

Cambridgeshire Special School Admissions Guidance

Special Schools for pupils with Autism

Most children and young people with diagnosis of Autism will have their needs met in mainstream educational provision with differentiation, adaptation and support as needed to achieve their best outcomes. However, for some, the provision required to meet their needs will require a Special School setting. . In order to make this decision, measures of adaptive functioning (behaviour that enables a person to get along in their environment) information about the impact of social communication difficulties on relationships with peers and the impact of anxiety and/or sensory needs on access to the physical school environment will all be helpful. Some children and young people may require an environment which is significantly modified in order to meet their language and communication needs.

Special school provision will be for those children and young people whose difficulties associated with their autism require provision that is so heavily adapted in terms of environmental adaptations that it could not be provided within a mainstream setting. Children and young people will have a diagnosis of Autism that has over time, significantly impacted on effective learning across the full curriculum. Although Autism will be the primary need, children and young people may also present with other associated learning needs. They will have impaired social interaction, communication and emotional dysregulation, as well as complex sensory, medical or physical needs. Children and young people may also present with behaviours associated with severe social, emotional and mental health issues (SEMH). These children and young people are otherwise thought to be able to access a broadly age-related learning curriculum.

Children and young people will exhibit the following characteristics:

- Significant and prolonged difficulties with social interaction and behaviour.
- Highly obsessional behaviour and routines which impact on the ability to access the curriculum.
- Atypical sensory profile preventing access to the curriculum.
- Severe rigidity of thinking with associated behavioural outcomes.
- Extreme lack of tolerance to changes in routine and structure.
- Extreme reliance on adult support to structure activities in order to engage successfully in classroom and group activities.

There will be robust evidence that Autism has negatively impacted upon attainment and social interaction over a period of time, despite sustained targeted interventions, informed by external specialist professionals. It will be evident that the lack of progress is indicative that the child or young person requires a specialist setting over and above that normally available in a mainstream school without an Enhanced Resource Base (ERB) for Autism. The child or young person's cognitive ability will be within the mainstream. A variable and inconsistent cognitive profile may be displayed. The child or young person will have the potential to work towards age-related national benchmarks and expectations.

Admissions

The child or young person must have the following unless agreed during the request for a placement with the school:

1. An Education Health and Care Plan in which Autism is identified as the primary area of need.
2. A diagnosis of Autism confirmed by the Health Service.
3. A history of:
 - Interventions or advice from an educational psychologist/ specialist teacher identifying the depth and intensity of support which has been received. And despite these interventions being consistently applied the child is still unable to access mainstream provision.
 - High levels of additional teaching assistant support.
 - Likely involvement from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
 - Significant emotional difficulties resulting in one or more of the following - fixed term exclusions, the need for "anxiety breaks", reintegration package or a managed move.
4. Educational Psychologist involvement that highlights:
 - A clear profile of his/her strengths and weaknesses within the areas of communication and interaction, social understanding and relationships, sensory processing, interests and routines, emotional understanding and awareness, learning and engagement, healthy living and independence.
 - Evidence of access to and demonstrable progress in the main curriculum areas, i.e. is not experiencing difficulties in learning due to general developmental delay
5. In line with Cambridgeshire County Council's Home to School Transport Policy the child/young person will live within 45 minutes travelling distance each way for primary aged child and within 75 minutes travelling distance each way for secondary age child/young person. Home to school transport will be provided if the school is not within the statutory walking distance of the child/young person's home (i.e. two miles for primary aged pupils and three miles for secondary aged pupils measured by the shortest available route to the nearest entrance to the school). Further details can be found at: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/imported-assets/Home%20to%20school%20travel%20assistance%20policy.pdf>