



Admissions Policy

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Other relevant policies:

Attendance policy

Safeguarding policies and procedures

Transition policy

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Introduction

Abbey School is an independent special school catering for children and young people with autism who may have additional learning and development needs and/or who may exhibit behaviours that challenge. The needs of our pupils are very complex and it is therefore, important for the school to ensure that the admissions process accurately identifies the needs of pupils and whether it is possible for the school to meet those needs effectively.

I. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity regarding the criteria for admissions for local authorities, parents/carers and Abbey School's admissions panel, and to ensure that processes, procedures and decisions are fair, transparent and consistent.

This policy will outline the criteria for admissions, the admissions process and the system for appeals.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is written in the context of and in compliance with;

- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- School Admissions Code (2021)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)

Admission Criteria

I.1. Essential Criteria

- All pupils will be aged between 4-18 years and have a diagnosis of autism¹
- Pupils' may also exhibit behaviours described as challenging to families, services and/or themselves
- All pupils' will be in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Individual Development Plan (IDP), naming Abbey School as placement.
- Pupils' may also have associated diagnoses such as ADHD, epilepsy, PDA, OCD and/or other health or additional needs which may be met dependent on Abbey School's ability to provide the specialist support or specific environments required. This will be ascertained through admissions assessment.

I.2. Additional Factors

The following factors will further inform whether Abbey School is a suitable placement for the child or young person:

- An appropriate peer group along with academic and social compatibility with the group will be taken into consideration. Where available places cannot be created in the appropriate age/peer group, this may mean that a place cannot be offered at that time.
- Pupils are not grouped within strict academic years; however, they are grouped with pupils within the same key stage years. This provides the flexibility to ensure that peer groups and curriculum access levels are suited to each pupil.
- The number of pupils in each year group is limited based on the overall published admissions number for balance across the school and to minimise impact of the annual year 14 leavers.

¹ Lack of an autism diagnosis will not preclude admission if the pupil fits the general profile of the school and the school's pre-admissions assessment indicates the ability to meet needs.

- The number of pupils requiring a staffing level of 2:1 will be limited at any one time. Requiring such a staffing level will not preclude admission, however, consideration will be given at the time of application to the number of 2:1 provision packages currently being supported in line with the overall needs of the school. Staffing levels will be reviewed each term. Should additional resource be required then the cost of placement would be adjusted accordingly.
- For children and young people with a physical disability, consideration will be given to whether accessible places are available or whether it would be possible to make reasonable adjustments within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. Abbey School is located within listed buildings and as such does have limitations as to the environmental adjustments that are possible.
- If there is a secondary diagnosis, including but not limited to Down Syndrome, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Mental Health Needs and Genetic Disorders, consideration will be given as to whether these needs can be met within the staffing structure and expertise at the school. Should additional resource be required then the cost of placement would be adjusted accordingly.
- Consideration will be given as to whether long term medical needs can be accommodated within the staffing and provision model at the school. Medical needs requiring on site nursing care cannot usually be accommodated.
- All those with parental responsibility/guardianship should be in support of the placement and in agreement with the approaches, values and ethos of Abbey School. Continued support and partnership of those with parental responsibility/guardianship is essential for the success and viability of any placement. A thorough home-school agreement will be in place.
- The journey time to get to and from school will be a consideration for day pupils in line with the government issued Travel to school for children of compulsory school age (DfE, 2024). As a general rule, travel time for primary aged pupils should not exceed 45 minutes and for secondary aged pupils, should not exceed 75 minutes. Abbey School appreciates that due to the limited nature of SEND provision, that longer journey times may be unavoidable, and so this will not necessarily preclude admission.

Each application for admission is considered on an individual basis. In each case, our assessment process is required to evaluate the needs of the child or young person in line with the following factors set out in the SEND Code of Practice, 2015.

- Whether the school is unsuitable for the child/young person's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs.
- Whether attendance of the child or young person at Abbey School would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

Pupil Admission Number (PAN): 110

Admissions Process

Referrals for admission made to the school will normally be made by LAs. A range of detailed and current information concerning that pupils should accompany these referrals. Where this is not the case, the school will seek access to such information. Senior staff will go through all

information received to assess whether the young person meets the admissions criteria for the school and, if so, to consider whether a place is available in a suitable class/peer group.

Next steps taken by the school are determined by the documentation received. The school may:

- Request further documentation
- Observe the pupil in their current setting
- Conduct telephone or remote meetings with parents
- Conduct telephone or remote meetings with multi-agency professions (where applicable) for example, teachers, SENCO, social worker etc.
- Invite the pupil to visit Abbey School
- Visit the pupil at home

Parents wishing their child to attend Abbey School should contact their placing local authority to request that consultation paperwork is sent to Abbey School.

We encourage parents/carers and professionals to visit the school prior to stating their preference for a placement through one of our scheduled open afternoons. This enables families and professionals to consider whether the school may be a suitable placement for the child/young person concerned. We encourage families to visit a range of provisions to support them in their decision-making process. Where open afternoons are not scheduled then parents are welcome to arrange a telephone appointment with a member of the leadership team to find out further information about the school.

If any aspect of Abbey School's assessment process is may to cause distress or worry to a child or young person (for example, if a visit to a new setting may be difficult to manage) then we will endeavour to work with families and placing authorities to complete a thorough assessment process with reasonable adjustments in order to support the wellbeing of the child or young person concerned.

Abbey School staff will always seek to gain the views of the child or young person regarding their future educational provision wherever possible.

If assessment concludes that Abbey School is able to meet the needs of the child or young person, then a formal offer will be made to the placing Local Authority.

The placement will be offered under the terms and conditions of the National Schools Contract.

If the Local Authority accept the placement, then Abbey School will be named on the child or young person's EHCP/IDP.

Abbey School assumes that by being named on an EHCP, the placing Local Authority have agreed funding for the school place. If the Local Authority do not agree to the school place then parents/carers have the right to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).

Once a placement and start date has been agreed the process of planning transition and induction into Abbey School will be initiated.

New Pupil Transition

When a place has been confirmed and the funding agreed by the local authority, Abbey School will:

- Send out pre-admission information forms to the parent/carer to complete and return. The fully completed forms must be returned at least two weeks in advance of the start date.
- Send out visual supplements e.g. photographs of the school, the pupil's classroom and teachers.
- Allocate a lead practitioner to be the point of contact for parents/carers during the transition process.

The lead practitioner will work with the pupil, family, existing placement and placing authority to develop a personalised transition plan to ensure that transition into Abbey School is as smooth as possible for the child or young person concerned. Transition plans are entirely bespoke based on the needs of the pupil concerned.

Over-subscription Criteria

Should more applications be received for a particular year group place than we have places available, the following criteria will be worked through taken from the school admissions code (DfE, 2021).

1. Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children
2. And thereafter, the full, half or step siblings who are twins or children from a multiple birth or existing pupils, living permanently at the same address
3. And thereafter, the full, half or step siblings of existing pupils living permanently at the same address.
4. And thereafter, the qualifying children of staff who have sufficient service
5. And thereafter, children of UK service personnel
6. And thereafter, children who are eligible for pupil premium.
7. And thereafter, children who are eligible for service premium
8. And thereafter, children who are twins or children from a multiple birth
9. Lastly, distance from school as defined by time using route planner software from home postcode to school postcode.

Waiting list

A waiting list will be established if:

- During the school year, where the PAN has not been reached but the maximum class size has been reached within an area of school.
- During the school year, where the PAN has not been reached and the maximum class sizes have not been reached within an area of the school, but the introduction of a pupil would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.
- During each school year, where the school has reached PAN plus the oversubscription criteria.

When a place becomes available in a class/year group, the relevant local authority will be notified.

Tribunals

Abbey School is able to support SEND Tribunal appeals, however, the number of tribunal cases undertaken by the school will be limited at any one time due to the requirement to hold school places open for extended periods of time. It may, therefore, be possible that the school is unable to support a tribunal appeal at a given time.

Emergency Admissions

Due to the need our children and young people have for a planned transition, we do not take emergency admissions. However, we endeavour to work as responsively as possible with Local Authorities and with families to provide a start date as soon as is feasible, taking into account the needs of the incoming pupil and their families and balancing this with the needs of the existing pupils at Abbey School.

Appeals

Any parent or commissioner wishing to question a decision not to admit a pupil to Abbey School should, in the first instance, raise the matter in writing with the Principal. The Principal will respond to the concern in writing within five working days, giving the reason for the decision.

If the parent or commissioner feels that the concerns have not been fully and fairly considered, they should write to the Chair of the Advisory Board (chair@abbey.school) who will convene an appeals committee. Appeals will be heard by an appeal panel comprising two members of the Abbey School Advisory Body and one independent panel member.

1. The hearing will examine in further detail
 - a. The context of the original decision
 - b. Any additional evidence that may support the appeal (parent, LA, medical professional etc)
 - c. The appeal panel will then form a final response, after consideration of all supporting evidence. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.
2. The minutes from the appeal hearing will be sent to the parent/carer and local authority within 10 working days.

Funding, Contracts & Fees

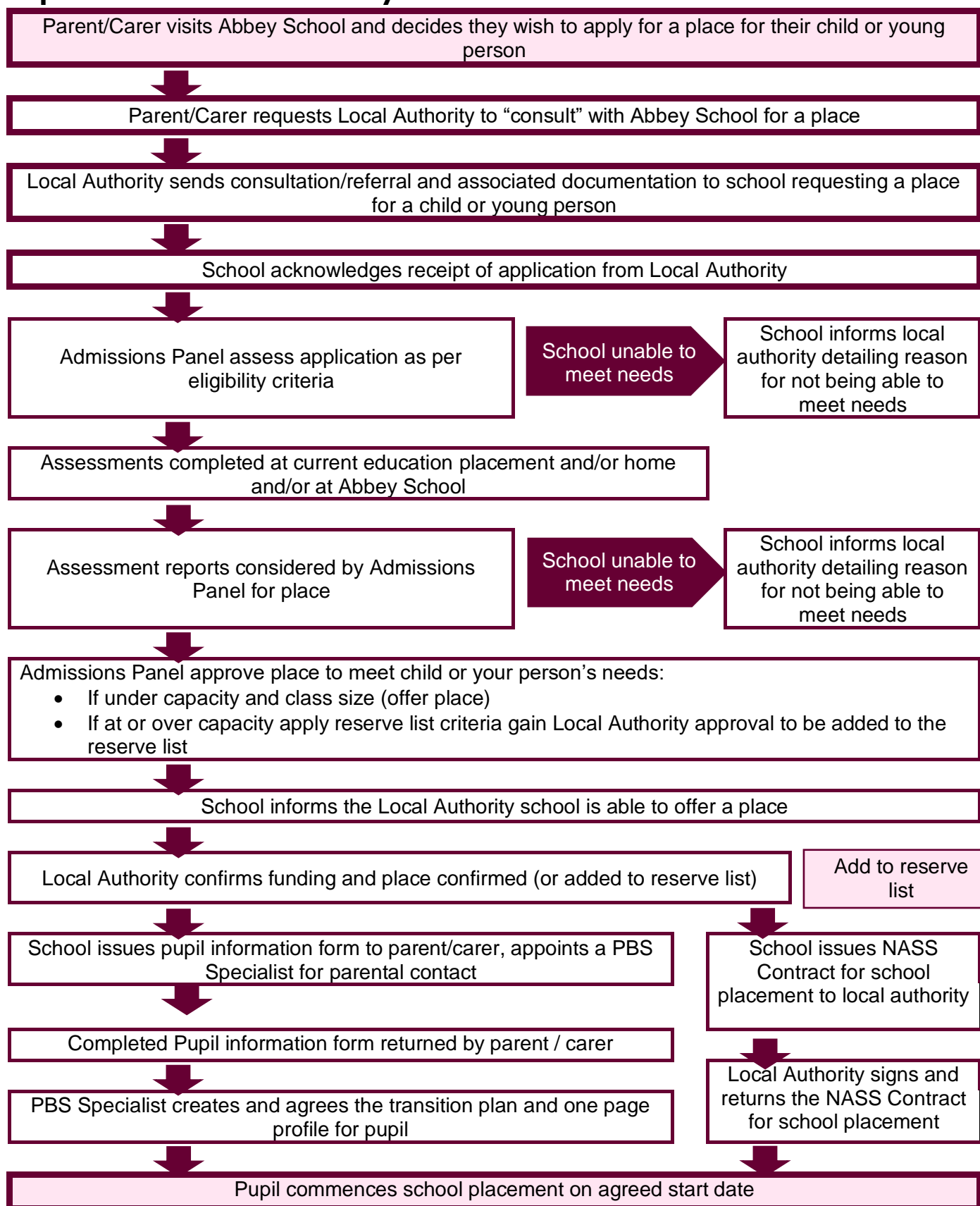
- All places at Abbey School will be offered under the terms and conditions of the National Schools Contract.
- All pupil's attending Abbey School are funded by the Local Authority in which they reside, and it is therefore, essential to have agreement in writing from the placing Local Authority to fund the School Placement.
- Contractually, all pupils will receive a range of supports. Additional reasonable services will be provided to enable Abbey School to meet additional specific individual needs as specified in the EHCP or agreed by the Local Authority following the School's pre-placement assessment. These services will be confirmed prior to the contract being issued.
- Where helpful, support to attend medical appointments local to the school is provided at no additional cost. However, support and expenses to enable pupil's attendance for non-emergency medical appointments (e.g. consultants, hospital investigations) not local to the school may incur charges for transport and additional staff. This is to be

agreed between the Placing Authority & Local Health Authority². Incontinence supplies/support must remain the responsibility of the Placing Authority.

- Complex medical procedures that require additional support and training to non-medical staff will be considered through a joint meeting between senior School staff and appropriate medical professionals. Should Abbey School feel able to meet a given need, there will be a tiered system for allocating the additional costings required to support high health needs.
- Highly specialist dietary needs can be supported but may require additional funding. Dietetic support must remain the responsibility of the Placing Authority.
- Fees should be paid in line with the agreements made between Abbey School and the Placing Authority as detailed in the NAS Contract. Fees should be invoiced to one funding provider only.

² Department of Health Publication Who Pays? Establishing the Responsible Commissioner
<http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2011/DEP2011-0404.pdf>

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



Appendix 2: Application process if Local Authority initiated

