# Willow School Policy




# Admissions Policy

Date: November 2026

Review Date: November 2028

## Aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide a clear understanding of the criteria for admittance
- Provide an overview of the application process
- Explain how pupils are placed across the school's sites and pathways
- Explain how we might agree the appropriateness of the placement and the method by which a working partnership between all stakeholders can begin

## Admissions Criteria

Willow School is an independent specialist school for pupils with special educational needs. To be considered for a place:

- Children must have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Children must be within the school's registered age range of 7–14 years inclusive
- Children's primary needs will usually be in the areas of communication and interaction (including autism) and/or cognition and learning, as set out in the SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Many of our pupils have a diagnosis of autism, however, a diagnosis is not required where the EHCP identifies needs that the school is able to meet
- Any additional needs, including learning disabilities or medical conditions, will be assessed on an individual basis to determine whether the school is able to meet the child's needs. Relevant medical information or a healthcare plan may be requested prior to admission

Additional Factors:

The following factors will further inform whether a placement at Willow School would be suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs, and whether their admission would be compatible with the efficient education of other pupils and the efficient use of resources:

- Whether other pupils attend Willow School with a similar level of ability and range of skills
- Whether there is an appropriate peer group for the child
- Where there is a secondary diagnosis or additional need, whether these needs can be met within the school
- Whether medical needs can be accommodated within the current staffing arrangements, premises facilities and staff training, including any reasonable adjustments that could be made
- Where a child's medical needs require on-site nursing care, the school is unlikely to be able to meet those needs, however, each case will be considered individually

## Our Sites and Pathways

Willow School operates across two sites:

- West Banks: Predominantly our KS2 site. Pupils following our Roots Pathway are based here, alongside some pupils working on the Branches Pathway
- Jermyn Street and White Hart Mews (a nearby classroom): Predominantly our KS3 site. Pupils follow our Branches Pathway, working on our Canopies (KS3) curriculum

Placement of Pupils:

Pupils are placed in the site, pathway and class that best meet their needs and abilities. This decision is based on information from the EHCP, the previous school, the school visit and pre-admissions meeting. This will be a discussion between professionals and parents to best place a pupil.

We are flexible with our classes and pupils, endeavouring to be adaptable to individual needs. All pupils are carefully monitored during their initial transition period, and a baseline assessment is typically completed after approximately four weeks in school. This assessment considers both the pupil's academic attainment and their wider holistic needs, including communication, social, emotional, sensory and independence skills. Following this process, a pupil may be moved to a different class, pathway or site if this would better meet their individual needs and support them to achieve the best possible outcomes. Any proposed move will be discussed with parents/carers beforehand.

In addition, pupils are grouped for phonics, mathematics and reading according to their individual learning needs and abilities. This ensures that teaching is appropriately matched to their level of development and may involve working with pupils from other classes.

## Admissions Procedure

Places at Willow School are commissioned and funded by the placing Local Authority. Where the Local Authority believes that a child's needs may be best met by our expertise, it will consult with the school as part of the EHCP process. At this time, the Local Authority will share all relevant papers relating to the prospective pupil, including the EHCP and reports from the current school and other professionals. This enables an informed decision to be taken as to whether the placement would be appropriate.

If it appears from the initial consultation that a placement at Willow School may be suitable for the child, the following procedure will ensue:

1. The school's senior leadership team will assess the needs of the child using the information provided.
2. Parents/carers and the child will be invited into school for a visit with school staff.
3. Following the visit, parents/carers will feed back to the child's caseworker and the school will respond formally to the placing Local Authority's consultation, stating whether it is able to meet the child's needs. Where the school is unable to meet the child's needs, the reasons will be given.
4. The final decision lies with the placing Local Authority, which will name the school in Section I of the child's EHCP and confirm the placement.

5. If confirmed, parents/carers will be asked to complete all school admission paperwork and consent forms and submit these to the school. A pre-admissions meeting will be held with the family and school to further understand the pupil's needs and share key information about school life and routines.
6. Parents/carers will also need to make their application to the placing Local Authority's Transport Team at this time, where eligible.
7. The school proprietor will arrange contracts and start dates with the placing Local Authority.
8. Children may enter the school at any time during the school year if places are available. When a start date has been established, the school will communicate with the family to establish transport arrangements.
9. The pupil's details will be added to Bromcom with a personalised profile created and a Tapestry account will be set up for parents/carers.
10. Within the first few weeks, pupils will have their baseline assessments and Holistic Pupil Assessment.
11. Between four and six weeks after starting, during the pupil's first term, the school will arrange a post-admission meeting with parents/carers to feedback on progress, agree next steps and share how their child has settled.

### Before a Pupil Starts

Before, or on, a pupil's first day, the school will ensure that:

- Admission paperwork is complete, including emergency contacts, details of those with parental responsibility and relevant consents (photographs and video, local area visits, administration of medication and intimate care, where relevant)
- An Individual Healthcare Plan is in place where a pupil has a medical condition, in line with the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- An allergy management plan, and any spare adrenaline auto-injector arrangements, are in place where required, in line with the Allergy Policy
- Relevant staff are briefed on the pupil's needs, EHCP outcomes and any health, safety or risk information
- Any transition arrangements agreed with the family are in place

### Safeguarding on Admission

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and school administrator will:

- Request the pupil's child protection file from the previous school, where one exists and has not already been received. The previous school should transfer this separately from the main pupil

file, within five school days for an in-year transfer or within the first five school days of the start of a new term

- Provide confirmation of receipt of the file to the previous school

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then:

- Review the file, and any other safeguarding information shared, before or as soon as possible after the pupil starts, and share relevant information with staff on a need-to-know basis
- Where a pupil is looked after or previously looked after, liaise with the Virtual School and the child's social worker, and ensure a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place

### Admission Register

In line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, the pupil will be entered on the school's admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend. The school will notify the local authority within five school days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register.

### Reduced or Transition Timetables

Some pupils may benefit from a phased start to help them settle. In line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, August 2024), any reduced timetable will:

- Only be used where it is in the pupil's best interests
- Be agreed with parents/carers and the placing Local Authority
- Be time-limited, with a clear plan for the pupil's return to full-time education
- Be reviewed regularly, with attendance recorded in line with the Attendance Policy

### Enquiries and Viewings

If you have any queries around your child attending Willow School, your initial point of contact should be your child's caseworker at the placing Local Authority. We always welcome phone calls from families and are happy to talk through any questions you may have.

Please note, we are unable to arrange any viewings of the school until a referral has been made by the placing Local Authority. Once the Local Authority has consulted with the school, we will arrange a visit with the family.

If a viewing is arranged, we ask that children attend alongside their parents/carers. This enables families to see how their child responds to the environment and enables the school to further understand each pupil's needs.

### Appeals and Concerns

As placements are decided by the placing Local Authority through the EHCP process, there is no admission appeal to the school. Parents/carers who disagree with the school named in Section I of their

child's EHCP may appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). The Local Authority will provide information about mediation and appeal rights.

Any concerns about how the school has handled an admission enquiry can be raised through the school's Complaints Policy.

## Equality Act

Willow School applies this policy fairly and consistently to every application. Under Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010, the school must not discriminate against, harass or victimise a prospective pupil in its admission arrangements, including the terms on which a place is offered, refusing an application or not offering a place. This duty applies in relation to the following protected characteristics:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Age and marriage/civil partnership are not protected characteristics in relation to pupils under Part 6 of the Act, which is why the school is able to lawfully admit pupils within its registered age range of 7–14 years.

As every pupil admitted to Willow School has special educational needs, the school takes particular care in relation to its duties towards disabled pupils. The school will:

- Consider each referral individually, using the information in the EHCP, from the previous school and from the school visit
- Consider what reasonable adjustments, including auxiliary aids and services, could be made to meet the child's needs before reaching a decision
- Not treat a child unfavourably because of something arising from their disability, unless this can be justified
- Base any decision that it is unable to meet a child's needs on evidence, and set out the reasons in its consultation response to the Local Authority

The school's Accessibility Plan sets out how it will improve access to the curriculum, the premises and information for disabled pupils over time.

## Publication of This Policy

In line with the Independent School Standards, this policy is published on the school website and is available on request from the school office.

## Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- SEND Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Allergy Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy