



Arbour House School

Admissions Policy

Date of Issue	November 2023
First issue date	July 2017
Version number	5
Next review date	November 2025
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Signed off by	Arbour House School Governing Body
Distributed to	Internal/External

Introduction

Arbour House School is registered for children and young people aged 6-18 years with complex social and communication needs including autism. It operates as an independent co-educational special school which provides up to 60 places across two school sites, with a Lower School in Weymouth, and an Upper School in Dorchester.

The school is owned and managed by Potential Ltd (trading as Potens).

Aims

The purpose of this Admissions Policy is to provide clarity regarding the criteria for admissions for local authorities, parents/carers, and other professionals to ensure that the process and decisions are fair and consistent.

This policy will outline the criteria for admissions. It has been written with reference to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice 2015 and approved by the Board of Proprietors and will be reviewed bi-annually. It is available on the school website or upon request.

Admissions Process

Arbour House School welcomes parents/carers and professionals to visit the school to enable families, carers and local authorities to consider whether the school might be suitable for the young person. We encourage parents/carers to visit a range of provisions in order to get a feel for the type of provision which may be suitable and to help in the decision-making process. We may also review documents such as Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, Annual Reviews and other specialist reports at this early stage to give an indication of whether Arbour House School might be a suitable option to consider.

Admissions Criteria

All pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

All pupils will have complex learning difficulties (as specified in their Education, Health and Care Plan).

Pupils will have social and communication difficulties, Autism/SLD/MLD/ADHD and/or other associated needs.

Pre-Placement Assessment

With the support of the local authority, the school's SENCo undertakes a Pre-Placement Assessment with the young person, their parents/carers and any relevant professionals. This can be in their current school setting, on site at Arbour House, or within the home, as appropriate.

As part of that assessment we aim to meet the young person to allow us to better understand what they find challenging and to consider more fully whether the learning environment that we are able to offer in a specialist school setting would enable that young person's needs to be met.

Many pupils have mental health difficulties as well as an ASC diagnosis for example.

We have Mental Health Champions and have ELSA and Thrive Practitioners so can support this to an extent, depending on the level of need, but requests for a specialist

SEMH setting or referrals for those who have significant levels of SEMH needs are not generally suitable placements for Arbour House.

When assessing referrals we aim to profile match as far as possible so account will be taken of the appropriate peer group and the effective education of other children with whom the child would be educated who may already be at the school. Academic, social, and emotional compatibility of the pupil with the existing cohort and the needs and difficulties those peers may have will form part of any decision made. Consideration will also need to be given to pupils whose physical vulnerability may put them at risk or who display behaviours that may put themselves and others at risk.

Many of our pupils have not engaged in their mainstream school/prior placement for a considerable period of time and need an alternative setting to try again to re-engage with learning. Many have found that a large school setting is too much to manage, so the actual size of the school and the number of other pupils in classes is also considered when assessing the suitability of pupils for Arbour House.

Pupils who are in a transition year, moving from Primary up into Secondary for example, can find the unfamiliarity of moving to a larger school, or the introduction of new routines, structures and expectations causes them to become extremely overwhelmed and therefore not manage the transition well. With all pupils we ensure that any transition is phased gradually and that pupils are well-supported in order to ensure the best possible chance of success. All pupils start on a phased timetable that is built slowly on an individual needs basis, and if it is deemed appropriate that pupils transition to Upper School, this is done at a stage appropriate time, when it is agreed that they can cope and will succeed as opposed to at a predetermined age-related point.

In a Primary setting where pupils remain in their same class and have the same teacher, the thought of moving up to a secondary provision where they may have to move around for specialist subject teachers can cause pupils to feel extremely anxious and unable to cope. This is why, whilst we use a specialist teacher model for older pupils to raise their academic attainment, it is the teachers that tend to move rooms, not the pupils. We aim to keep as much as possible stable, secure, and predictable for pupils that need that approach.

The number of pupils in each class will be limited to small group teaching for core curriculum subjects such as English, Maths and Science. For other subjects where there are benefits to pupils' learning to work with a larger group of peers, such as for PSHE and PE, pupils will be grouped together accordingly. This ensures that pupils continue to develop empathy and tolerance, advance socially and emotionally, and are best prepared for transitions and life beyond school.

All pupils will benefit from a bespoke, practical, life-centred education that takes account of individual interests and strengths, balanced by a modified National Curriculum Programme of Learning throughout their school day, as outlined in the School Prospectus, Mission Statement, related school policies and other information. We are aware that one size does not fit all and that this type of bespoke education

may not be best for every child and that will also be considered as part of our suitability assessment.

The initial assessment will indicate the appropriate and safe staffing levels too. Staffing levels are reviewed ongoingly, but more formally at the Annual Review of pupils' EHCP in liaison with parent/carers, SEN and other relevant professionals.

This detailed assessment, together with further information from parents/carers and professionals, is considered by the school to determine whether we would be able to meet the young person's needs and support them effectively and holistically to make the best progress possible. It is then sent to the Headteacher for consideration.

Decisions by the Headteacher will be guided by the SEN Code of Practice 2015 and also take into account whether the placement would be compatible with the efficient use of resources. Journey time will also be taken into consideration when making an offer of placement.

The school will endeavour to meet appropriate ethnic/cultural requirements. The school has a multi-faith ethos as its foundation and recognises the value and importance of tolerance of all faith systems and those with no faith.

Arbour House School is committed to equality of opportunities for pupils and aims to meet the needs of all by considering differences in:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Social
- Religious backgrounds

This also takes into consideration individual pupils' abilities, needs and learning styles. All reasonable actions and adjustments will be taken to meet these needs, but as in any school, there may be occasions when this is not possible. In these cases, if Arbour House was not deemed the appropriate school, then placement would not be offered.

A placement may not be offered if parents/carers are not in agreement with the school's methodologies and approach as outlined during visits and documents such as the Prospectus, our Mission Statement, and our Behaviour and Sanctions Policy. Obviously parents/carers need to be supportive and work in partnership with the school for placements to be successful.

Naming Arbour House School on an Education, Health and Care Plan

Arbour House School has been registered by the Department for Education (DfE) as an approved independent special school that can be named by parents and local authorities on Education, Health and Care Plans. Before naming a special school, Local Authorities must consult the school who will consider whether the young person meets the school's admissions criteria.

Tribunals

The decision to accept a tribunal is undertaken by Potens and the Headteacher.

Accessibility Plan

This document can be accessed on the school's website or upon request.

Emergency Admissions

Due to the needs our pupils have for a well-planned transition, we do not take emergency admissions. However, we endeavour to work as quickly and 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 other pupils already at the school.

Contract and Fees

If a decision to offer a place is made, the Headteacher will liaise with the local authority regarding contractual arrangements and fees.

Contractually, all pupils will receive a range of support requirements. Additional reasonable services will be provided to enable Arbour House School to meet additional specific individual needs as specified in the Education, Health and Care Plan or agreed by the Local Authority following the school's pre-placement assessment. These services will be confirmed prior to the contract being issued.

Complex medical procedures that require additional support and training to non-medical staff will be considered through a joint meeting between the Headteacher and appropriate medical professionals.

Fees should be paid termly and will be invoiced by Potens' Head Office only.

Appealing Against an Admissions Decision

To appeal an admissions decision made by the Headteacher of the School, parents/carers or local authorities should write to the Chair of Governors within 14 working days of receipt of the letter outlining the reasons for appealing the decision.

The Appeals Panel will be chaired a member of the Board of Proprietors and/or Governing Body who will review all of the assessment information and reason(s) for appeal and make a final decision within 5 working days of the appeal letter.