

# **ADMISSION OF DAY STUDENTS**

**[C25]**

## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the day-student admission policy is both consistent with Thetford Academy's mission and in compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to outline Thetford Academy's practices related to day-student admission and tuition. Thetford Academy also operates a residential program for international students, which has different criteria for admission and different tuition costs, and therefore the policy below is not intended to apply to admission of international students.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy and the administrative rules and procedures developed pursuant to this policy, the following definitions shall apply.

**Designating-Town School District (or "Designating Town," for short):**

A designating-town school district is a sending-town school district in Vermont (i) which has designated Thetford Academy as the secondary school for all of its students, and (ii) for which TA has accepted designation as the town's secondary school, and (iii) which therefore receives an enrollment guarantee from the Academy for all of its students, according to the provisions of 16 V.S.A. § 827. Ideally, a designating town also will maintain a partnership agreement with the Academy, but a partnership agreement is not required by law for designation.

**Non-Designating Partner-Town School District (or "Partner Town," for short):**

A non-designating partner-town school district is a sending-town school district that (i) offers Thetford Academy as a secondary-school choice for its students, and (ii) maintains a partnership agreement with the Academy, and (iii) therefore receives an enrollment guarantee from the Academy for its students who choose to attend the Academy and who meet the Academy's admission criteria for students from non-designating towns.

**Sending-Town School District (or "Sending Town," for short):**

A sending-town school district is any school district that sends one or more students to Thetford Academy and from which Thetford Academy accepts public tuition funds in exchange. Designating towns and partner towns are special types of sending towns.

## **III. POLICY**

In keeping with its mission as "an independent school with a public purpose," Thetford Academy shall maintain an open enrollment policy for area students who meet the criteria for day-student admission.

The Head of School shall ensure that Thetford Academy, as an independent school, meets all requirements necessary for the State Board of Education's approval to serve both general education and special education students (pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 166 and the Vermont State Board of Education rules 2220-2227 and 2228). As an "approved independent school," Thetford Academy shall accept public tuition payments to serve day students admitted from designating towns, partner towns, and other sending towns. Thetford Academy shall also accept private tuition payments to serve day students admitted from non-sending towns.

Should the number of day students wishing to attend Thetford Academy exceed the number of spaces available, then the following priority rule for enrollment shall apply:

Subject to the exceptions in section IV.A below, enrollment shall be guaranteed for

- (i) students from designating towns,
- (ii) students who were enrolled in the prior school year,
- (iii) children of Thetford Academy employees,
- (iv) siblings of already-enrolled students, and
- (v) students from partner towns.

All other students who meet the criteria for day-student admission shall be offered enrollment in the order in which their applications were received, until the enrollment capacity of Thetford Academy is reached.

With the approval of the Board of Trustees, Thetford Academy may choose to reserve some spaces each year for international students. If any of these enrollment spots go unused, they may be filled by day students according to the priority rule stated above.

## **IV. COMPONENTS OF POLICY**

### **A. Criteria for Admission of Day Students**

#### **1. Students from Designating Towns**

##### **a. Application for Admission: Students from Designating Towns**

Students from designating towns shall not be required to apply for admission to the Academy. Enrollment shall be granted upon request, subject to the exception in section 1.b below.

##### **b. Enrollment Guarantee for Students from Designating Towns**

Any legal pupil who is a resident of a designating town as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 1075 shall be eligible to attend Thetford Academy. Thetford Academy shall rely upon the designating town's school board to determine residency of the town's pupils. Thetford Academy shall guarantee enrollment for all resident students from the designating town, subject to the exception below.

- Exception to Enrollment Guarantee: Enrollment shall not be automatic for a student from a designating town who seeks to enroll at Thetford Academy during a period of suspension or expulsion from another school. If a student is denied automatic enrollment, the student may appeal the decision according to the procedure described in section IV.B below, or the student may wait until his/her term of suspension or expulsion has been served and then request to enroll at that time.

The enrollment guarantee described above is conditional on designation by the town and acceptance of that designation by Thetford Academy. Acceptance of designation shall be reviewed annually by the Academy's Board of Trustees, with written notification provided by January 15th to the designating town's school board if the Academy decides not to accept designation for the following school year.

c. Partnership Agreement Expectation for Designating Towns

Designation and its acceptance imply a commitment between Thetford Academy and the designating town to partnering in the education of the town's students. As evidence of this commitment, the expectation shall be that Thetford Academy and the designating town will maintain a partnership agreement as outlined in section 3 below.

## 2. Students from Non-Designating Towns

a. Application for Admission: Students from Non-Designating Towns

Each student from a non-designating town is required to submit an application for review by Thetford Academy's Admissions Committee, unless the student (i) is the child of a Thetford Academy employee, or (ii) is the sibling of an already-enrolled student, or (iii) resides in a sending town which maintains a partnership agreement with the Academy as described in section 3 below. For students in these categories (i)-(iii), enrollment shall be granted upon request, subject to the exceptions in section 2.b below.

Thetford Academy's Admissions Committee shall consist of qualified Thetford Academy employees appointed by the Head of School or his/her designee, and it shall determine application procedures in consultation with the Head of School. Application procedures shall be modified as appropriate to accommodate any student with a documented disability. The Admissions Committee shall comply with the open enrollment policy in section 2.b below when reviewing applications for admission.

b. Open Enrollment Policy for Students from Non-Designating Towns

Thetford Academy shall comply with federal and state laws and regulations governing tuition payment and non-discrimination in its admission decisions. No student from a non-designating town shall be denied admission if the reason for denial is that the student is disabled as defined in section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended or that the student is in need of special education services, as long as space is available in Thetford Academy's special education program and the student's needs as set forth in her/his IEP or Section 504 Plan can be met at the Academy. Nor shall any student be denied admission on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), ancestry, national origin, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, or any other classification protected by federal or state law.

It is the policy of Thetford Academy that a student from a non-designating town who applies for admission shall be admitted if space is available, subject to the non-discrimination requirements above and the exceptions to the open enrollment policy below. Should the number of day students wishing to attend Thetford Academy exceed the number of spaces available, then admission shall be granted according to the priority rule stated in section III.

- Exceptions to Open Enrollment Policy: A student from a non-designating town may be denied admission if s/he is not in good standing at the school or schools most recently attended, if the student has previously attended school. A student shall be considered "in good standing" if s/he can provide evidence of the following:
  - (i) s/he has not been legally dismissed or suspended for more than ten days during the preceding twelve months for disciplinary reasons, and
  - (ii) s/he is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of an approved school or home study program, and
  - (iii) her/his school attendance record presents a reasonable likelihood that any existing attendance requirements of Thetford Academy will be met.

A student who is unable to provide evidence of good standing may be admitted if it is the determination of the Head of School, based on information presented by the student, that there is a reasonable likelihood that the student will benefit from and succeed in the programs offered by Thetford Academy. However, Thetford Academy reserves the right to deny admission to any student who has a documented history of behavior which could be potentially threatening to the safety of the school community or to the student's own safety and which is not related to a documented disability. If denied admission, a student may appeal the decision according to the procedure described in section IV.B below.

c. Partnership Agreement Option for Non-Designating Towns

Thetford Academy shall offer each non-designating, sending-town school district the opportunity to enter into a partnership agreement with the Academy as outlined in section 3 below, in order to receive an enrollment guarantee for the town's students who meet the Academy's criteria for day-student admission.

### **3. Partnership Agreements between Thetford Academy and Sending Towns**

By entering into a partnership agreement, Thetford Academy and a sending town commit to building and maintaining a close relationship that is to the mutual benefit of both parties. The terms of each partnership agreement shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- length of agreement;
- enrollment guarantee;
- demonstrations of mutual commitment (such as board representation and communication, collaboration between respective schools' teachers, visits to respective schools' campuses);
- tuition;
- review and renewal of agreement;
- modification of agreement;
- dispute resolution.

## **B. Appeal of Denial of Admission**

### **1. Students from Designating Towns**

If a student from a designating town is denied automatic enrollment at Thetford Academy, the student may appeal the decision to the Head of School. If still denied enrollment, the student may appeal the Head of School's decision by submitting within ten days of the denial a written request to appeal to both the Thetford Academy Board of Trustees and the student's town school board. These two boards shall form a Joint Appeals Committee consisting of four members (two appointed by each board). The Joint Appeals Committee shall provide an opportunity for the student and/or his or her parent or guardian to discuss the request not to uphold the decision of the Head of School. The Committee shall render a decision within 30 days of the request to appeal. In the event of a tie vote by the Committee, the decision of the Head of School shall stand.

### **2. Students from Non-Designating Towns**

If a student from a non-designating town is denied admission to Thetford Academy, the student may appeal the decision to the Head of School. If still denied admission, the student may appeal the Head of School's decision by submitting within ten days of the denial a written request to appeal to the Thetford Academy Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall provide an opportunity for the student and/or his or her parent or guardian to discuss the request not to uphold the decision of the Head of School. The Board shall render a decision within 30 days of the request to appeal.

### C. Day-Student Tuition

1. On or before January 15th of each year, Thetford Academy shall establish tuition rates for day students for the next school year and shall notify the school board(s) of all sending-town school districts and the Secretary of Education of any proposed increase in tuition rates. Tuition rates shall be established in accord with Chapter 21 of Title 16 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated and regulations of the State Board of Education. In calculating base tuition rates, all operating expenses and capital costs shall be amortized equally across the student body.
2. Payment of tuition shall be made in two equal installments, due within 30 days of the date of an invoice from Thetford Academy. Invoice dates will be September 15 and December 15.
3. When a student enrolls at Thetford Academy after the beginning of a semester, tuition for the student shall be pro-rated accordingly and shall be payable immediately.
4. Sending towns shall receive reimbursement of public tuition funds for students who have withdrawn from Thetford Academy, on a per-diem pro-rated basis, following formal written notification of withdrawal by the student's parent or guardian. Sending towns shall also receive public-tuition reimbursement, on a per-diem pro-rated basis, for students who have been dismissed from Thetford Academy, following formal written notification of dismissal to the student's parent or guardian and to the sending town's school board. In cases of dismissal for truancy, pro-rated tuition reimbursement will be counted from the first day of absence in the consecutive sequence leading to dismissal. Students from non-sending towns who pay private tuition to Thetford Academy and who have been dismissed from the Academy for any reason are not eligible to receive private-tuition reimbursement. Temporary separation from the school, such as a suspension for disciplinary reasons or absence due to illness or family emergency, shall not be grounds for adjustment of public or private tuition-payment obligations.
5. Thetford Academy shall notify the sending town's school superintendent (as well as parents or legal guardians) in writing when any enrolled student has exceeded absence limits as specified in the Student Handbook, in order for the sending town to help promote regular attendance.
6. For sending-town students enrolled at Thetford Academy and in a vocational program at either River Bend Career & Technical Center or Hartford Area Career and Technology Center, Thetford Academy shall bill the sending town a vocational-student rate, based on the assumption that each such student is enrolled for four course credits in that year at Thetford Academy. Sending towns shall assume responsibility for technical/vocational-center tuition and shall make payment directly to River Bend Career & Technical Center or Hartford Area Career and Technology

Center, as appropriate, for sending-town students enrolled in the programs at those institutions.

7. For each student on a Section 504 Plan, Thetford Academy shall invoice excess cost in addition to the base tuition rate. For sending-town students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) per federal IDEA statutes, Thetford Academy shall bill the sending town according to the services identified in the IEPs on a fee-for-service invoice otherwise known as Special Education Excess Cost. Individual student contracts will be provided through the Special Education Agreement signed with the sending town, which shall outline the costs, billing procedures, and responsibilities of both parties.
8. Interest at the Wall Street Journal prime rate (annual) may be charged on balances that remain unpaid after 60 days.

ADOPTED: June 6, 2019