



MacIntyre Academies Discovery Academy

Admissions Policy

Version	Purpose / Change	Responsibility	Date
V8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children/young person/students changed to learner and school changed to Academy throughout, where appropriate• His/her replaced with 'their' throughout• Updates throughout to reflect current practices• References to legislation added• New sections added on parent/carer responsibilities, equal opportunities	Principal	March 2026

Person Responsible: Principal
Type of policy: Statutory
Date of first draft: 2015
Date of staff consultation:
Date adopted by the Trust Board: July 2015
Date of implementation: Sep 2015
Date reviewed: (*annually*) Mar 26
Date of next review: Mar 27

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Admissions Policy

Policy statement

Discovery Academy is a school for learners, aged 9 – 19 years who have an autistic spectrum condition and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. When at full occupancy, the Academy will provide around 100 places across all age groups. For a learner to be admitted to the Academy, their placement must be agreed by a Local Authority (LA) and named in their 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 learner.

Scope

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

This policy operates within the following legislation:

- **Education Act 1996** - Sets out duties regarding children with special educational needs;
- **Children and Families Act 2014** - Reformed the system for children and young people with SEND;
- **Equality Act 2010** - Protects against discrimination;
- **SEND Code of Practice 2015** - Statutory guidance for supporting children with special educational needs;
- **School Admissions Code** - Statutory guidance on school admissions.

Rationale

Our Academy is for learners who have an existing EHCP that names Discovery Academy. The admission process for special schools is not the same as enrolment and admission in mainstream schools. Many of our learners 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 individuals to improve their own well-being, focusing on their communication, social, emotional, and mental health as central to the delivery of the Academy curriculum. We include learning to build positive relationships and learning that will help individuals understand and shape their own emotions. We have a holistic and non-judgemental approach to supporting behaviour that empowers the learner to engage in education. We support learners to recognise their challenges and barriers to learning and teach them alternative ways of responding to difficult situations. The Academy 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 learners 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 and carers, the Academy cannot proceed to the admissions stage without LA support and a formal consultation being submitted to the Academy.
2. Discovery Academy can be considered if the parents/carers have expressed a preference for a 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 a 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 Academy, preferably before the completion of a statutory assessment or Annual Review. The focus of any visit is upon the parent/carer viewing the Academy. The Academy will not comment on the appropriateness of the provision for the child/young person before the completion of the admissions process.

Admissions Criteria

Discovery Academy's admissions criteria are:

1. The learner must have an EHCP that refers to an autistic spectrum condition and/or social, emotional or mental health needs as the main barrier to learning;
2. The learner must be aged between 9 – 19 years;
3. Learners are able to:
 - Follow adult led direction
 - Access an adapted national curriculum
 - Access classroom-based learning
 - Work towards formal accreditations;
4. The learner 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;
5. The admission of any one child/young person must not be detrimental to the learning of the others already placed at the Academy.

Admissions Process

The process of admission to Discovery Academy is as follows:

1. If the LA believes that our Academy may be suitable, they will consult with us. All consultations must go through Warwickshire SENDAR.

Parents/carers can make a request to the LA that they consult with Discovery Academy. We do not discuss with parents before consultation whether we can meet need, as we follow a formal process.
2. The LA will send Discovery Academy a copy of the proposed EHCP and supporting documents as part of the consultation process.
3. We will consider:
 - Whether we can meet the child's needs as described in the EHCP;

- Whether admission would be compatible with the efficient education of other learners;
 - Whether admission would be an efficient use of resources;
 - The needs of the existing cohort;
 - If we have space in an appropriate developmental group for the individual to join.
4. The Principal and Assistant Principal/SENCO will consider the paperwork received from the LA in line with the Academy's admission criteria and may consult with other leaders in the Academy during this time.
 5. During the consultation process, Discovery Academy may visit the individual in their current setting to establish if we can meet their need. If appropriate, we may contact professionals to have a better understanding of their needs and the support required. We may also invite the parent/carer and child to visit the school.
 6. The Academy will endeavour to make a decision promptly. Once a decision has been made, the Principal will liaise the LA, confirm a start date, and arrange the admission of the individual. If the Academy decides that it cannot meet their needs, the LA will be advised of the reasons for this decision in a form that can be shared with parents/carers.
 7. The LA will arrange transport in accordance with its own Home to School Transport Policy. It is the responsibility of families to liaise with the LA to make travel arrangements. It is important to note that travel arrangements are made independently of the Academy, and we do not make arrangements on a family's behalf, nor do we not have any influence over the outcome and cannot get involved in making travel arrangements or decisions. Parents/Carers are to contact the LA immediately to arrange transport. A delay in transport being arranged should not delay a learner attending school on their identified start date.
 8. If the Academy is full, it cannot offer a place as this would compromise the safe and effective education of the learners already on roll.
 9. Following the admissions procedure, if a place at the Academy is not offered, the following may apply:
 - parents/carers may indicate to the LA that they would like Discovery Academy to be named as the school of preference within their learner's EHCP. 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 Tribunal (SEND).
 - The LA may approach the Academy to reconsider its view and commit to the provision of additional resources to support a successful future placement. The Academy may still believe it cannot meet the needs of the learner or that their placement may be incompatible with the needs of other learners already on its roll. In most cases this is accepted by the LA and other solutions are sought. In the rare instance that the LA decide to name Discovery Academy regardless of the response that the Academy has given, the parents may again access the tribunal process and the Academy reserves its right to apply to Secretary of State for Education to be removed as their named provision from the learner's EHCP.

Transition Planning

Once a place is confirmed, we will work with the family and previous setting to plan a smooth transition. We will contact families to arrange a home visit so we can best understand the needs of the learner and what we can do to support them in school. If a placement has been agreed mid-year, we will discuss with the family to co-plan an appropriate transition.

Transition arrangements for learners starting in September are as follows:

- The Academy will meet with families prior to starting school to obtain vital information in supporting your child;
- Discovery Academy will liaise with the previous school to ensure a smooth transition;
- Discovery Academy may do an observation in the current school setting to help understand the needs of your child;
- Discovery Academy may contact other professionals to understand the needs of your child and how best to support them;
- Discovery Academy may attend your child's Annual Review if appropriate;
- Typically, a 6-week transition programme will run in the summer term to familiarise individuals with their new environment before they start;
- Parents will be initially requested to stay on site which provides an opportunity for families to get to know each other, Academy staff, and the school environment.

All parents/carers are asked to complete learner information documents before they start school with us. We will help families to fill out the forms. This will include all medical and dietary needs and other crucial support information for the learner. If a learner has medical care needs which necessitate that medication needs to be administered during school hours, an Individual Health Care Plan will need to be prepared before they can safely begin attending the Academy. If a place has been offered with conditions of additional resources, a start date will not be set until the additional resources have been allocated to the Academy and have actually been provided.

Changes at previous reviews:

Version	Purpose / Change	Responsibility	Date
V4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review • Page 2 – number of CYP on roll increased 	Principal	June 2021
V5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal changed to Executive Principal and Head of School role added • Contents page added 	Executive Principal	Feb 2023
V6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further detail added to point 8 of the admissions process 	Executive Principal	Sep 2024
V7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 5 – Inclusion of CiC, PCiC and Kinship) • Admissions Process – Inclusion of Family Footings involvement in the process • Change in terminology from 'will' to 'may' as we have individual plans based on need. • Executive Principal to Principal • Pre-Placement Interviews/Visits – Removed examples of assessments as this includes a broad range of possible multi-agency work 	Principal	March 2025