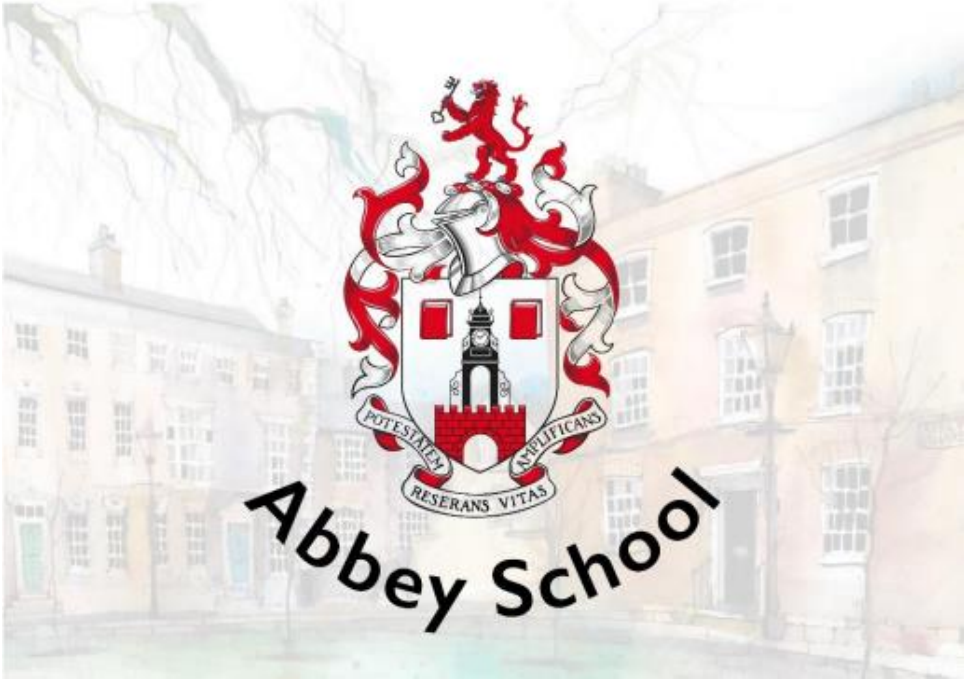


Admissions POLICY

Abbey School

Version number	3.0	Date	October 2026
Adopted by	Senior Leadership Team	Date	October 2026
Last reviewed on	Autumn 2026		
Next review due by	Autumn 2027		

Other relevant policies:

Attendance policy

Safeguarding policies and procedures

Transition policy

Contents

1. Policy Statement 2
2. Aims 2
3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework 2
4. Equality and Non-Discrimination 3
5. School Designation and Specialist Provision 3
6. Admission Principles 3
   6.1. Admissions Panel 4
   6.2. Referral Routes 4
7. Admissions Procedure 4
   7.1. Stage 1: Initial Referral 4
   7.2. Stage 2: Documentation review 5
   7.3. Stage 3: Assessment Process (where required) 5
   7.4. Stage 4: Consideration by Admissions Panel 5
   7.5. Stage 5: Decision 6
8. Grounds for Declining a Placement 6
9. Capacity 6
10. Waiting List 7
11. Funding Arrangements 7
12. Transition Arrangements 7
13. Emergency Admissions 8
14. Safeguarding 8
15. Complaints and Appeals 8
16. Monitoring and Review 8

Appendix A: Application process parent initiated by preference expressed to local authority 9

Appendix B: Application process Local Authority initiated 10

1. Policy Statement

Abbey School is an independent special school providing specialist education for children and young people aged 4 to 18 years with autism and associated special educational needs and disabilities.

The school is committed to ensuring that admissions arrangements are fair, transparent, consistent and compliant with relevant legislation. All admissions decisions will be made in the best interests of the child or young person and with due regard to the school's ability to meet identified needs whilst maintaining the efficient education, welfare and safety of existing pupils.

The school recognises that each child and young person presents with a unique profile of strengths, needs and aspirations. Consequently, all applications are considered on an individual basis.

This policy outlines the principles, criteria and procedures governing admission to the school.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure openness, fairness and transparency in admissions procedures.
- Support the identification of placements that best meet the needs of children and young people.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- Promote equality of opportunity and non-discrimination.
- Ensure the effective use of school resources.
- Facilitate successful transition and integration into the school community.
- Protect the welfare, safety and educational outcomes of all pupils.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 Years (2015).
- Equality Act 2010.
- Independent School Standards.
- Relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance.
- Relevant local authority commissioning arrangements.

The school acknowledges the principles of fairness, transparency and parental engagement reflected within the School Admissions Code 2021; however, admissions to independent special schools are primarily governed through SEND legislation, Education, Health and Care Plan processes and contractual arrangements with commissioning authorities rather than the statutory admissions framework that applies to maintained schools and academies.

4. Equality and Non-Discrimination

The school is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

No child or young person will be treated less favourably on the grounds of:

- Disability;
- Race;
- Ethnicity;
- Nationality;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Gender reassignment;
- Sexual orientation;
- Socio-economic background; or
- Family circumstances.

The school will consider and implement reasonable adjustments wherever practicable to enable access to education and school life in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Admissions decisions will be based solely on whether the school can appropriately meet identified needs and whether admission is compatible with the education, welfare and safety of other pupils.

5. School Designation and Specialist Provision

The school provides specialist education for pupils whose primary area of need is autism.

Many pupils also present with additional needs including:

- Learning disabilities;
- Speech, language and communication needs;
- Sensory processing differences;
- Social, emotional and mental health needs;
- Anxiety-related presentations;
- Challenging behaviours;
- Medical needs;
- Physical needs; and
- Complex profiles requiring multi-disciplinary support.

The school delivers education through a highly structured, autism-informed approach supported by specialist teaching, therapeutic interventions and individualised programmes.

6. Admission Principles

The school's admissions process is underpinned by the following principles:

- Child-centred decision making.
- Transparency and consistency.
- Partnership with families and professionals.
- Evidence-informed practice.
- Safeguarding and welfare.
- Compatibility with the efficient education of existing pupils.
- Effective use of specialist resources.

Each application is assessed individually and no automatic right to a place exists.

6.1. Admissions Panel

Admissions decisions will be made by an Admissions Panel.

The panel may have involvement from the following roles depending on the level of assessment required to come to a decision:

- Executive Principal;
- Head of School;
- Assistant Head (Positive Behaviour Support & Transition);
- Therapies staff;
- Behaviour Analysts
- Other senior leaders as required.

The panel may seek specialist advice from external agencies where appropriate.

The Admissions Panel will maintain written records of decisions and the reasons underpinning them.

6.2. Referral Routes

Admission into Abbey School is via local authority placement and, therefore, most referrals come directly from local authorities as part of the EHCP or IDP process. However, initial enquiries regarding the suitability of placement for a young person are also welcomed from parents and carers, schools, social care services, health professionals and other education providers.

7. Admissions Procedure

7.1. Stage 1: Initial Referral

The school receives referral information and supporting documentation.

This will normally include:

- EHCP/IDP or draft EHCP/IDP;
- Educational reports;
- Psychology reports;
- Therapy assessments;
- Medical information;

- Risk assessments;
- Attendance information; and
- Behaviour records where relevant.

7.2. Stage 2: Documentation review

The Admissions Panel reviews available evidence and determines whether sufficient information exists to proceed.

Additional documentation may be requested where necessary.

7.3. Stage 3: Assessment Process (where required)

The school may undertake:

- Observation in the current setting;
- Meetings with parents or carers;
- Discussions with professionals;
- Visits by the child or young person;
- Home visits;
- Assessment activities; and
- Review of specialist reports.

The extent of assessment activity will vary and will largely depend on the richness of information received in the initial consultation.

7.4. Stage 4: Consideration by Admissions Panel

The Admissions Panel will consider:

Need

Whether the school can meet:

- Educational needs;
- Social communication needs;
- Emotional needs;
- Therapeutic needs;
- Medical needs; and
- Safeguarding needs.

Compatibility

Whether admission is likely to be compatible with:

- Existing peer groups;
- Curriculum delivery;
- Class organisation;
- Staffing structures;
- Behavioural profiles within classes;

- Health and safety requirements.

Resources

Whether:

- Appropriate classroom provision exists;
- Suitable staffing is available;
- Relevant therapeutic support can be provided;
- Physical accommodation is appropriate;
- Necessary funding arrangements are achievable.

7.5. Stage 5: Decision

A decision will be communicated to the commissioning authority or family in writing.

The school may:

- Offer a placement;
- Offer a placement subject to conditions;
- Place the child on a waiting list; or
- Decline to offer placement.

Reasons will be provided where admission is not approved.

8. Grounds for Declining a Placement

The school may conclude that admission is not appropriate where:

- The child's needs cannot reasonably be met.
- Required therapeutic provision is unavailable.
- Appropriate staffing cannot be secured.
- Health and safety risks cannot be managed safely.
- Admission would significantly impact upon the welfare or education of existing pupils.
- The physical environment is unsuitable despite reasonable adjustments.
- Required funding arrangements cannot be agreed.

Such decisions will be evidence-based and recorded appropriatel

9. Capacity

The school is currently registered to accommodate up to 150 pupils.

Admissions are also dependent upon:

- Suitable classroom places;

- Staff-to-pupil ratios;
- Peer group composition;
- Therapeutic capacity;
- Behavioural dynamics;
- Health and safety considerations.

Availability of a numerical place alone does not guarantee admission.

10. Waiting List

Where a place cannot immediately be offered, applicants may be placed on a waiting list.

Priority may be influenced by:

- Compatibility with existing provision;
- Availability of suitable class placements;
- Urgency of need;
- Date of consultation;
- Local authority requirements.

Inclusion on a waiting list does not constitute an offer of a school place.

11. Funding Arrangements

Admission is subject to:

- Agreement of placement by the commissioning authority;
- Confirmation of funding;
- Completion of contractual arrangements;
- Agreement regarding any enhanced provision required.

The school reserves the right to review placement viability should funding arrangements materially change.

12. Transition Arrangements

The school recognises the importance of effective transition planning.

Transition programmes may include:

- Home visits;
- School visits;
- Visual transition resources;
- Gradual integration programmes;
- Meetings with families and professionals;
- Individual transition plans.

Transition arrangements will be tailored to the needs of each pupil and will be managed by a named transition lead.

13. Emergency Admissions

The school does not routinely facilitate emergency admissions because of the importance of careful assessment and planning.

Where exceptional circumstances exist, the school will work collaboratively with commissioning authorities to determine whether an accelerated admissions process can be undertaken safely.

14. Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains paramount throughout the admissions process.

The school reserves the right to request and review all information necessary to assess safeguarding risks and to determine whether appropriate arrangements can be implemented.

Any safeguarding concerns identified during the admissions process will be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

15. Complaints and Appeals

Parents, carers or commissioning authorities who are dissatisfied with an admissions decision should first raise their concerns with the Executive Principal.

A formal review may then be requested.

Where concerns remain unresolved, the matter may be referred to the Chair of the Advisory Board who may convene an independent admissions appeal panel.

This process does not remove or restrict any statutory rights relating to:

- Education, Health and Care Plans or Individual Development Plans;
- Local authority placement decisions; or
- Proceedings before the SEND Tribunal.

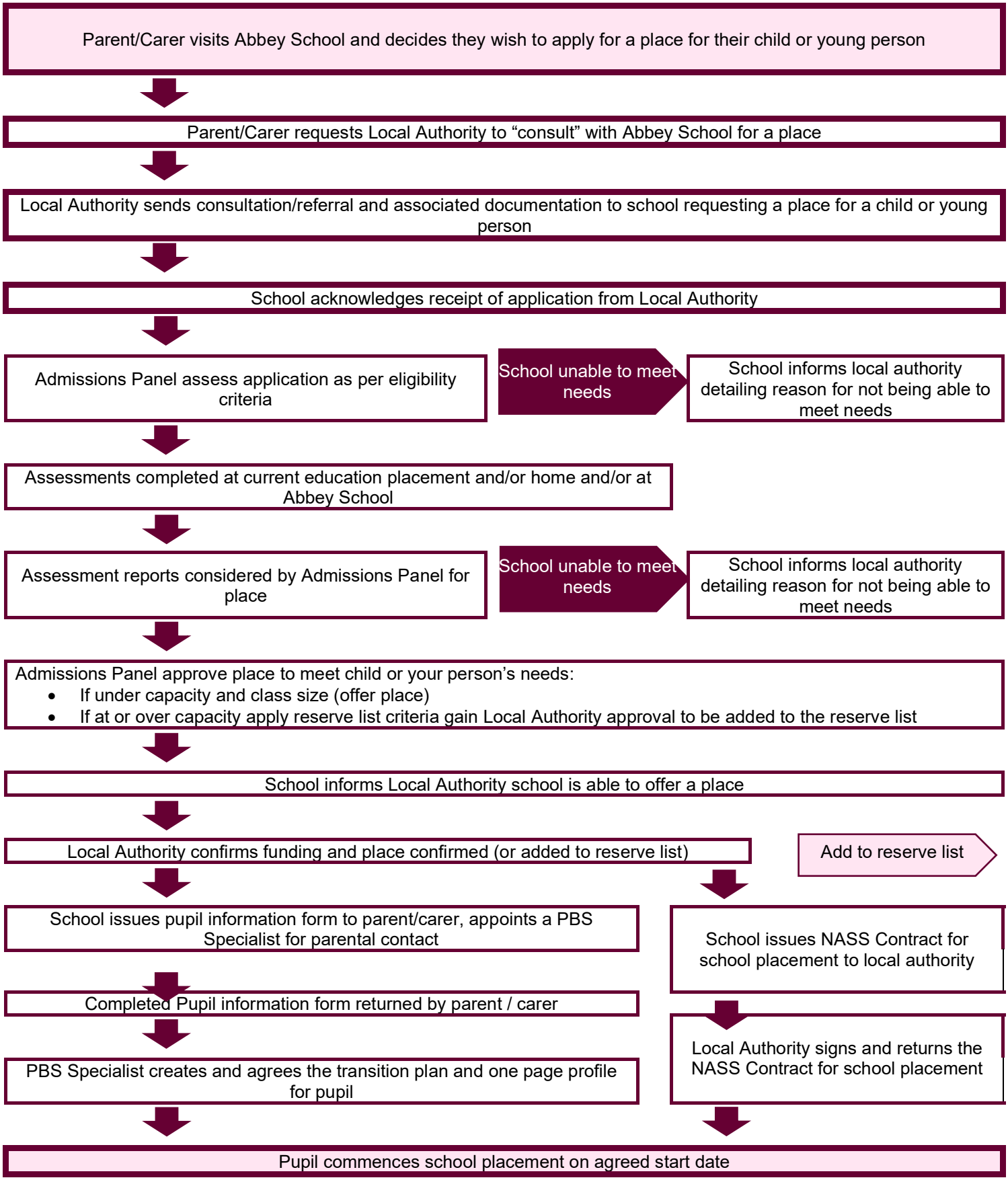
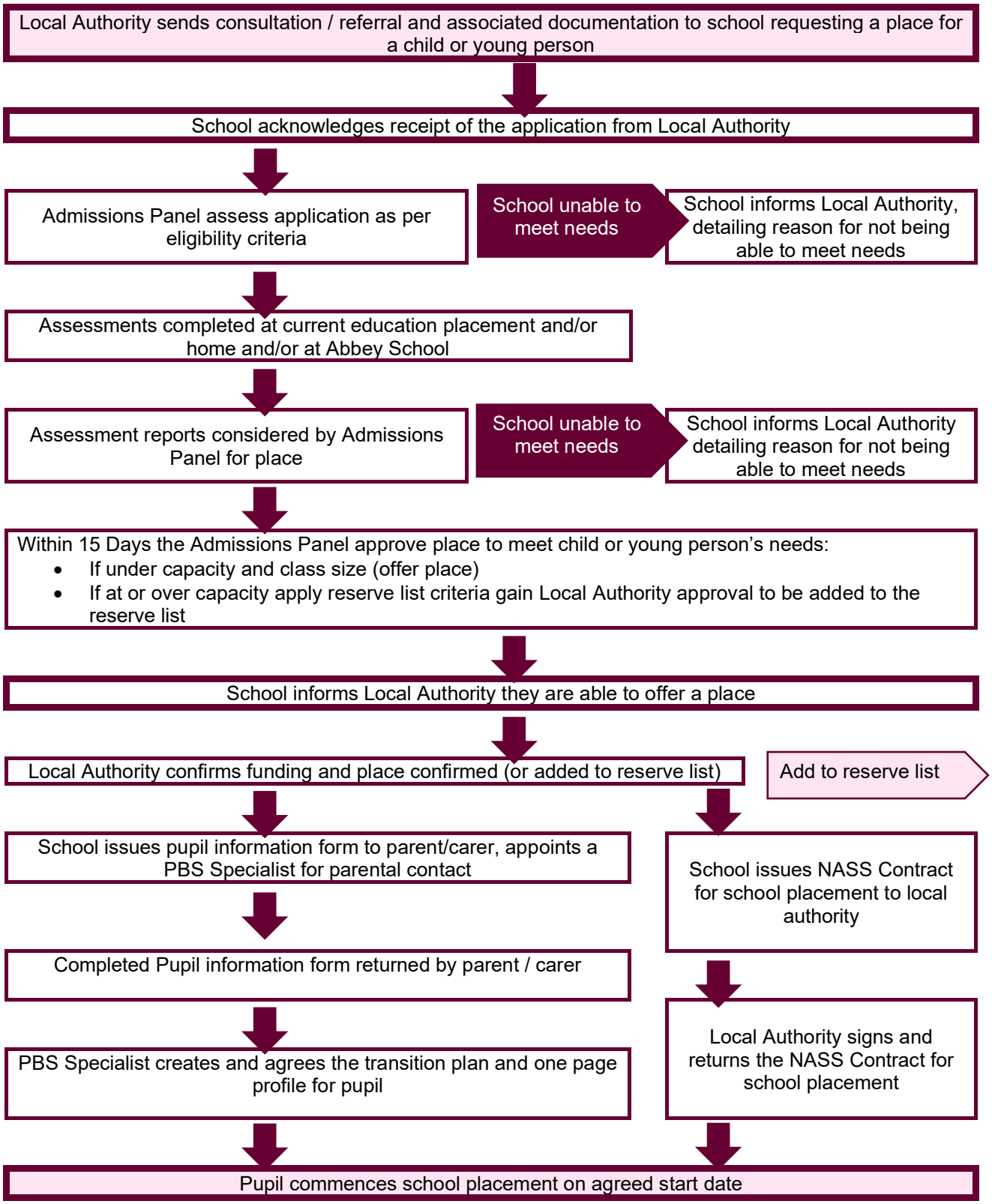
16. Monitoring and Review

The Executive Principal will monitor admissions arrangements annually to ensure:

- Compliance with legislation;
- Fairness and consistency of decision-making;
- Efficient operation of admissions procedures;
- Alignment with the school's strategic objectives.

This policy will be formally reviewed annually or sooner where changes in legislation, regulation or operational practice require amendment.

Appendix A: Application process parent initiated by preference expressed to local authority



Appendix B: Application process Local Authority initiated