



LOCATION: SCHOOL HANDBOOK, SECTION I, DOCUMENT 13

ADMISSIONS POLICY

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Reviewed By: Vicky Aspin

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Date of next review: Spring 2027

1. Introduction

1.1 Abbey Court School is a day school for pupils with a primary need of severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties aged 3 – 19 years. Abbey Court Foundation Special School is maintained by Medway Local Authority for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) as their primary presentation of need. Additional educational needs may include visual/hearing impairment, sensory impairment, autism and/or physical disability. All pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans.

1.2 Abbey Court offers an education matched to the individual needs of pupils with SLD/PMLD. However, there are parameters which restrict the types of needs that can be met by the provisions available at the school.

1.3 The admissions criteria, contained within this policy, are designed to determine the suitability of a potential placement at the school and to inform referrals.

1.4 The admissions procedure will specifically identify individual needs and will determine whether identified needs can be met or not, through the specialist provision available at the school. It will also determine whether any reasonable adjustments are required and whether additional funding would be needed to support this.

2. Characteristics of pupils considered for admission

2.1 Abbey Court's designation is for pupils with severe and/or profound learning difficulties. Pupils admitted will, therefore, experience severe developmental delay as a primary need, and their attainment levels will reflect their learning and cognition difficulties. This should not be confused with a primary need, which outlines significant difficulties or significant developmental delay. Severe Learning difficulties in the context of our pupils means they are likely to make very small steps of progress even by the time they are 19.

2.2 All pupils at Abbey Court are working below the standards of National Curriculum assessments and significantly below the level of their age-related peers. Pupils therefore fall into two categories: 'Non-subject specific' (Abbey Court Engagement Model) and 'subject specific' learners. Abbey Court P Levels)

Bands of attainment

Pupils at Abbey Court will fall within the following bands of attainment:

- * Pupils whose attainment will be described within the 'P' scales throughout their school career.
- * Pupils working on non-subject-specific learning through the Engagement Model.
- * Pupils who will work (completely or partly) on alternative supplementary materials designed for pupils who are not likely to progress in line with National Curriculum Key Stages and attainment levels.
- * Pupils with long-term needs arising from a disability in addition to their learning disability, that requires prolonged inter-agency involvement (e.g. a pupil with a life-limiting medical condition).

2.3 The pupils' acquisition of basic skills will be and will remain significantly behind that of their peers. A large proportion of pupils will experience prolonged and persistent severe difficulties in acquiring basic skills, which in turn will lead to limited progress over time and limited generalisation or transfer of learning.

2.4 Exceptionally, the Local Authority may request the Governing Body/Headteacher for a pupil to be placed temporarily on an observation and assessment placement. The purpose of the placement will be to gather and provide the LA with information about the pupil and to recommend appropriate future provision. This agreement would be considered an exceptional arrangement and is at the discretion of the Governing Body/Headteacher.

3. Associated Developmental Factors

3.1 In addition to having a primary need of severe and or profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils are likely to have additional needs in the following areas:

- * Medical
- * Physical
- * Sensory
- * Social and Communication
- * Social and/or Emotional

3.2 The above may exacerbate the child's global learning difficulty. Low achievement levels will result in pupils being unable to access mainstream qualifications. Many pupils can, however, achieve external specialist accreditation for the gains in knowledge and understanding they have made and for the skills they can demonstrate. (See Abbey Court School PARR policy).

3.3 Many pupils will have significantly reduced periods of engagement and require high levels of support to remain on task. These features will not in themselves amount to a primary behavioural need or significant behavioural difficulties. The school does not cater for pupils whose primary need/main presenting need is an emotional/challenging behavioural difficulty.

4. Characteristics not normally considered for admission

4.1 Pupils who fall outside the school designation to provide for a primary need of severe/ profound learning difficulties would be inappropriately placed at Abbey Court School. Such pupils may:

- (a) exhibit patterns of behaviour, which would put the safety and security of pupils and others at risk
- (b) have needs that are 'incompatible with the age, aptitude or ability of other children already in school' and impact the provision of efficient education to them.
- (c) require styles of intervention to manage their behaviour that would negatively impact the accessibility or well-being of the other, highly vulnerable children and young people.
- (d) present with severe levels of combined difficulties, e.g. sensory impairment, medical problems, neurological problems, physical or emotional behavioural difficulties, language disorder, severe communication difficulties (autistic spectrum), which, combined, create significant new needs over and above those created by the child's severe or profound learning difficulty.

5. Admissions

5.1 The following factors (which are not in priority order) will be taken into account to determine admissions and will be used by the school to consider representations made by Local Authority (LA) officers to prioritise admissions in the event of over-subscription and in accordance with section 39 4(b) of the Children's and Families Act 2014

- (a) Information from the LA or Phase Transfer Allocations Panel
- (b) Parental preference - expressed in statutory assessment or annual review
- (c) The pupil has an EHCP where the described needs of the pupil fall into the characteristics of pupils considered for admission (see above)
- (d) The curriculum of the school can meet all the needs outlined in the EHCP
- (e) The placement would be an efficient use of the school's specialist resources
- (f) Established arrangements with the local health trust or social services department ensure that all non-educational needs can be met through such arrangements
- (h) A vacancy determined by availability within:
 - * Overall capacity of the school
 - * Overall capacity of phase/site accommodation limit
 - * Class grouping (broadly determined by NC year)
 - * Recruitment of appropriate staff/reasonable efforts to recruit in discussion with the Local Authority
- (i) Nearness and ease of access
- (j) The LA's directive to educate children within their local community
- (k) Appropriate observation and assessment have taken place within the school/appropriate educational setting

6. Guidance for Normal Transfer and Admission Dates

6.1 Pupils will transfer preferably at the beginning of the academic year, with the exception of the Nursery, where pupils will be admitted at any point, subject to the admissions criteria being met. The Secondary Allocations Panel is held annually in October. Exceptionally, this may be impacted where key staff are not in post at the start of the term, and a recruitment process is being followed. This would be discussed with the Local Authority where this is the case, and the school will make best endeavours to secure replacement staff as soon as practicable. The following notes for each Key Stage include other factors that might influence admissions.

6.2 Foundation Stage to Key Stages 1 & 2

Referrals are sent from the Local Authority regarding pupils requiring a place in the Nursery, Reception, KS1 or KS2. If they meet the school's entry criteria, a visit to the school for the family and pupil is arranged, following which, the Headteacher will contact the Local Authority to confirm if a place is being offered. The Local Authority then writes to the parents. A home visit is then undertaken by the Key Stage Leader, class teacher and, if appropriate, school nurse. Following the home visit, information is shared with the leadership team, and a start date is agreed upon along with a plan for transition. At the final Annual Review of Nursery (2), placement in Reception year is discussed, and suitability to transfer to the main school is agreed by all present if appropriate and confirmed to the Local Authority, who then notify parents.

6.3 Key Stage 3 & 4

Existing Abbey Court pupils will have completed an annual review in year 6 (for secondary transfer) to determine whether the school continues to be the appropriate placement, and this is confirmed to the Local Authority, who will notify parents. This will be replicated at the Year 10 Transition Review. Applications for admission from years 7 - 11 from pupils not already at Abbey Court School will be considered as appropriate, and normally through the appropriate Phase Transfer Panel process.

Applications for admission after the beginning of year 7 will be conducted in the same way as Key Stage 1 & 2 admissions.

School will make its best endeavours to arrange visits for parent(s)/family at the request of the Local Authority. Where there may be detrimental impact on pupils/other scheduled meetings, this may not be possible, and will be discussed with the Local Authority.

6.4 16 - 19 Facility

For existing Abbey Court pupils at the Year 11 Annual Review (or Year 10), discussions will take place about the range of options available for Post 16 placement and parents/carers will state their preference for the school's 16 - 19 Further Education (FE) facility. The school will confirm to the Local Authority whether the school continues to be an appropriate placement, and the Local Authority will notify parents.

Applications from other schools for FE provision will be conducted in the same way as KSI / 2 admissions, and the school will make considerations as outlined in (5) above.

7. Appeals against a decision not to admit

7.1 Admissions are considered by the school's Leadership Team, and the Headteacher, who has delegated duty from the Governing Body, will respond to the Local Authority.

7.2 Should the pupil not be deemed to be suitable, the Local Authority will be advised of this, and a discussion will be had with the Head of the Local Authority SEN Department. The Local Authority do have powers to direct admission, where they follow the expected statutory process, discuss this fully with the Headteacher prior to naming in line with local agreed arrangements and justify their decision. The school is able to appeal a direction by writing to the Secretary of State and reserves the right to do this where it considers this is an appropriate course of action.

8. Effective Admissions

8.1 The following will usually assist in effective decision-making:

- * Review of all available documentation
- * Verification of curriculum suitability by Key Stage Leader
- * Analysis of match to admissions criteria
- * Suitability and availability of non-educational provision - social services, Health Trust personnel
- * Inclusion planning, dual placement, short-term and long-term placement and provision
- * Meeting with parent/pupil
- * Visit to the referring school
- * Early involvement or knowledge of the child

8.2 Induction procedure

Between the school's decision to offer a place and the pupil's admission, the following transition activities may be necessary:

- * Taster sessions for the pupil (accompanied by a parent if necessary)
- * Period of observation and assessment
- * Meeting for parent and pupil with teacher (including home visits)
- * Invitation to school events

(see Abbey Court School Transition procedures: Document 14)

* Where, for whatever reason, there may be a delay to the induction process, the school will remain in contact with the Local Authority and the parent.

8.3 There may be exceptional circumstances where a pupil does not fully meet the admissions criteria but may be considered for a short, fixed period of observation and assessment that may contribute to a later, more informed decision. This would be considered an exceptional arrangement, which would be agreed upon at the discretion of the Headteacher/Governing Body.