



MacIntyre Academies Discovery Academy

Admissions Policy

Person Responsible:	Principal
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Date of staff consultation:	
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Date of next review:	Sep 2018

Policy statement

Discovery Academy is a school for children and young people, aged 9 – 19 years who have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or an autistic spectrum condition. When at full occupancy, the Academy will provide 80 places across all age groups. For a child/young person to be admitted to the school, his/her placement must be agreed by a local authority (LA) and named in the child/young person's education health and care plan ('EHCP') (formerly statement of special educational needs).

Purpose

To ensure that all involved in the Admission Procedure work in partnership, enabling informed decisions in the best interests of the child/young person.

Scope

This admissions policy is relevant to all members of the Trust Board, Local Advisory Board, staff, parents, students and Local Authority representatives who are involved in the admissions process to Discovery Academy. The policy promotes the rights of all students regardless of disability, ethnic background, language, culture, faith or gender.

Rationale

A placement at Discovery Academy should always arise from a process that identifies the school as an appropriate and positive choice and best meets the need of the child/young person. Many of our students will have previously found going to school a challenge and may have had difficulties in coping within a mainstream environment and therefore accessing an appropriate curriculum. Discovery Academy aims to support young people to improve their own well-being, focusing on their communication, social, emotional and mental health as central to the delivery of the school curriculum. We include learning to build positive relationships and learning that will help children and young people understand and shape their own emotions. We have a holistic and non-judgemental approach to supporting behaviour that empowers the child or young person to engage in education. We support children and young people to recognise their challenges and barriers to learning and teach them alternative ways of responding to difficult situations. The school aims to support students to become socially responsible, polite and caring young adults, who value the lives of others and the environment in which they live.

Our students benefit from a curriculum that focuses on developing academic potential, social, vocational and life skills and learning that is practical and often outside the classroom.

Principles underpinning the admissions policy and procedure

1. Discovery Academy accepts referrals from Local Authorities (LAs). Whilst we welcome approaches from parents, the school cannot proceed to the admissions stage without local authority support.
2. Discovery Academy can be considered if the parents/carers have expressed a preference for special school placement which is referred to the SEN team within the LA and then on to Discovery Academy, OR the parent prefers a placement in mainstream school, but evidence shows that no reasonable steps could be taken by the LA or existing school to overcome the 'incompatibility with the efficient education of other pupils';
3. Prior to the admissions process, parents or carers are encouraged if they wish to make a visit to the school, preferably before the completion of a statutory assessment or Annual Review. The focus of any visit is upon parent/carer viewing the school. The school will not comment

on the appropriateness of the provision for the child/young person before the completion of the admissions process;

4. In most cases, although the child/young person will have been supported through a high level of additional resources within their mainstream placement, all reasonable steps will have been exhausted;
5. During the admissions process, children/young people will be visited in their current placement and at home if possible.
6. If requested by the LA and deemed appropriate, key staff from Discovery Academy may attend an Annual Review at the child's/young person's existing school.

Admissions Criteria

Discovery Academy admissions criteria are:

1. The child/young person must have (or is currently undergoing a statutory assessment for) an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to a social, emotional or mental health need (or BESD under previous code) or an autistic spectrum condition such as Asperger's syndrome as the main barrier to learning.
2. At the point of referral, many children/young people have additional, associated and sometimes a complexity of needs which may include:
 - ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder);
 - ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder);
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD);
 - Tourette's syndrome;
 - Mental Health Difficulties;
 - Speech and Language Difficulties;
 - Dyslexia.
3. The child/young person will have a history of persistent, complex and long-term learning needs and will often be working at a national curriculum level below their chronological age.
4. Evidence is also likely to exist of:
 - Learning difficulties in a range of curriculum areas, with greater difficulty in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, and understanding concepts;
 - Inadequate progress despite appropriate and sustained interventions within the child's/young person's existing placement;
 - Life-skills well below age-appropriate levels;
 - Vulnerability as a result of their diagnosis or learning needs;
 - Sensory difficulties;
 - Difficulties with social development, communication and interaction;
 - Emotional difficulties including anxiety, distress or other factor arising from an inability to cope with social interactions particularly within existing school placement;
 - Poor communication & self-advocacy skills.
5. Other factors that can impact on a child's/young person's ability to succeed in their current placement may include:

- A child in the Looked After system
 - Significant input from Health and Social Care
 - Significant illness or mental health issues in the family
 - A history of bereavement, separation, loss, neglect or abuse
 - Family breakdown or poor family support network
6. The admission of any one child/young person must not be detrimental to the learning of the other students already placed at the Academy.

Admissions Process

The process of admission to Discovery Academy is as follows:

1. The Local Authority will send a copy of the child's/young person's Education, Health or Care Plan, latest annual review and any other relevant paperwork to the school for consideration.
2. All children/young people will be visited in their current school placement and home if possible. This visit forms part of the admissions process but may happen before or after the 'admissions interview' with parents/carers, as follows:
 - a. If it is clear from the paperwork, that the school can meet the child/young person's needs, the Principal will invite the child and his/her parents/carers in for a pre-placement interview. The Principal, will then arrange for a designated member of staff to visit and observe the child/young person in their present setting and at home. They may additionally talk to any relevant professionals including an educational psychologist if involved.
 - b. If it is not clear from the paperwork, that the school can meet the child/young person's needs, the Principal will organise for a designated member of staff to visit and observe the child/young person in their present setting and talk to all relevant professionals including educational psychologists. In this situation, the child/young person's parents/carers will be invited to the school for a tour if they have not already visited.
3. Following the admissions interview or current placement/home visit, the school will endeavour to make a decision promptly. The school acknowledges that parents have often been through many assessments in the past and will aim to let parents /carers know the outcome as quickly as possible. The decision will be communicated to the parents/carers and the LA including a proposed start date.
4. Once a decision has been made, the Principal will agree a fee level with the LA, confirm a start date and arrange the admission of the student.
5. If the school decides that it cannot meet the child/young person's needs, the Authority will be advised of the reasons for this decision in a form that can be shared with parents/carers.
6. The LA will arrange transport in accordance with its own Home to School Transport policy
7. If the school is full, it cannot offer a place as this would compromise the safe and effective education of the children/young people already on roll.
8. Following the admissions procedure, if a place at the school is not offered, parents/carers may indicate to the LA that they would like Discovery Academy to be named as the school of preference within their child's EHC plan. The LA will consider parent/carers' preferences but may not agree to the school of preference. In such circumstances parents have the right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND).

Pre-placement interview /visits

The pre-placement interview and visits to current school/home are designed to gather up to date information from children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals in support of the admissions process (please see appendices 1-4 for template documents used during home/family visits). The information sought will typically include feedback on:

- What motivates the child/young person and an understanding of what support works well;
- Previous school placement(s) and experience(s);
- Academic ability, national curriculum levels and skills that the child/young person has developed;
- Behaviour in different environments and behaviour strategies that have worked well;
- Whether the child is looked after and if so the name of the contact person and key personnel in the placing authority;
- Family organisation and an understanding of significant people in the child/young person's life The child/young person's and their parent/carers' expectations of what the school can do The child/young person's and their parent/carers' aspirations for the future;
- An understanding of religious and cultural needs;
- Current EHC planning or previous Statement of Educational Needs;
- Current multi agency involvement, feedback and outcomes of any assessments including a CAF if in place;
- Information regarding any particularly vulnerabilities;
- Information regarding attendance, any fixed term exclusions.

The student will wherever possible take a central role in the pre-placement visit. He/she have the chance to talk about themselves and their experiences. The student will also be invited to join a class or play in the playground, supported by an experienced member of the staff team. If it is not possible for the student to attend (if, for example, it would cause severe anxiety) the student will be observed during the visit to their current setting and at home.

Arrangements to help transition into School

The school will liaise with the parents and carers and/or the current educational setting to see what transition arrangements will best suit the child/young person. Transitions are often difficult for children who have social, emotional and mental health needs or an autistic spectrum condition. An induction programme, appropriate to the individual child/young person, will be drawn up to support transfer to Discovery Academy. It is essential to consider mechanisms/strategies that may make the process easier for each child/young person. This may include visits by key staff between schools.

The school is keen to work closely with families to ensure that the whole family's needs are taken into consideration when looking at suitable placements and transition arrangements (please see appendices 1-4 for template documents used during home/family visits). Social stories and photographs of the school and staff will be offered to the children/young people as well as visits/part-time placements to the school so that the child/young person and their family feel fully prepared for the move to Discovery Academy. Any visits will be planned with parents/carers and will be bespoke to individual needs.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: First home visit template

Appendix 2: Second home visit template

Appendix 3: Family information template

Appendix 4: Transition to school file contents