



**THE
WHITE
HOUSE
SCHOOL**

Admissions Policy

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1. Context

The White House School is an Independent Specialist school. We are part of an ethical and progressive organisation that believes it can achieve real change for pupils and their families.

The White House School is situated within BCP local authority and offers a specialist learning provision which emphasises the development of core academic understanding, encourages creativity, celebrates outdoor learning and promotes the growth of essential life skills. We aim to establish a safe, creative and vibrant environment where children feel challenged and supported in their learning, achieving high levels of wellbeing and academic success. We aim to nurture and develop mutual respect, tolerance, teamwork, perseverance, kindness and good manners. We adhere to the values of **ARC**:

- **Ambition**
- **Resilience**
- **Community**

The White House School operates within the SPELL framework. SPELL is The National Autistic Society's framework for understanding and responding to the needs of children and adults on the autism spectrum. It focuses on five principles that have been identified as vital elements of best practice in autism and emphasises ways to change the environment and our approaches to meet the specific needs of each person.

SPELL stands for Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal and Links:

Structure	Structure makes the world a more predictable, accessible and safer place. We can support people on the autism spectrum in creating structured environments using visual information.
Positive (approaches and expectations)	We must seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self-esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.
Empathy	We must try to see the world from the standpoint of the autistic child or adult, knowing what it is that motivates or interests them but importantly what may also frighten, preoccupy or otherwise distress them.
Low arousal	Approaches and the environment need to be calm and ordered in such a way so as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
Links	Autistic people, their parents or advocates should be seen as partners. Open links and communication will reduce the risk of misunderstanding, confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at the school
- Set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply
- Explain how to appeal against a decision not to offer your child a place

3. Legislation

The school will set out in this admissions policy the process and selection criteria for placement. As an Independent School we are required to have a written policy on admissions. This policy meets that requirement.

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):

- [School Admissions Code 2021](#)
- [School Admission Appeals Code](#)
- Equality Act 2011
- Education Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)

4. Definitions

The **normal admissions round** is the period during which parents can apply for state-funded school places at the school's normal point of entry, using the common application form provided by their home local authority.

Looked after children are children who, at the time of making an application to a school, are:

- In the care of a local authority, or
- Being provided with accommodation by a local authority in exercise of its social services functions

Previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they:

- Were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 or the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or
- Became subject to a child arrangements order, or
- Became subject to a special guardianship order

This includes children who appear to have been in state care outside of England and have ceased to be in state care due to being adopted.

A child reaches **compulsory school age** on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

5. How to apply

Applications for placements usually come via a Local Authority SEND department. It is however possible to apply directly if parents intend to fund a school placement via their own means.

Applications via Local Authority SEND departments:

1. Parents are advised to book a tour of the school. This will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of the provision on offer as well as an opportunity to meet school Leadership. Parents are advised not to bring the potential new pupil with them at this stage in order to allow for a candid and direct dialogue.

2. If you feel our education offer may be appropriate for your child/dependent then you should ask your Local Authority Case Officer (CO) to make a placement consultation with the school. Your CO is obliged to do this if you request it.
3. The school admissions administrator will receive and process your child/dependent's EHC plan and associated documents. An initial response will then be provided to your CO indicating whether the school considers it likely that they have the resources and expertise required to support the potential new pupil. This response will be approved by the School Board. This is not typically sent to parents, but a request can be made for this.
4. If the initial response indicates that the school may be able to meet the needs of the potential new pupil, then we will make arrangements to observe the child in their current setting and invite them in for an assessment session in school. The Headteacher will oversee the remainder of the admissions process and will determine if the school feels able to meet the needs of the potential new pupil. This arrangement may be amended at the direction of the Headteacher if it is deemed that reasonable adjustments are required to support a pupil to access the assessments.
5. Following the assessment session, the Headteacher will write a report which will be sent to the parents/carers of the potential new pupil as well as the Local Authority CO and Brokerage team. This will constitute either an offer of a placement or a determination that the school does not feel able to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.

Applications directly via a parent of carer:

1. It is possible for parents to make a direct application to the school, but it is necessary to consider the financial implications of self-funding a placement. The school is not block funded by a public body and so the resource base required via placement fees reflects the entire cost of delivering a specialist education.
2. If the parent of the potential new pupil has an EHC Plan this should be sent to the school's admissions team. If the child does not have an EHC Plan the parent/carer should write a cover letter expressing a request for an initial consideration of a placement request.
3. If the parent/carer does not have an EHC plan for the potential new pupil, then a school admissions application form must be completed and returned to the admissions team.
4. The admissions team will prepare an initial response which will be sent directly to the parent/carer of the potential new pupil. This response will be approved by the School Board. This will identify whether the school feels it is probable that it has the resources and expertise required to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.
5. If the school feels that there is a reasonable expectation that it can meet the needs of a potential new pupil, then the potential new pupil will be invited to attend an assessment session. Following the assessment, the Headteacher will write a report which will either constitute the offer of placement or a determination that the school is unable to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.

The school will endeavour at all times to reply to Local Authority placement consultations within 14 days of receipt during term time. The 14 days begin from the receipt of a full application in the school's required format.

The school will endeavour to respond to parent applications within the same time frame. If a face-to-face assessment is assessed as being reasonably appropriate the school will offer this at the next available opportunity. The school can facilitate one face-to-face assessment, per curriculum pathway, each week during term time.

6. Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Parents are entitled to request a place for their child outside of their normal age group and should make this clear during the application process. The school will consider this application and conduct diagnostic assessments to form

their own judgement on the most appropriate age group for admission. However, it is to be noted that, at The White House School, we are a specialist SEN provision which places great emphasis on differentiated learning, therefore the need for pupils to be taught in year groups outside a child's normal age group, should not necessarily apply.

Decisions on requests for admission outside the normal age group will be made on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, this will include taking account of:

- Parents' views
- Information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional
- Whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The Headteacher's views

Wherever possible, requests for admission outside a child's normal age group will be processed as part of the main admissions round. They will be considered on the basis of the admission arrangements laid out in this policy, including the oversubscription criteria listed further on. Applications will not be treated as a lower priority if parents have made a request for a child to be admitted outside the normal age group.

Parents will always be informed of the reasons for any decision on the year group a child should be admitted to. Parents do not have a right to appeal if they are offered a place at the school, but it is not in their preferred age group.

7. Allocation of places

Admission number

The school does not provide a specific number of spaces or allocations per academic year. The school releases spaces according to availability within the school. This availability is not a strict measure of possible spaces within a class but is a subjective measure based on the needs of the cohort and the communication and learning approaches of on-roll pupils. As such the release of spaces is dependent on the judgement of school leadership as to the capacity of the school to meet the needs of more pupils with the resourcing the school has, and the current allocation of resourcing based on need of the pupils on roll.

In general, however, our capacity is between 6-10 pupils per class. The school offers three classes as part of our Curiosity Curriculum Pathway and two classes within our Discovery Curriculum Pathway. All pupils must be aged 6 and above to join our school.

Oversubscription criteria

In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order until all places are filled. Highest priority will be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school. The following criteria will then be applied:

1. Pupils who currently attend a school or service operated by the parent group. This can colloquially be referred to as a 'feeder school or service'.

2. The date of application for consultation of a placement at the school. This will be the date at which the first consultation email or letter was received that meets the school's requirements for an application for placement.
3. Priority will next be given to children with siblings at the school. Siblings include step siblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children living permanently at the same address. Priority will not be given to children with siblings who are former pupils of the school.

Tie break

In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the school will use random allocation as a tie breaker to decide between applicants. This process will be independently verified.

Children below compulsory school age

Where children below the school's entry age are offered a place at the school, they will be entitled to attend the school full-time once they have turned 6 years old. Applications are welcome from the first day of the Autumn term of the preceding year.

8. In-year admissions

Parents can apply for a place for their child at any time. Likewise, if there are spaces available in the year group and curriculum class that is assessed as being appropriate, your child will be offered a place.

If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. We will not normally conduct assessments unless there is a space that has been assessed as, with reasonable belief, would be appropriate for the potential new pupil. This arrangement may be waived by the Headteacher in consultation with the potential new pupil's parents or carers.

9. Admissions Criteria

The school admissions process is a two-stage process with oversight from the organisation's directors as well as the school's Headteacher. The process is supported by an admissions administrator. The school has the expertise and resources to meet the following needs (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Presentation of ASC need, including delayed receptive and expressive processing, sensory processing needs, restricted and/or repetitive patterns of behaviour, limited social imagination and inflexibility of thought
- Social, emotional and mental health needs which present as sensory withdrawal or communication shutdown relating to being overwhelmed by communication or sensory or social inputs
- ADHD

The school does not have the resources and facilities to be able to meet the following presentations of need (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Physical expressions of need targeting peers or adults
- Emotional dysregulation presenting as targeted negative communication towards peers
- Dysregulation leading to destruction of property or self-harming and/or self-endangering acts or actions

The school considers any presentation of need that has not been identified for more than 3 years prior to application as being historic. This need will inform the school's overall picture of need, but it will not be used directly in the consideration of the school's ability to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.

10. Appeals

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you will be informed why admission was unsuccessful and be given information about the process for hearing appeals. If you wish to appeal, you must set out the grounds for your appeal in writing and send it to the following address:

The School Board
The White House School
170 Magna Road
Wimborne
BH213AP

Or send electronically to reception@thewhitehouseschool.org marked as **Confidential – Appeals Application FAO Directors**.