

# THE LION WORKS SCHOOL POLICY



## Admissions Policy

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## Context

The Lion Works School is an independent special school. We are part of an ethical and progressive organisation that believes it can achieve real change for children, young people and their families.

The Lion Works School is situated within the BCP local authority. We offer an academic and vocational specialist learning provision across KS3, KS4 and Post 16 aiming to reduce barriers to enable successful learning experiences and outcomes. There are a variety of routes a student can take, which include GCSEs, BTECs and other accredited qualifications whilst building confidence, improving wellbeing, enabling self-regulation and increasing attendance. Our school is full of life and has a wealth of resources to spark interest and ignite that passion to achieve, equipping our students for everyday life and the opportunities that await them.

We adhere to the values of ARC:

**Ambition**

**Resilience**

**Community**

The Lion Works School operates within the SPELL framework. SPELL is The National Autistic Society's framework for understanding and responding to the needs of children and adults on the autism spectrum. It focuses on five principles that have been identified as vital elements of best practice in autism and emphasises ways to change the environment and our approaches to meet the specific needs of each person.

**SPELL** stands for Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal, Links:

<b>Structure</b>	Structure makes the world a more predictable, accessible and safer place. We can support people on the autism spectrum in creating structured environments using visual information.
<b>Positive (approaches and expectations)</b>	We must seek to establish and reinforce self-confidence and self-esteem by building on natural strengths, interest and abilities.
<b>Empathy</b>	We must try to see the world from the standpoint of the autistic child or adult, knowing what it is that motivates or interests them but importantly what may also frighten, preoccupy or otherwise distress them.
<b>Low arousal</b>	Approaches and the environment need to be calm and ordered in such a way so as to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.
<b>Links</b>	Autistic people, their parents or advocates should be seen as partners. Open links and communication will reduce the risk of misunderstanding, confusion or the adoption of fragmented, piecemeal approaches.

## Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at the school
- Set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply
- Explain how to appeal against a decision not to offer your child a place
- Meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards by making the school's policy on admissions available to parents

## Legislation

The school will set out in this admissions policy the process and selection criteria for placement. As an Independent School we are required to have a written policy on admissions. This policy meets that requirement and complies with the following legislation:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Education Act 2011](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)

## How to Apply

Applications for placements usually come via a local authority's SEND department. It is, however, possible to apply directly if parents intend to fund a school placement via their own means. The school is not block funded by a public body and so the resource base required via placement fees reflects the entire cost of delivering a specialist education. Parents should consider the financial implications of self-funding a placement.

Application via a local authority's SEND department:

1. **Touring the school** – Parents and carers are advised to book a tour of the school. This will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of the provision on offer as well as an opportunity to meet either the headteacher or a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. Parents are advised not to bring the potential new student with them at this stage in order to allow for candid and direct dialogue. Subsequent tours with the child can be arranged following this.
2. **Consultation Request** – Following a tour, if parents or carers feel that the education offer at TLWS is appropriate for their child, they should request that their SEND Case Officer sends consultation documents to the school via the admissions email:

[admissions@thelionworksschool.org](mailto:admissions@thelionworksschool.org). These usually consist of the child's Education, Health and Care Plan, the latest Annual Review paperwork and other supporting evidence. A Case Officer has a legal duty to consult with a school that is the parental preference.

3. **Initial Response** – The school admissions administrator will receive and process the consultation documents. An initial response will then be provided to the SEND Case Officer indicating whether the school considers it likely that we have the resources and expertise required to support this potential new student. This response will be approved by an Executive Director. This is not usually sent to parents as well, but a request can be made for this.
4. **Pathways** – If the initial response indicates that the school may be able to meet the needs of the potential new student then a suitable pathway will have been indicated, either the main Leaders Pathway or the EBSA Explorers Pathway. The assessment process differs depending on which pathway is the most appropriate. The Leaders Pathway is the 'usual' route into TLWS and the Explorers Pathway has been designed for students that present with emotional based school avoidance and have been absent from school for a long period of time.
5. **Leaders Pathway Assessment** – the potential new student will be invited in for 2 half day assessment sessions in school. The assessment process involves one-to-one sessions with specialist teachers as well as time in class with a potential peer group. Potential future students are accompanied one-to-one throughout this process. The assessment day arrangements may be amended at the direction of the headteacher, if it is deemed that reasonable adjustments are required to support a student to access the assessments.
6. **Explorers Pathway Assessment** – a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team will visit the potential new student and their family at home. Assessments, in the form of questionnaires, will be conducted in the home setting.
7. **Assessment Response** – The headteacher will oversee the remainder of the admissions process and will determine if the school feels able to meet the needs of the potential new student. The headteacher will use the information gathered from the consultation documents, the assessments, observations of the student and any discussions with the student and family to write an assessment response. This report will be sent to the parents of the potential new student as well as the local authority's SEND Service. This will constitute either an offer of a placement or a determination that the school does not feel able to meet the needs of the potential new student.

Application directly from a parent:

1. **Touring the school** – Parents and carers are advised to book a tour of the school. This will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of the provision on offer as well as an opportunity to meet either the headteacher or a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. Parents are advised not to bring the potential new student with them at this stage in order

to allow for candid and direct dialogue. Subsequent tours with the child can be arranged following this.

2. **Consultation Request** – Following a tour, if parents feel that the education offer at TLWS is appropriate for their child, they should send their child’s Education, Health and Care Plan, a covering letter expressing a request for an initial consideration of a placement along with any other supporting evidence to the school’s admissions team via the admissions email: [admissions@thelionworksschool.org](mailto:admissions@thelionworksschool.org). If the child does not have an EHCP, a school admissions application form must be completed instead. This can be requested from the admissions team.
3. **Initial Response** – The school admissions administrator will receive and process the request. An initial response will then be provided to parent indicating whether the school considers it likely that we have the resources and expertise required to support this potential new student. This response will be approved by an Executive Director.

The process will then follow steps 4, 5, 6 and 7 as above.

The school will endeavour at all times to reply to Local Authority placement consultations within 14 days of receipt during term time. The 14 days begin from the receipt of a full application in the school’s required format. The school will endeavour to respond to parent applications within the same time frame. If a face-to-face assessment is assessed as being reasonably appropriate the school will offer this at the next available opportunity. The school can facilitate one face-to-face or home visit assessment each week during term time.

## **Allocation of Places**

**A) Admission numbers** – The school does not provide a specific number of spaces or allocations per academic year. The school releases spaces according to availability within the school. This availability is not a strict measure of possible spaces within a class but is a subjective measure based on the needs of the cohort and the communication and learning approaches of on-roll students. As such the release of spaces is dependent on the judgement of school leadership as to the capacity of the school to meet the needs of more students with the resourcing the school has, and the current allocation of resourcing based on need of the student’s on-roll.

**B) Selection and banding** – On the Leaders Pathway, the school offers a formal curriculum as well as a resource intensive curriculum, this can be offered according to availability and is a heavily adapted approach. Students will be offered a placement within one of these bandings following assessment. Although final determination of banding will not be made until after a face-to-face assessment report has been written, it is possible at stage 3 of the admissions process that a parent or local authority may be advised that there are no spaces available in the banding deemed most likely to be required to meet the needs of the potential new student. On the Explorers Pathway, there are two different stages that a student can be supported at. Students will be offered a placement within one of these stages following assessment.

**C) Oversubscription criteria** – In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order, until all places are filled. Highest priority will be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school. The following criteria will then be applied:

1. Students who currently attend a school or service operated by the parent group or where the school has a formal resource sharing agreement with. This can colloquially be referred to as a ‘feeder school or service’.
2. Student with siblings at the school. Siblings include step siblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children living permanently at the same address. Priority will not be given to children with siblings who are former pupils of the school.

All offers are subject to a 3-week guaranteed period following offer. Beyond that the admissions team will liaise with SEND Case Officers (or parents if self-funding) to keep them advised of availability on an ongoing basis. It is not possible to ‘hold open’ a space beyond this as this could potentially frustrate another student’s access to education if the school were to do so. The admissions team will communicate routinely and proactively to avoid disappointment for admissions requests. After the 3-week period has elapsed, admission offers will be confirmed based on the earliest formal acceptance of an offer from a Case Officer (or parent if self-funding).

**D) Tie Break** – In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the school will use random allocation as a tie breaker to confirm which placement can be agreed. This process will be independently verified. This could happen in the event that one space remained, and two case officers provided written confirmation they would like to accept an offer at exactly the same time.

**E) Children below compulsory school age** – Where children below the school’s entry age are offered a place at the school, they will be entitled to attend the school full-time in the September that they would enter Year 7 according to their age. Applications are welcome from the first day of the Autumn term of the preceding year.

### **In-Year Admissions**

Consultations or applications for places can be made at any time. If there are spaces available in the year group and curriculum class that is assessed as being appropriate, your child will be offered a place to start immediately. If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child’s name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. We will not normally conduct assessments unless there is a space that has been assessed as, with reasonable belief, would be appropriate for the potential new student. This arrangement may be waived by the headteacher in consultation with the potential new student’s parents or carers.

## **Admissions Criteria**

The school admissions process is a two-stage process with oversight from the organization's Executive Directors as well as the school's headteacher. The process is supported by an admissions administrator. The school has the expertise and resources to meet the following needs (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Presentation of ASC need, including delayed receptive and expressive processing, sensory processing needs, restricted and/or repetitive patterns of behaviour, limited social imagination and inflexibility of thought
- Social, emotional and mental health needs, which present as sensory withdrawal or communication shutdown relating to being overwhelmed by communication or sensory or social inputs
- Emotional based school avoidance

The school does not have the resources and facilities to be able to meet the following presentations of need (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Physical expressions of need targeting peers or adults
- Emotional deregulation presenting as targeted negative communication towards peers
- Deregulation leading to destruction of property or self-harming and/or self-endangering acts or actions
- Cognitive processing and attainment below the school's specified benchmarks to be able to access the curriculum available in each year group and curriculum area.

The Year 7 entry minimum level of attainment to be able to access the semi-formal curriculum is level 2 according to the National Curriculum level descriptors in English and Maths. This increases incrementally year on year. We are able to accept students significantly below age related expectations in terms of academic attainment, but our curriculum may not be appropriate or accessible with attainment below the specified level.

The school considers any presentation of need that has not been identified from more than 3 years prior to application as being historic. This need will inform the school's overall picture of need, but it will not be used directly in the consideration of the school's ability to meet the needs of the potential new student.

## **Appeals Procedure**

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you will be informed why it was unsuccessful and be given information about the process for hearing appeals. If you wish to appeal, you must request an appeal form from [admissions@thelionworksschool.org](mailto:admissions@thelionworksschool.org) and return it marked as



**Confidential – Admissions Appeal** to the same email address. Alternatively, the form can be printed and sent to:

The Lion Works School  
543 Wallisdown Road  
Poole  
BH12 5AD

## **Complaints**

The school has a published complaints process. The admissions process is not subject to the conditions and processes within the complaints process. The school complaints process complies with the Independent School standards with the complaints process available for parents and carers of pupils, as defined by the Education and Skills Act 2008 and the Education Act 1996. The school always welcomes all feedback on the performance of our committed staff team. Feedback about staff performance relating to admissions can be provided through the admissions appeals process.

## **Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Directors annually in consultation with the school board.