

Admissions Policy

2026-27

A large decorative graphic on the left side of the page. It consists of a thick, curved band of olive green at the top, followed by a larger area of dark teal. Within the teal area, there is a white circle and a white wavy line that resembles a river or a path.

Pride
Passion
Partnership
Professionalism
Positivity

What is the policy about?

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

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE):

- [School Admissions Code](#)
- [School Admission Appeals Code](#)

The school is required by its funding agreement to comply with these codes, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to Fen Rivers' Headteacher and senior leadership; governing bodies; commissioners; referring schools; pupils; prospective pupils; parents; and carers.

Policy Requirements

Overview

Fen Rivers is a specialist school for children and young people aged 4-16 who hold Educational Health Care plans (EHCP) for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties. Our success for our school is defined as the amount of progress each young person makes in terms of changes to their behaviour (their communication of their emotional wellbeing), their academic progress, their ability to engage in the community and eventually live independent lives through employment and further education.

We aim to have leavers who are confident, happy young people with high levels of self-esteem, a clear picture of their future and the wherewithal in terms of skills, abilities, and personal characteristics to achieve that future.

Admission to the school will only be through the referral process outlined in this policy. Referrals can be made at any time throughout the year and will be processed at half termly Admissions meetings.

Number of Places Available

The school provides education for 80 full time (28.75 hours of education per week per place) equivalent pupils aged 4-16 which is currently offered to 30 primary learners and 48 secondary learners.

Admissions Criteria

The school will specialise in providing places for:

- Those holding an Education Health Care plan (EHCP) with a primary need of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Admissions processes will evaluate the appropriateness of the placement at Fen Rivers based on the following criteria:

1. Availability of space in the applicant's year group.
2. Availability of space within suitable groups/classes; based on the applicant's individual needs, and the collective needs of the group/class.
3. A detailed and up to date Risk Assessment will be imperative to inform integration and induction conversations with parent and pupil and should be provided for consideration at the admissions meeting.
4. An EHCP must be up to date and accurately describe the needs of the pupil being referred. This is required for the school to ensure that the needs of the pupil can be met through the provision available. This will either be in the form of an EHCP that has recently been completed or with supporting evidence of annual reviews, prior to admission.
5. If a pupil is offered a place that is accepted based on incorrect information, an interim EHCP review will be undertaken to determine if the school can meet need.

Equal Opportunities

The school is committed to equality of opportunity. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

Based on admissions criteria Fen Rivers will deliver an education which:

- Meets individual requirements - therefore is based on assessed needs
- Prioritises academic attainment with a specific emphasis on therapeutic support

Referral/Admission Arrangements

To acquire a place at the school a young person must be referred through the SEND placements team at Norfolk, the local authority. Referrals made directly to the school will not be accepted due to not following procedure. This includes applications from neighbouring local authorities, which must also go through the agreed Norfolk referrals process to ensure fair access.

Point of Contact

The point of contact is: The Norfolk SEND Placements Team

Contact Address: Norfolk SEN Placements Team, senplacements@norfolk.gov.uk

The Admissions Process

Norfolk County Council has agreed to fund 96 places at the school. They work collaboratively with the school leadership team, holding half termly admissions meetings where they ask if school believe a child is suitable and if the school can meet need based on their review of all paperwork submitted and observations made of the young person in their current setting.

Funding

Each place will attract base funding of £10,000 per place, plus any top up funding required to meet a specific high level of need, as agreed. Any top-up funding is based upon the pupil's assessed needs and the cost of meeting those needs in the school and will come from the local authority that is funding the place, if not Norfolk.

Offers

All referrals will go through Admissions meetings with the Norfolk County Council SEND Placements Team, who will write to parent/carers to formally offer the place at Fen Rivers and agree a start date.

Induction Process

Pupils will undertake an initial visit with their parent/carers following acceptance of a place. During this visit the student and their family will be shown around the school and have the opportunity to meet their class team and ask any questions they may have. Pre admissions paperwork, under Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, will be completed with/by parents before any student is admitted. This will be completed prior to the proposed start date.

Transition visits will also be offered ahead of the agreed start date to enable the joining pupil to meet and begin to get to know the children and staff in their class and build up to full-time for the agreed start date. Parents will be responsible for transportation for transition visits ahead of the start date. This is local authority policy.

Over the first few weeks of transition, the young person will be supported by the class team to ensure they settle into the environment and class group. During transition students will be helped to understand the timetable, rewards system and expectations and their rights and responsibilities whilst a Fen Rivers learner.

Refusal

The school will only refuse a place on the following grounds:

1. The school is full and therefore there are no available places and to admit further would prejudice the efficient education of others already attending.
2. There is insufficient funding available to fund a place for the young person's needs
3. The young person's needs are not provided for by the school
4. No availability of space in the applicant's year group.
5. No availability of space within suitable groups/classes; based on the applicant's individual needs, and the collective needs of the group/class.

Should the school be unable to accept a referral this will be discussed during the half termly admissions consultations with the SEND placement team.

Objections and Complaints Procedure

Appeals

If you wish to register an appeal with the First Tier Tribunal (SEN and disability) you first have to consider whether to take part in mediation. This is called Mediation, Information, Advice Session (MIAS). If you decide not to use mediation after discussing the options, tell the mediation adviser; they will send you a certificate within 3 working days and you can then register your appeal. You do not have to use mediation if you do not want to – you only have to consider whether to or not. The Local Authority must tell you about mediation and who to contact for the initial advice when they send you their decision. You must contact the mediation adviser within two months of getting the decision from the LA.

Should a commissioner or parent wish to appeal a decision not to accept a referral, appeals must be made in writing to:

First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) 1st Floor
Darlington Magistrates Court
Parkgate
Darlington
DL1 1RU
United Kingdom

Email send@justice.gov.uk
Telephone: 01325 289350
Fax: 0870 739 4017

Complaints

Any objections to this policy or its application should be raised with Fen Rivers, The Bridge MAT through its normal complaints process. See the school's Complaints Policy for further detail.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, you are able to complain to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) at: academy.questions@education.gsi.gov.uk

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and any amended policy for the following September published on the school's website before the end of the preceding February. The policy will remain on the website throughout the school year.

Any change to the policy will be proposed in draft in the proceeding July and circulated to commissioners and referring schools. Views will be sought and considered by the Multi Academy Trust over a 2-week consultation period before final publication and notification of the final revised policy.

Definitions

LAC – Looked After Child: A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Related policies

- SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy

Policy Owner and Contact Details

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Next Review Date: September 2027