



Strawberry Lane School

Admission Policy

Approved by:	Adam Price - Headteacher	Issue Date: February 2025
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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the arrangements regarding how referrals are managed and followed up by Strawberry Lane School and Options LD & Autism Services.

The **purpose of this policy** is to recognise the importance of having a robust and clear referrals and admission procedure that sets out the processes that will be followed in managing and responding to referrals in a timely manner in order that we can demonstrate how we can or cannot meet an individual's needs.

Implementation: It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that all 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*.

The manner in which enquiries and referrals are handled is of key importance to the organisation as this may be the first time a referrer has come into contact with any Options Services. It is essential that all referrals are handled with the utmost courtesy and professionalism as this has an impact on the public perception of the service and our reputation with local commissioners and purchasers.

It is important that all referrals are treated in confidence and the same processes apply to all referrals for consistency of service and service delivery.

2 Admission Criteria

Students admitted to Strawberry Lane School will meet one of more of the criteria listed below:

- The student will be aged between 11 and 19 years
- The student will have a diagnosis of Autism / ASD / Asperger's Syndrome or display tendencies.
- The student will have an Education, Health and Care plan
- The Education, Health and Care plan will clearly specify the student's learning, educational, social, behavioural and medical needs
- The student will normally have been assessed as being below the average ability range of educational functioning
- The student may have one or more specific learning difficulties
- The student will express a commitment to the placement
- The student's parents/carers will express a commitment to the placement
- Where, despite a period of sustained reasonable adjustment strategies from the student's mainstream setting, the young person's needs continue to be unmet
- The student presents with other significant needs that require sustained specialist interventions, therapies and teaching approaches that can be more appropriately delivered within a complex needs school
- Strawberry Lane School will be named in Part 4 of their EHCP

Students can be admitted into Strawberry Lane School at any time of the academic year. Students can only be admitted to Strawberry Lane School when there is a vacancy, and the school can offer an appropriate peer group and curriculum and the admittance of the new student will not negatively impact on the education of students already placed here.

3 Referrals and responding to referrals

Strawberry Lane School accept referrals from Local Authorities, CCG's Families and advocates for prospective children and adults with a learning disability or diagnosis of Autism who would benefit from specialist education and or care services. Referrals may come directly to the Strawberry Lane School or via Central Office and all referrals are managed through a process centrally, which is coordinated by the Referrals Coordinator.

When a referring agency or agencies approaches Strawberry Lane School they will be dealt with **promptly**, courteously and effectively.

Strawberry Lane School 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/service would be able to consider a referral regarding a specific child/person;
- formal referral for a place in a school or service
- 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.
- Parent/family visits are welcomed after a referral has been made however a formal assessment process cannot commence without the support of the Local Authority/CCG

Where the enquiry is for information or to ascertain whether in principle the school/service could consider a referral, Strawberry Lane School will respond in writing with the required information.

Where a formal referral is being made, Strawberry Lane School will commence to gather the initial information using the referral form

The referral co-ordinator will ensure that the referring agency or agencies has up-to-date information about Strawberry Lane School and check that they are aware of the referral process.

Once all the required referral information has been provided to the Head Teacher, they, along with a Multi-disciplinary team (MDT) will consider the information gathered and make a decision if an assessment can be under taken to assess suitability and risks associated with a planned placement. A decision will be made within 48 hours of the information being received. The decision whether to move onto a formal assessment, request more information or decline the referral will be made by the Head Teacher in discussion with the MDT.

Where services have a dedicated clinical team, the clinical lead should be involved in the decision-making process in relation to the acceptance and admission of a person into the service. The final decision to accept a referral will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher. Key documents including the completed *Initial Assessment* and the *Impact Assessment* should be shared with the clinical lead to inform the decision-making process.

4 ASSESSING SUITABILITY FOR A PLACEMENT

When an enquiry has been received, the assessment lead (MDT/HT/Clinician) may invite the referrer to meet at Strawberry Lane School to discuss the initial needs of the individual requiring a placement. This discussion should include completion of the *Initial Assessment Tool*, and identify specific areas for the *Impact Assessment* to be completed. The meeting should also include when the placement is required from, and future assessment planning dates.

The Head Teacher will arrange for an assessment visit to be undertaken to meet the young person, this may be in their school or at their current placement or home. Where possible the assessment visit will be arranged as soon as possible according to the needs of the young person and their current placement ideally within 5-10 days of the initial referral being received.

All assessment visits will attempt to involve staff from placing school/placement and members of the MDT as required. Parents/Guardians will be invited to attend or be part of an assessment visit. Staff currently providing support to the child/person will also be involved in this assessment visit.

The following documentation will be completed in order to assess all individual needs and assess the risks for the child/person being referred and the risks to other children/people currently supported in the school/service.

- Referral Forms (as applicable)
- Initial Assessments Tool
- Admission Assessment Forms
- Risk Impact Assessment Forms

The MDT will consider the following areas when assessing a child/person for a place in Strawberry Lane School:

- Child/person's primary needs
- Risks presented by the child/person's behaviours
- Sensory Needs
- Communication Needs
- Health and Wellbeing
- Physical and Emotional Needs
- Environmental requirements
- Information included in the child's EHCP or SEN
- Any legal frameworks that apply, or could apply, to the child/ person; Inherent Jurisdiction Order/ Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard.
- Mental Capacity Assessments in line with the Mental Capacity Act and any Best Interest Decisions
- Current placement support plan and risk assessments • Placement history and important life events.

Once the assessment is completed the Head Teacher will consider all the information gathered and in discussion with the MDT decide if a suitable offer can be made. This process should be completed and a decision made within 2 working days of the assessment being completed. This process may take longer, because further advice may be required from the Lead Clinician, MDT and Head of Service.

5 SUPPORTING THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Once the placement of a young person has been agreed, then the admission planning process begins. This is a flexible process that is designed to support the following principles

- The transition plan is led by the needs and wishes of the young person, enabling them to have the familiarity they require about their new school/placement to reduce any anxiety and to help to provide a smooth transition process.



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- Admission Planning Meetings will be arranged involving the key people, as appropriate, which may be identified as part of the person's circle of support.
 - To allow Strawberry Lane School to make the necessary environmental arrangements to meet the needs of the young person and allow them to become familiar with their new environment.
 - To support the family or guardians to develop the trust and confidence required for them to support and promote the new placement and help to develop a smooth transition into Strawberry Lane School reducing anxiety and distress.
 - To ensure that all administration details are completed, fees agreed and the relevant legal frameworks are put in place to manage the transition to the new school/placement.

The timing of each admission will be individually tailored to the needs for the young person, but the Head Teacher will actively work to promote timely placements and will seek to ensure that the admissions process is not unduly extended.

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 Strawberry Lane School unless it is agreed that this would not be in the best interests of the prospective young person.

The Admission/ Discharge checklist is to be completed to demonstrate the handover of all the relevant documents from the previous placement to the new placement. This should be signed by the manager/registered person from both placements to evidence specific listed information has been handed over and received. This includes the transfer of any safeguarding concerns or paperwork, which must be delivered by hand and signed for by the DSL or an identified member of the Senior Leadership Team.