



Admissions Policy

Reviewed by:	Henrietta Jordan, Schools Director
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Approved by:	Tracey Storey, CEO

Purpose of this Policy

- To describe and clarify school policy regarding the admission of learners to the school.
- To describe the aims and procedures, which will maximise educational benefit on the admission of a learner.

Aims

- To ensure that every learner achieves their potential.
- To achieve as smooth a transition as possible into the school to maximise educational benefit for all learners.
- To ensure that placement at our schools is prioritised for those learners for whom mainstream school/provision does not enable the individual to grow and thrive to their potential.

Legal Status of the School

Melrose Education schools are registered independent special schools. They are not currently approved by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Parents, carers and young people may ask a local authority to consider placing a learner at one of our schools. However, as the schools are not approved under section 41, the local authority is not under the same statutory duty to name the school in an Education, Health and Care plan, and the school is not required to admit a learner solely because it has been named in a plan.

A placement can only proceed where the school has confirmed in writing that it is able to meet the learner's needs and the necessary placement, commissioning and funding arrangements have been agreed.

Principles

- Learners with an EHC (educational health and care) plan as defined in the 2015 SEND Code of Practice, will be eligible for admission to the school.
- The school has an agreed number of places, and these cannot be exceeded.
- To admit learners within an age range agreed by the Department for Education.
- To admit boys and girls.
- Any decision regarding the admission of a learner to the school will be considered on an equal opportunities' basis, regardless of gender, race, religion, or background.
- Learners will at the point of entry will normally have an EHCP, learners without an EHCP may be offered an assessment place in very exceptional circumstances.
- Learners without an EHCP naming the school will only be admitted in the following circumstances:
 - a) The learner is already the subject of a current EHC plan or statement naming another school that makes similar provision and requires a change of school due to a family move or change of social services arrangements.

All admissions will take place through close and joint working between the local authority and the school. The principal and Directors have the right to question a potential admission with the local authority on the following grounds:

- If the child is outside the age range catered for by the school.
- If the school is already at its planned admissions limit.
- If a group within any age range is full.
- If the child does not meet the designation of the school.
- If the learner's admission may be incompatible with the progress and welfare of learners already on the school roll (e.g., if there are medical needs over and above those catered for by the school).

Where there are limited places available at the school, the principal, and Directors will decide based upon the school's ability to meet individual need.

Admissions Process (Appendix 1)

- Local authority SEND team, case officer or commissioning team consults with the school.
- Receipt of proposed statement or EHCP and paperwork.
- Parents/learners visit school – (sometimes parent/learners may visit more than once – agreed as necessary).
- Parents complete a risk assessment with a member of the admissions team.
- Learner where appropriate will undertake a minimum of one trial day.
- Consultation returned to the SEN case officer.
- A signed IPA must be returned from the local authority before a start date can be agreed.
- School informed and admission date agreed.
- School entry planning meeting – to plan admission and ensure relevant information shared.
- School entry pack issued to parents.
- Induction begins at the school – each learner's induction is personalised to needs.

Visits, Observations and Assessment Days

A learner and their parent or carer will normally be invited to visit the school as part of the assessment process.

Where appropriate, the learner may also be invited to attend one or more assessment or trial days. A trial day is used to help the school understand the learner's needs, identify appropriate support and plan a successful transition. It is not a test that the learner is expected to "pass".

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the visit or assessment process. Where a conventional trial day would not be appropriate because of the learner's disability, health, anxiety, safeguarding circumstances or current placement, the school may use alternative arrangements. These may include observations in the learner's current setting, professional meetings, shorter visits, phased visits or additional written evidence.

The school may make a placement decision without a trial day where it considers that sufficient reliable information is otherwise available.

Assessment of Suitability

In deciding whether to offer a placement, the school will consider:

- whether the learner falls within the school's registered age range and special educational needs provision;
- whether an appropriate place is available within the school's registered capacity;
- the learner's EHC plan and supporting professional reports;
- the learner's educational, communication, sensory, physical, medical, social, emotional and mental health needs;
- any safeguarding information and known risks;
- the staffing, expertise, resources, facilities and therapeutic support required;
- the reasonable adjustments that could be made;
- whether the school's curriculum and environment are suitable;
- the needs, safety, welfare and education of learners already attending the school;
- whether any identified risks can be appropriately managed and reduced;
- the proposed funding and commissioning arrangements; and
- whether the proposed placement is likely to support the learner's agreed outcomes.

Decisions will be based on the individual learner and the available evidence. The school will not make decisions based on generalised assumptions about a diagnosis, disability or protected characteristic.

Where the school concludes that it cannot meet the learner's needs, it will provide the local authority or commissioner with a clear written response explaining the reasons for its decision.

Confirmation of Placement

A placement will only be confirmed when:

- the school has issued its written agreement to admit the learner;
- the local authority or commissioner has confirmed the placement in writing;
- the funding level and any additional resources have been agreed;
- a signed Individual Placement Agreement or equivalent commissioning agreement has been received;
- all necessary educational, medical, safeguarding and risk information has been provided; and
- an appropriate start date and transition plan have been agreed.

The school will not normally agree a start date until these arrangements have been completed.

Responsibilities/Guidance

- The local authority shall be responsible for the decision as to consult through the SEN panel.
- The principal shall be primarily responsible for implementing the admissions procedures and reporting to the Directors.
- The principal along with SLT and class teacher will be responsible for obtaining full relevant information concerning a potential admission as soon as he/she has been notified of the possibility. This will include participating fully in the school entry planning meeting processes.

Parents and Carers are expected to:

- provide complete, accurate and up-to-date information about the learner;
- attend admissions and transition meetings where reasonably possible;
- support the learner to participate in suitable visits or assessments;
- inform the school about relevant educational, medical, safeguarding or risk information;
- provide details of the learner's current and previous educational settings;
- read and acknowledge the school's relevant policies and expectations; and
- work in partnership with the school and placing authority to support a successful transition.

Relevant information may be obtained from and shared with the local authority, current or previous educational settings and other professionals where there is an appropriate lawful basis. Consent will be sought where consent is required.

Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

The school will administer its admissions arrangements fairly, consistently and transparently.

The school will not unlawfully discriminate against a learner or prospective learner because of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity. This includes discrimination because of a protected characteristic associated with another person or a protected characteristic that the school believes the learner has.

The school recognises that learners applying to an independent special school will have a range of disabilities and special educational needs. A decision that the school cannot meet a learner's individual needs is not, by itself, unlawful discrimination. However, the school will consider reasonable adjustments and available support before deciding that a placement cannot be offered.

Any assessment, visit, trial day or admissions meeting will be reasonably adjusted to avoid placing a disabled learner at a substantial disadvantage.

Concerns About the Admissions Process

A parent, carer, local authority or commissioner may ask the Schools Director to review whether the school's admissions process was followed correctly. A request for review should identify the part of the process about which there is concern and provide any relevant additional evidence.

A review will consider whether the decision was reached fairly, consistently and on the basis of sufficient information. It does not require the school to offer a placement where it remains satisfied that it cannot safely or appropriately meet the learner's needs.

Complaints about the way the school administered its admissions process may be raised through the school's complaints procedure.

Where the concern relates to a local authority's decision about the school or type of provision named in an EHC plan, the parent or young person should use the local authority's disagreement-resolution, mediation or SEND Tribunal arrangements.

Appendix 1

