

Admissions Policy

Updated September 2022

Review Date: September 2024



Little Acorns School can educate boys and girls from the ages of 4 to 15, with a maximum of 14 pupils at any one time.

The normal admissions round for Little Acorns School is any period during which parents/Carers or a Social worker as the corporate parent can apply with the Local Authority Special Educational Needs (SEN) Department agreement, for a funded school place at Little Acorns School.

How to apply

Applications are usually made directly to the school headteacher, by a Local Authority SEN Department, since all of our pupils are in receipt of funding for Specialist School provision via their Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). General applications and enquiries are also welcomed from parents/carers and Social workers, but decisions to offer a place are subject to approval by the SEN funding department of a child's Local Authority.

School procedures for admission

- General Process

All referrals to Little Acorns are managed by the Head Teacher, Alison Neal and Responsible Individual Simon Bayliss. Our school is designated to support children whose primary special needs have been identified through Statutory assessment as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) or having speech, language and communication difficulties. However, in view of the complex nature of many special educational needs, Little Acorns School considers any referral on merit.

- Initial process for referrals

After the initial referral or request to consult is received from the relevant local authority the child, carers, parents, Social Worker and / or any other professional directly involved will be contacted. The school will arrange a meeting at the child's home, current school setting or at Little Acorns. It is not unusual for a number of meetings to take place. Following meetings, the Head Teacher will determine whether the school provision offered is likely to be suitable for the child's needs. If all parties agree that the school can provide suitable provision, then the school will outline that they can meet the child's needs and will advise the relevant local authority SEN department. The local authority will review the referral in line with their own policies and procedures and will decide if a school place at Little Acorns is to be offered to the child. The offer of a place made by Little Acorns school will be valid for a period of 30 days from this offer being made. After this period the offer will be considered invalid and any further consideration of a placement must be the subject of a further consultation. The reason for this 30-day cut off is to ensure the stability and welfare of the school cohort as a whole and to ensure other consultations can be considered and processed without concerns regarding outstanding offers. This is then followed by an initial network meeting that further identifies the child's strengths and difficulties with all professionals involved. This is designed to gather essential background information around learning and cognition and pertaining to risk assessment, health, medical, behaviour, social and emotional difficulties etc. All relevant consent forms are then completed. All this information must be shared before a start date / induction period can be initiated. Any strategies around risk that need to be put in place can be identified and agreed at this stage. Specific routine issues, boundaries and expectations are discussed and agreed.

- Induction period

Having considered and agreed to pursue the placement, the school formulate an induction timetable for a period of time dictated by the child's needs, circumstances etc. This, most often, will be a part-time integration within the pupil's class and will involve staged opportunities as part of an initial assessment. This timetable will build on the child's previous educational experience and also match the prevailing needs of the child. The length of the induction period will be based around the needs of the pupil. Ordinarily, we would anticipate induction having been completed once a pupil has attended on a full timetable for a 4-week period. Pupils will be full time as soon as practicable but this will take into account any relevant risk assessment at advice of other professionals. If the induction period has raised concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of the pupil (or those around him/her) then this will be documented and the timetable, implementation and strategies will be revised to

include a clear time scale for the future. If concerns remain, then professionals at the review meeting or subsequent network meeting will discuss the feasibility of the placement. If we determine that we cannot meet need we will communicate this to parents/carers and the local authority. We will provide 28 days' notice of the school placement offer being withdrawn

Allocation of places

Admission numbers

The school has an agreed admission number of 14 pupils. Children may enter at various points throughout the year and all years are open for entry until the agreed admission number is reached.

Oversubscription criteria

All children whose statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care (EHC) plan names the school will be admitted before any other places are allocated.

1. Highest priority will be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children, irrespective of their fostering authority or IFA, who apply for a place at the school.
2. Priority will be given to children who reside at Little Acorns Therapeutic Care Home as part of a whole care/school package, however children from outside of Little Acorns Therapeutic Care Home will also be considered.
3. Priority will next be given to children on the basis of a social or emotional need, where placement in a small specialist setting is agreed as a primary need on their EHC plan
4. Priority is next given to pupils who reside in Kent or Medway

Appeals

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you can request information about why admission was refused and given information about the process for appeal. If you wish to appeal, you must set out the grounds for your appeal in writing and send it to the following email address within 10 days of being notified by the local authority: alison.neal@littleacornstc.com