



Admissions Policy

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Statement of intent

At Ash Meadow School, we welcome all students, and places at the school are offered in an open and fair way. Our admissions process is delivered in-line with the Equality Act 2010, the School Admissions Code, the School Admission Appeals Code, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The number of places available is determined by the capacity of the school, and is called the 'agreed admissions number'. Our published admissions number (PAN) is 50.

The table below sets out who the admission authority is and other responsible bodies in our school.

Type of school	Who is the admission authority?	Who deals with complaints about arrangements?	Who is responsible for arranging/providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at the school?
Non-Associated Independent school	Senior Leadership Team	Head of School	Executive Headteacher

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'
- DfE (2012) 'School Admission Appeals Code'
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- SEN Information Report

Roles and responsibilities

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance when carrying out the overall admission of students into the school.
- Communicating clearly any reasons for rejecting the admission of a student, as well as the parent's right to appeal and the appeal process.
- Implementing any advice or recommendations given by the Schools Adjudicator without undue delay.
- Determining the admission arrangements on an annual basis and publicly consulting stakeholders on any proposed changes to the admission arrangements.
- Communicating oversubscription criteria clearly to parents.
- Notifying the LA of any in-year admissions and their outcomes.
- Acting in line with the relevant legislation and guidance pertaining to admissions.
- Receiving concerns and objections regarding the admission of students and making recommendations to the admission authority as a result of these concerns and objections.

- Approving variations to determined admissions arrangements where there has been a major change in circumstances or law.

Admissions process

The majority of students may be experiencing a period of crisis in education prior to joining the school. These include:

- tensions, disruptions and breakdowns in family relationships at home
- persistent bullying, poor attendance, disengagement from learning and social isolation at school
- a range of associated mental health issues such as feelings of low mood and self-esteem
- problems with basic daily life functioning such as eating, sleeping and personal care.

These factors can combine to reach crisis point which can then lead to school exclusion, family breakdown, mental health problems and poor quality of life for students.

A referral will be made for a specialist provision which includes Ash Meadow School.

The core principles of the school's admissions process are founded on an appreciation of how difficult this transition is for prospective students and their families.

The school's admissions process is a critical part of school operation. It includes the decision making process whereby prospective students who meet the admission criteria make their transition into the school.

Admission to the school is a 3 stage process:

1. Initial referral either by a parent or a local authority
2. School and/ or home based assessment
3. Transition into school

The initial stages of the process are managed by a team of staff which includes:

- The Head of School
- The Education, Health and Care Plan coordinator
- The Deputy Head Teacher
- The Service Manager

There is no set time span for the admissions process as this depends on a number of factors including:

- the nature and quantity of referral information;
- the need to seek additional consultation, clarification and advice;
- the number of students under consideration;
- the number of pupils awaiting assessment;
- the availability of places and the time of year.

The school will work with parents and external agencies to ensure that decisions on whether to offer an assessment are based on complete, accurate, reliable, and up-to-date information. Assessments and admissions take place throughout the year.

The decision to offer an assessment is based on rigorous evaluation of the referral information in order to determine whether a pupil's needs are consistent with the school's admissions criteria which are set out below:

- All students will have a confirmed diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition and their associated needs will be formalised in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Students will have a range of learning abilities (from P Levels to National Curriculum Assessment Levels) and may display atypical learning styles and uneven profiles of cognitive strengths and difficulties.
- Students may have a range of behaviours e.g. resulting from inflexible thinking, social communication difficulties, emotional dysregulation and sensory issues.
- Students will have needs and ability profiles that are compatible with those of the students who already attend the school.
- Students may present with additional medical conditions or factors, including mental health issues and stereotypical behaviours but the school reserves the right to decide whether these can be managed effectively and safely within its existing resources.

When it has been determined there is a high probability that the school can meet a student's needs and other criteria are met e.g. availability of places etc., an assessment visit will be arranged.

The school will confirm its impressions of a student's needs and what offer the school can provide the student with along with the opportunity to experience a range of school day and residential activities.

Following a successful assessment visit, all students have a carefully and sensitively managed period of admission and induction to support their transition into the school.

Scope

The school's admissions process is followed for all students irrespective of age and urgency of placement.

In view of the individual circumstances and unique life experiences of each student who is referred for consideration, a degree of flexibility is maintained.

All families and Local Authorities are supported through the initial referral part of this process by the school's referrals and admissions team.

Procedures for Admission

Admissions to the school are managed through a partnership-building process with families and Local Authorities which is designed to ensure that the school can meet the needs of prospective students.

Referrals

Referrals are logged and recorded by the Admissions administrator on the school's referrals database.

Referrals are processed in when they have been agreed by the Authority and School and a contract has been put in place.

All referral files are reviewed by at least two members of the referrals and admissions team.

Additional information may be sought from relevant professionals outside the school.

If the decision is to move on the process, assessment visit dates will be mutually agreed with families and local authorities.

Admissions Booklets will be completed by the families and school and a Transition Booklet will be provided by School and completed by the family to ensure a smooth transition.

Assessment

The school may assess its ability to cater to the applicant's needs by:

- Inviting the applicant to attend the school for a visit
- Visiting the applicant's home
- Visiting the applicant's current education provision

Families are expected to contribute to the assessment to help Ash Meadow School collect up-to-date, accurate and complete case history, medical notes, risk assessment, behaviour management plans and other relevant information.

A summary Pen Picture of the student is compiled and distributed to all staff via the student's Education File prior to the student's start date.

An assessment plan is agreed with the family and relevant staff.

The assessment period will differ depending on the needs of the individual student.

For some students, a gradual and phased transition assessment is required because of their individual circumstances. This can take place over several weeks.

The assessment may include some time working individually with specialist staff.

Students are encouraged to give their views on the school during their visit via a method that suits their communication needs e.g. verbal, PECs, Makaton, Augmentative Device.

Decisions on admission are made at a multidisciplinary team meeting, following the assessment period.

Families are notified of this decision as soon as possible following this meeting, either through direct discussion or through their Local Authority.

Local authorities are notified of placement decisions by the Head Teacher.

A summary report is compiled containing recommendations for whether the school is a suitable placement for the student and providing information surrounding next steps in the admissions process.

Transition

Once confirmation of the placement offer has been received, school staff liaise with the local authority and family to agree a start date.

All new students receive a personalised Transition Booklet and are supported by a designated, experienced Teacher and Teaching Assistants.

All new families and carers receive a personalised Admissions Booklet to complete prior to the student's start date.

During the induction period which usually lasts for 6 weeks, additional baseline assessment information will be collected.

After approximately 6 weeks, families and carers are invited to a Post Entry Review (PER) meeting to discuss how the transition has worked.

Pen Portrait, Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment information is updated at the Post Entry Review.

The Post Entry Review targets are followed up through subsequent Student Progress Meetings.

Catchment areas

The school will accept students from outside the catchment area – oversubscription criteria will apply where applicable.

Siblings and children of staff

For the purpose of this policy, “sibling” is defined as any brother or sister related by blood or marriage and any fostered or adopted siblings.

Where oversubscribed, the school will give priority to children whose siblings are currently at the school or who attended the school before.

For the purpose of this policy, “children of staff” refers to any children of staff who have been employed by the school for two or more years at the time at which the application was made, and where the member of staff has been recruited to fill a vacant post where there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

Selective criteria

The school is permitted to select students with reference to general or special ability or aptitude, provided that the way in which the ability or aptitude is assessed is not discriminatory.

Equal opportunities

The school will not establish admissions criteria that excludes individuals with a particular protected characteristic.

The admissions criteria will not exclude a greater proportion of students with particular protected characteristics, unless the school can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The admissions criteria will not discriminate against disabled applicants, unless the school can justify how this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The admission authority will comply with any request for information to help parents prepare their case for the appeals hearing.

The presenting officer will be responsible for relaying to the attendees the decision not to admit the child, and answer questions where necessary.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the governing board on an annual basis.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff and other interested parties. The next scheduled review date for this policy is October 2022.