducted by faculty and Faculty Chair/Director of Advancement)
3. Child participates in a 3-day class-visit (required for Grades 3+ & at the discretion of K-2 faculty)
4. Participate in meeting with our Student Support Team as requested
5. Enrolment decision communicated. We aim to communicate admissions decisions within ten days. At times, however, we may be unable to confirm enrolment within this timeframe (e.g. if an application is received during summer, if re-enrolment deadlines have not passed, etc.)

### **Applying for kindergarten admissions from WWS pre-k program**

For students currently enrolled in our licensed group childcare program who receive Supported Child Care Development (SCCD) Program support or services, WWS will take the following steps as part of the kindergarten application process.

The Early Years Chair will:

- Meet with the parents to ensure that all specialist reports have been received and inquire if there are pending assessments
- Participate in any team meetings with the family and SCCD related to the transition into kindergarten and the Ministry of Education
- Consult with the student's pre-k teachers to gather information regarding supports received and anticipated level and type of support the student may need going into kindergarten including but not limited to:
  - Need for 1:1 support within classroom
  - Need for 1:1 support outside classroom
  - Impact on others in the class
  - Adjusted class schedule (e.g. shortened days/week)
  - Outside support specialists
  - General kindergarten readiness

### **Appeals**

While WWS is committed to fair and thorough enrolment processes that we feel serve the best interests of our students, it is recognized that from time-to-time admissions decisions can sometimes be met with disappointment or disagreement. Applicants are able to raise concerns by filing a formal written complaint as per the school's Communication and Grievance Procedure.

See also [BC Waldorf Special/Inclusive Education Policy](#)