

CONTENTS	Page
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0 REFERRALS	1
3.0 RESPONDING TO REFERRALS.....	1
4.0 SUPPORTING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS	2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the arrangements regarding admission to Options Higford School and Care Services

Implementation: It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

Compliance: This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

2.0 REFERRALS

Options Higford accepts referrals from Local Authorities and their partners for prospective children / young people who would benefit from specialist education and care primarily designed for those with an autistic spectrum condition. Referrals may come directly to Higford or via Central Office. The school and care home is able to cater for children and young people with severe, moderate and mild learning difficulties in addition to their autism. The school would not expect to provide for students with average or above average ability whose overall progress across the curriculum is in line with their ability. Options Higford would not expect to cater for students whose primary needs are related to an attachment disorder, although this may be an additional diagnosis, nor those whose level of dangerousness would be likely to put at risk the wellbeing of other children. However, it is recognised that students are likely to exhibit behaviours that may challenge resulting from their Autism and Learning Difficulties.

3.0 RESPONDING TO REFERRALS

1. When a referring agency or agencies approaches Options Higford they will be dealt with promptly, courteously and effectively.
2. Options Higford will seek to establish the status of the enquiry, distinguishing between:
 - requests for information about referrals, fees and the availability of places;
 - a request to ascertain in principle if the school and / or care home would be able to consider a referral regarding a specific child / young person;
 - formal referral for a place;
 - a referral for an emergency placement;
 - a request from a Special Education Needs Tribunal to establish if the school could provide a place that would meet a young person's needs.
3. Where the enquiry is for information or to ascertain whether in principle Options Higford could consider a referral, Options Higford will respond in writing with the required information.

4. Where a formal referral is being made, Options Higford will commence to gather the initial information. This will include ensuring that the referring agency or agencies has up-to-date information about the school and / or care home, its fees and the availability of places that they are aware of the referral process and the provision currently being made for the prospective child / young person.
 - a. Once all the required information has been provided to Options Higford for a referral, admission panel will consider this referral. This will be done within 10 working days of the information being provided to the school. The admission panel can decide that:
 - i. the school / care home cannot meet this child / young person's needs
 - ii. more information is required before a decision can be made
 - iii. that it appears that the school / care home can meet this child / person's needs.
 - b. Options Higford will then complete its referral process by arranging for appropriate staff to carry out a pre-admission assessment of the young person; this will be at the school's expense.
 - c. The school's pre-admission assessment will include meetings with the child / young person, their parents or guardians and the service(s) currently or most recently supporting the student. The assessment will build on the referral information and will cover the following areas:
 - The child / young person's primary need is for a service catering for students with an autistic spectrum disorder and additional learning difficulty.
 - Consider issues of dangerousness, in particular any history of arson, sexualised assault, self-harm and physical attacks on others.
 - Particularly for young people who are aged 16 or more, evidence that previous placements have failed to meet the young person's needs and whether the school / care home would have the time necessary to provide the stability and continuity required to meet their needs.
 - Whether conflicts between the child / young person's family and providers have undermined previous placements; if so what arrangements have been made to resolve the underlying roots of the conflicts.
 - d. The report of this assessment will then be considered by the admissions panel who will decide whether or not to make a definite offer of a placement to the referring agencies. Options Higford aims to complete its assessment and to decide on a definite placement offer within 10 working days of starting the process.

4.0 SUPPORTING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. Once the placement of a child at school has been agreed, then the admission process begins. This is a flexible process that is designed to support four outcomes:
 - firstly, led by the needs and wishes of the young person, enabling them to have the familiarity they require about the school to reduce any anxiety and to help them understand where they will be moving to live
 - secondly, to support school staff to make the necessary arrangements to promote the child's successful placement at school
 - thirdly, to support the family or guardians to develop the trust and confidence required for them to support and promote the placement
 - lastly, to ensure that all administrative details of the placement have been agreed and that contracts have been agreed between the school and the funding agencies.
2. The timing of each admission will be individually tailored to the needs for the child / young person but Options Higford will actively work to promote timely placements and will seek to ensure that the admissions process is not unduly extended.

3. The admissions process will always require staff to visit the young person where they are currently living; it will normally also involve the young person visiting Options Higford unless it is agreed that this would not be in the best interests of the prospective student.