**FAQs for Open Days (parents)**

* **What is the closing date for registration for Year 7 2021?**

The closing date is 18th November 2020.

* **When does the exam take place for 2021 entry to Year 7?**

We are using the ISEB Common Pre-test this year and girls will be able to take the test in one of three ways:

1. Many prep schools will be arranging a date for students to take the test in their own school. If the ISEB Pre-Test is offered at your daughter’s school, she should sit it there, by 12th December 2020.
2. We will be holding a test date on Friday 11th December 2020, so if your daughter is not able to take the test at her current school, she will be able to come and sit the test here at NHEHS
3. If she is applying to another secondary school that uses the ISEB Pre-test, she can take the test at that school. The test must be taken by 12th December 2020. Please ensure that you register your daughter with NHEHS as well, in order for us to access her marks.

* **Do you interview every girl?**

Yes, at NHEHS we feel it is important to interview every applicant. The interviews take place in January and each girl has a 20 minute individual interview with one of our interview team. The interview gives us the opportunity to get to know your daughter better and find out more about the way she thinks and the things that interest her.

* **My daughter attends a state school – will this place her at a disadvantage in the exam?**

The entrance exam is designed to identify academic potential and reduce relentless ‘teaching to the test’. The content is based on the Year 5 curriculum. State school applicants are not therefore at a disadvantage and our new intake into Year 7 each year is generally very close to a 50/50 split between girls from prep schools and girls from the state sector.

* **What allowances will you make for schools having been closed in the summer term?**

We will of course bear in mind the unusual experiences that students have had and the inevitable differences in the amount of teaching that they may have received. The tests are designed to look for potential, and to avoid the need for tutoring, as much as is possible. By interviewing everyone, we are able to get a full picture of students’ abilities, even if they have had less teaching during the lockdown. We also look carefully at references, which we hope will give us a sense of any lost teaching time.

* **What type of girl are you looking for?**

We certainly don’t set out to look for a ‘type’ - we have a wide range of girls joining us every year, from a variety of backgrounds - but what NHEHS girls do all have in common is a love of learning, interests that extend beyond the curriculum, and what schools often call ‘teachability’.

* **How do I apply for a bursary? And how are bursaries awarded?**

Bursaries are available on entry to Year 7 and to the Sixth Form. They are means-tested and assessed based on parental income and assets. Bursaries can cover up to 100% of the fees, and full awards also comprise assistance with school uniform, music lessons, school lunch and curriculum-related trips.

If you are interested in applying for a bursary, you can indicate this via a tick box on the registration form. Once we receive your registration form, you will then receive log-in details for the Girls’ Day School Trust bursary website, where you can make your bursary application. Bursary applications must be made by the closing date of 18th November 2020 and we are then notified by the GDST about parents’ eligibility for a bursary. Decisions about bursary awards will then be made by the Headmaster, based on girls’ performance in the entrance exam and interview, and the outcome notified to parents in the decision letter they receive in February.

* **What scholarships are available for Year 7 entry?**

All girls taking our entrance exam are automatically considered for an academic scholarship. In addition, girls applying to join us in Year 7 can apply for Music and Sport scholarships. Interest in the scholarships is indicated on the registration form and parents will then be asked to complete the relevant scholarship registration form and obtain a reference to support the application. The deadline for all scholarship applications and references to reach us is 18th November 2020.

* **How are scholarship applicants assessed?**

Music - we suggest that applicants for Music scholarships have reached at least Grade 4 standard on their main instrument. The Director of Music selects girls for audition and these auditions then take place in late January. We hold a special open event for prospective music scholars in November, when girls interested in applying are encouraged to join us for a morning and spend time with the Music department.

Sport - the Director of Sport selects the applicants that she wishes to see for assessment and these girls then join us for an afternoon in January, to take part in a number of activities, including a brief interview with a member of the PE department.

* **What is the typical scholarship award worth?**

Generally, all scholarship awards are for 10-15% of the fees, although higher awards are sometimes offered to exceptional candidates.

* **What size are the form groups in Year 7 and how do you compile the form groups?**

The year group is 96 girls in total and just under half of these come from our own Junior school. The year group is split into four form groups, each with a form tutor and co-tutor, and girls remain in these form groups for Years 7 and 8, before we mix the form groups for Year 9. When compiling the form groups for Year 7, we generally place girls in a form group with another girl from their primary school if possible, so that they have a familiar face when they first join us. If a girl is the only one coming from her school, we make sure that there are other girls in the form group who are in the same situation. We also look at where girls live and try to place them in form groups with other girls who live near to them and who may share part of their journey to and from school.

* **How do you help Year 7 to settle in?**

On the first day of term, all the other year groups go home before lunch, leaving Year 7 and the Year 12 ‘big sisters’ to have lunch together and get to know each other. Our Year 12 girls volunteer to act as ‘big sisters’, with each Year 12 volunteer allocated to a small group of Year 7 girls. The ‘big sisters’ arrange regular meetings with their Year 7 group through the year and are there to answer questions, offer advice and share stories about their time in the school.

On the afternoon of the first day, Year 7 go on an orienteering activity around the school site, to help them start getting to know the school and find their way around. Very early in the autumn term, we take all of Year 7 to Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre for an activity day, where girls work in teams and get to know each other better. This also gives staff the opportunity to see whether there are any girls who might need a bit more support in settling in, and of course our form tutors and co-tutors, as well as the Head of Lower School, will be keeping a close eye on Year 7 in the first few weeks, to make sure that they are happy and making friends.

* **What sort of pastoral support is there for girls?**

At NHEHS, we have a very strong pastoral system, and there is always someone for girls to talk to if they have any worries about anything. In Year 7, the first port of call is always the form tutors, but girls can speak to the Head of Lower School, the Deputy Head Pastoral or the school counsellors. Equally, if parents have any concerns, they are encouraged to communicate these to the form tutor in the first instance; we would rather know about an issue early on so that we can resolve it quickly.

* **Is there a school bus service?**

The school bus service will be running four routes in September, from Central London, Richmond and Kew via Chiswick, Harrow, and Isleworth. All information about routes and bookings can be found on our website: <https://www.nhehs.gdst.net/admissions/school-transport/>

* **Do you set for any subjects?**

The only subject that we set for is Maths, from Year 8. There are four Maths divisions and these are quite fluid, which allows girls to move between them. We generally feel that setting is counter-productive, as girls who are not placed in the top set may tend to feel discouraged and perform less well, but setting for Maths allows us to ensure that all girls learn at the right pace and can be challenged or supported as needed.

* **Which languages do girls study in Year 7?**

All girls study Mandarin in Year 7 and we have a carousel system for European languages, whereby French, German and Spanish are taught in rotation for half a term at a time, giving girls exposure to both language and culture. Girls then choose two languages from the four studied in Year 7, to take forward into Years 8 and 9. There is a minimum requirement of one modern language at GCSE although some girls choose to study two. All girls start Latin in Year 8 and Classical Greek is also available from Year 10.

* **How much homework do girls get in Year 7?**

For the first couple of weeks, teachers will focus on settling the Year 7s into secondary school so minimal homework will be set. After that, students will receive approximately 20 minutes of homework for each main subject a week (creative subjects set project work instead). They are encouraged to stick to this time limit and stop when they have completed 20 minutes of work. At the start of the school year, all girls will be given a homework timetable to help them organise what homework to complete each evening.

* **Are there any restrictions on combinations of A level subjects?**

In a word, no! We offer a wide range of subjects at A level, including Economics, Government & Politics, History of Art, and Psychology. We strongly believe that girls should be able to select any combination of A levels and should be able to study the subjects they are passionate about.

* **What extra-curricular clubs are on offer?**

We pride ourselves on the number and variety of extra-curricular clubs on offer. There are clubs for each academic subject and a plethora of others - from bridge club to robotics, from feminism to films, there really is something for everyone! We hold an extra-curricular fair at the start of each term, which allows girls to find out more about what’s on offer and to sign up. We also encourage girls, as they move up the school, to take on responsibilities for the running of clubs.

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