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# Admissions Policy

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Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
Reviewed September 2025
For review - Annually - Review targets annually

This Policy has been written with reference to section 6 of the equality act 2010. As part of our admissions process Utopia does not discriminate on the basis of any of the protected characteristics in relation to Race, Religion, Sex, Sexual Orientation or Disability.

Utopia provides for pupils from the age of 13-16 years who have a range of additional needs. Pupils may experience additional needs associated with anxiety related conditions, sensory impairments, neurological divergent and autistic spectrum disorders.

Most pupils will have an Education Health and Care Plan. Ideally pupils will join Utopia at the beginning of the academic year, however admissions can be received mid year where we can appropriately meet need. Pupils will generally join us from within the Wirral LA area however enrolment will be considered from other Local Authority Boroughs.

There are two main routes for admission to school:

### **Local Authority**

The Local Authority (LA) is responsible for placing children in the school and will liaise with the school regarding admissions. They may consult the school on a place for your child. This will happen because they consider that your child's needs could be met by Utopia. This can take place at any time during the school year and may arise following a planning meeting or review. You should be aware if this is the case. You are welcome to arrange a visit if a consultation is taking place.

### **Parental Preference**

You may visit school by appointment if you are considering specialist provision for your child. You may visit whether you already reside in Wirral or if you are from a different area. We ask that you keep your child's current school and the Local Authority informed as far as you can.

Who might be involved?

- Assessment and Reviewing Officer from the LA
- Principal Assessment and Reviewing Officer
- Members of staff from your child's school
- Social Worker
- Education Support Officers
- Wirral SEND Partnership- Parents support

### **The Process**

During your visit there is no pressure to make a decision. Our responsibility is to provide you with enough information to feel equipped to make a decision. We will answer your questions. Sometimes more than one visit is required.

If you decide that you would like to proceed to explore a school place for your child you must inform the Local Authority. Often this is called preferencing. You will need to do this as part of the EHCP process.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all school places are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

### **A pupil will be admitted to Utopia**

- If he or she falls within the terms of the current approval for a place within the school. This is currently when a child has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) identifying a learning difficulty.
- When considering admission, the Head of Centre or those with delegated responsibilities will review their needs as identified in the EHCP with due consideration of the provision required, including the curriculum offer and the accreditation pathway available (if relevant) ensuring that there is a progression route for each pupil. As per the SEND code of practice this will be decided within 15 days of receiving the initial referral.
- When the Authority or a neighbouring one, parents and Utopia and any relevant professionals who are involved in the assessment are all agreed that the child's needs are such that action should be taken immediately to arrange a visit and assess if we can suitably meet need.
- As an emergency or provisional placement where children are awaiting the confirmation of an EHCP if Utopia feel they can adequately meet that child's needs.
- The power to admit a young person is delegated to the Head of Centre. In certain situations they may wish to take the case to the board of governors.

### **Consultation with parents and the LA before naming a school:**

- Before specifying the name of a particular school in an Education Health and Care Plan, the Authority will consult with the parents of the child concerned and may also consult with Utopia on an informal basis.
- Where the parent has a preference, the Authority will name the school, unless:
  1. The school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability or aptitude or their special educational needs; or
  2. The attendance of the child at the school would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he or she would be educated.
- The Authority will give due consideration to the views expressed by those consulted but the final decision lies with Authority.
- When considering admission the Head of Centre, or those with delegated responsibilities will meet the child, ask parents to visit the school if they have not already done so, will review their needs with due consideration of the provision required, including the curriculum offer and the accreditation pathway available (if relevant) ensuring that there is a progression route for each pupil. Following this visit the Head of Centre or those with delegated responsibility may decide at this point that the admission of the pupil is unsuitable and will notify parents and the LA.

As part of its consideration the Authority will take into action the grounds listed above. In so doing it will be mindful of:

1. the terms of the approval of the school concerned.

2. the number in the particular year or teaching group and classroom arrangements in the school.

The use of admission panels:

- If there is a high pressure on school places, or a high volume of admissions to be considered for a certain part of the year, the school may operate an admissions panel. Its purpose will be to enable the school, having been consulted by the Authority, to come to a decision as to whether or not the admission of a child is compatible with the provision of efficient education for the child with whom they would be educated or the efficient use of resources. The discussion at the panel will inform the response of the governing body to the Authority. The final decision lies with the Authority.

Admission for other Local Authorities:

- If the governing body of a school or the Authority are consulted by another LA which is proposing to name Utopia in a child's Education Health and Care Plan then the school and the Authority will discuss the proposal before replying.
- The school will work closely with the local authority case managers and meets at least half termly for regular consultation meetings, the purpose of which is to inform the school of pupils who require places in the locality.

Admission Arrangements:

Once a place has been agreed, the following operational arrangements will be made:

- SEN Transport will organise transport, if required and the pupil is eligible for it.
- School Office staff will receive the paperwork and to send out welcome pack with consent forms.
- A start date will be proposed.
- A pre-admission meeting will be held
- Parents, School and the multi-disciplinary team will liaise, to ensure appropriate plans are in place to ensure the health, safety and progression of a child.
- In some circumstances it is mutually beneficial to have a phased transition into school. This will be considered at the pre-admissions meeting.