

Document name
Admissions Policy

This document is relevant to:	
Central Support Services	✓
Education	✓
Medical Therapy	✓
Residential	✓

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 St. John's School and College provides residential and day education services. The school is a non-maintained special school and the college is an independent specialist college for young people who require significant levels of support beyond that which can normally be provided within a mainstream setting.
- 1.2 Applications for placements are open to young people with a wide range of learning difficulties which may be moderate/severe/profound and complex and/or have learning disabilities, as well as those with additional requirements relating to autistic spectrum disorders, challenging behaviour, hearing impairments and mental health issues. See **Appendix 2**.
- 1.3 Decisions regarding the placement of children and young people involve a number of stakeholders and take account of the views of the placing authority, parent/carer preference and views of professionals within St. John's.
- 1.4 St. John's seeks to help to make a real and practical difference to the young people who access our services and embrace the unique diversity that they present. The admissions process aims to fairly identify young people whose needs the organisation can meet.

2. Policy

- 2.1 St. John's will ensure that fair and transparent admissions procedures are undertaken for all young people who are referred or apply to the school or college, in line with St. John's mission statement and values.
- 2.2 Any placement decision undertaken by St. John's will be a result of careful consideration of that young person's individual needs, as identified in the Education, Health and Care Plan (if in place), how effectively those needs can be met by the provision at St. John's and whether those needs can be met without detriment to the wellbeing and safety to other learners already at the school and college.
- 2.3 St. John's Admissions Panel comprises of the Admissions Manager, senior education, residential, therapy and medical staff who will as a team undertake the admissions assessments. Final decisions made by:
 - ✓ School: C.E.O, Headteacher, Head of Wellbeing, Positive Behaviour Support Leader, Head of Care.
 - ✓ College: C.E.O, Principal, Head of Wellbeing, Positive Behaviour Support Leader, Head of Care.
- 2.4 Individual learner placement assessments will be organised and undertaken by a multidisciplinary staff team who will consider the medical, therapeutic, residential care and educational needs of each individual applicant.
- 2.5 When a referral/application is received, St. John's will consider the request and respond with a decision to proceed with an assessment. Where a young

person is not considered at this stage, clear reasons will be provided with recommendations expressed in terms of meeting their required needs.

- 2.6** In all admission decisions, St. John's will pay due regard to equal opportunities and diversity and will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate the placement.
- 2.7** All placements are subject to availability of funding and funding eligibility criteria. St. John's recognises that our provision forms part of a regional and national framework which must prioritise and justify the use of limited resources
- 2.8** Parents/carers or young person's representatives may also be fee paying.
- 2.9** Applications/referrals will be considered throughout the year. 'In year' admissions may be offered where a vacancy exists but note that in the case of residential placements these will be subject to availability of bed space.
- 2.10** Where a preference of placement provision is under question and involves a tribunal or panel decision, St. John's will provide unbiased, honest assessment reports to support the best interests of the young person.
- 2.11** If parents/carers contest a rejected application by St. John's any appeal would go to the CEO.

3. Procedures/processes

- 3.1** An initial enquiry may be made and a visit for parents/carers and their young person will be organised by St. John's Transition team.
- 3.2** All applications/referrals will be received through the Admissions Manager at St. John's. The Admissions Manager will collate all relevant documentation received and distribute it to the Admissions Panel members who will give full consideration to it. Further information, including evidence, may be requested from the local authority or referring agents by the Admissions Team, where necessary.
- 3.3** All prospective young people are required to attend an assessment visit comprising of one or two days at the school or college (two days if a residential placement is sought). This will give the young person an opportunity to experience a range of learning activities with associated resources, as well as enabling direct initial observations and assessments. Where required, members of the assessment team may undertake direct assessments at the young person's school or home, the duration of which may vary.

Assessments will not take place without the permission of the Local Authority (unless the learner is involved in a tribunal in which case specific specialist assessments may be requested by other parties) St. John's will negotiate arrangements with the young person's family or carers and inform the Local Authority of the arrangements made.

Purpose of the assessments is to ensure that:

- The needs of the young person are clearly identified
- The level and type of support needed (aligned to our provision and program offer) is identified
- Resources can be provided in line with individual need on entry
- Reasonable adjustments are identified for subsequent discussion and action
- Funding processes are satisfactorily met.

Assessment Outcomes

Assessment outcomes inform the decision of the Admissions Panel and also form the basis of future baseline assessments. Outcomes facilitate individual multi-disciplinary planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of learning.

- 3.4** Once a decision has been made by the Admissions Panel the young person and their parents/carers will be informed and the placement request report compiled and sent to the LA. This report provides detailed information obtained from the admissions and assessment process, including the fee structure and associated aspects of support and provision that St. John's will provide.

Transition Support

- 3.5** St. John's Admissions Team will determine via the assessment process if a learner will benefit from support with entry transition and how that transition support should be organised. The direct assessment will help to inform this decision.
- 3.6** Transition support may take different forms, including continuing assessment by St. John's professionals at the learner's current placement or home or by the young person attending St. John's for a planned programme. Transition may include overnight stays where appropriate.
- 3.7** The Admissions Panel will negotiate transition support needs with the local authority at the point of offering a placement. The cost of extended into entry transitions (of more than two full education days) will be charged on the basis of the fee set from the direct assessment. Transition must be agreed by the local authority as part of the quoted fee prior to commencement. Details of the transition may be negotiated with the young person's family or carers.
- 3.8** During the transition process the learner will appear on St. John's learner roll.
- 3.9** Internal transitions (that is, between St. John's School and St. John's College) will not be charged for and will be organised on an individual basis to meet the needs of each learner.

APPENDIX 1

Exceptional Extension to Educational Placements at the College

When St. John's College has offered a learner a 3-year learning programme, the expectation is that, on completion of the programme, the learner will be prepared to engage with their next placement or provider. By prepared we mean that the young person has:

- Undertaken all necessary elements, including completion of relevant coursework, unit/credit accumulation, and exams in order to achieve the qualifications they have been working towards, as identified on admission
- Been supported in identifying areas of interest in vocational, leisure, living and social options – with the aim that a successful transition plan can be followed
- Been made aware of various future options and supported to make choices about where they would want to live and what they want to do
- Been able to communicate those choices, and have those choices understood and respected.

Although 3 year learning programmes are offered, it is understood that placements are agreed for 1 year at a time, and following years are agreed based on progress made, and potential for future progress on the programme as identified through the placement review process.

St. John's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will only consider extensions to placements (i.e. beyond 3 years) in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances may include (but are not limited to):

- A learner being absent from college for a considerable period of time, either due to illness or accident, that significantly impacts on their programme of learning
- A learner not being offered placement with any other provider or service, and facing serious disruption such as being made homeless
- An identified educational need that can be best met at St. John's college and in the best interests of the learner
- A request from the Local Authority to extend the placement.

To be considered for an extension, learners or their families or representatives should write to St. John's Principal and copy in the Admissions Manager (admissions@st-johns.co.uk) to make known their intention of requesting an extension. The letter/email should include clear reasons why the placement should continue, risks associated with not continuing the placement, and describe what benefit continuing the placement would have for the learner. St. John's will acknowledge receipt of a written request within 10 working days (within term time, however this may take longer in holiday time).

Following receipt of a written request to extend a learner's placement St. John's may consult with the learner's Local Authority.

St. John's Admissions Panel will provide multidisciplinary advice to the Senior Leadership Team who will make the decision on suitability to extend their placement. SLT's decision will be based on the application made, the learner's personal

situation in relation to the above mentioned circumstances, and other available information (such as discussing with keyworkers, families, and other involved professionals). SLT must also take into account:

- Available vacancies - including places that have already been offered to other learners
- Best interests of the learner – including the learners views and aspirations, any protection or safeguarding considerations, personal /family circumstances
- Programme content - including suitability, availability, and level of accreditation
- Suitable peer group, both residentially and educationally
- Availability, capacity and suitability of continuing therapeutic intervention
- Support levels – understanding the expectation from Local Authorities that support levels should reduce over a programme, and that during an extension period support levels may be reduced further.

St. John's will communicate whether the request is agreed in principle or whether it is rejected. This will be done as soon as all relevant information has been collected.

No formal offer of extending a learner's placement will be made to the learner without first consulting with their Local Authority. Any offer made will be copied to the appropriate professionals within the Local Authority.

N.B. The decision to agree to extend a placement beyond the expected end date lies with the Local Authority. St. John's College runs a planned three-year programme with progression built in at the end of each year.

Some young people and/or their families request a fourth year.

St. John's remains neutral on this matter and if the young person and/or their families come to an agreement with their Local Authority that a fourth year meets one or more of the criteria below, then St. John's will provide this fourth year.

Criteria:

That a fourth year:

- can show further progression
- is qualitatively different
- compensates for a gap in earlier provision
- supports the welfare of the young person
- or another exceptional reason.

Residential placements will only be held for a limited time (date set by St. John's) for learners who are applying for an extension, even if they are undergoing tribunal proceedings.

St. John's may consider extending privately funded placement outside of the above guidance.

The School may extend a placement by arranging a placement at the College if appropriate.

APPENDIX 2

St. John's School and College Admissions Criteria

A. Short version

St. John's School and College is a school, college and residential charity which admits young people with a learning disability aged 7–25 whose needs are related primarily to an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). Other young people whose primary needs are non-ASC can also be assessed where we judge we can meet need.

We admit young people for day or residential placements where other needs such as Down's Syndrome, Hearing or Visual Impairment, Demand Avoidance etc. are part of their Education, Health and Care Plan.

Therapy and Positive Behaviour Support are integrated into all our placements.

For further information please contact: admissions@st-johns.co.uk or look at the long version of our admission criteria.

For specific issues relating to the School (7- 19) please contact sue.evans@st-johns.co.uk
For specific issues relating to the College (19 – 25) please contact liz.coles@st-johns.co.uk

B. Long version

St. John's will admit a child, young person or adult ¹ with a learning disability if they meet an appropriate number of these criteria:

1. **Age:** 7 – 25
2. **Primary need:** Communication and Interaction (primarily Autism Spectrum Condition, ASC). We also accept placements where the primary need is described as: Asperger's Syndrome, High Functioning Autism, Atypical Autism, Pervasive Development Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Pathological Demand Avoidance or similar. Some non-ASC primary needs are similar in presentation and we will assess such requests sympathetically.
3. Some EHCPs use terms such as BESD, SEMH etc. for CYPA with autism. Where the need is primarily autism, we will consider such applications.

¹ CYPA

4. **Secondary needs:**

- a) Mental Health needs where community mental health services are already fully² involved
- b) Down's Syndrome
- c) Hearing Impairment
- d) Visual Impairment
- e) Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) or Demand Avoidance
- f) Gender Identity or Gender Dysphoria
- g) Fragile X
- h) Other chromosomal disorders
- i) Other³: where we can meet need.

5. **Cognitive ability:** Broadly speaking⁴ our CYPA in school and college fall into three groups:

- LJ⁵ 1
- LJ 2
- LJ 3

However, cognitive levels on their own are only one factor as we know that many other factors are often equally important, especially in the early years of a learning journey at St. John's.

- 6. **LJ 4:** in exceptional circumstances we may accept a CYPA onto learning journey 4 where their cognitive or other needs lie outside LJ 1 – LJ 3 areas and a bespoke learning journey will be designed for them such as an apprenticeship or a supported internship.

- 7. **Health and Care needs:** our Nursing and other staff can support CYPA with epilepsy, diabetes and a range of other medical needs. We can also support CYPA with personal care needs and these will be individually assessed prior to offering a place.

8. **Education, Health and Care Plan in place.**

² We will not accept placements where there are significant mental health needs and community mental health services have had no involvement

³ We have a significant experience in other areas and our admissions team can provide further information on application.

⁴ These groups are not fixed categories and young people may move between them and may be placed outside of their cognitive group if that is appropriate for other reasons. **LJ 1** broadly corresponds to P4- P7/PS 1-2 and Pre-Entry and Entry level 1/2; **LJ 2** broadly corresponds to P8 – NC2/PS 3-5 and Entry 2/Entry 3; **LJ 3** broadly corresponds to NC3 and above/PS 6 and above and also to Entry 3 and Level 1 and Level 2. We also recognize that many of our young people have specific talents and spiky profiles and may be working a long way outside these bands in specific areas of their talents.

⁵ LJ = learning journey; whilst our CYPA often start on one journey many of them move journeys during their time with us.

9. **Privately funded placements:** in exceptional cases we may take privately funded placements or assessment placements.
10. **Community placements:** a small number of CYPA with an EHCP find education, even in our adapted and specialist settings, too demanding in terms of their sensory and emotional needs and we have significant expertise and experience providing a community-based placement for such CYPA.
11. **Residential placements (School 7 – 19):** flexible placements available on site up to 38 weeks a year.
12. **Residential placements (College 19 - 25):** flexible placements on site and in the community up to and including 52-week placements.
13. **Partnerships** We have strong partnerships with a number of other providers in Sussex and beyond and if we can't meet need or believe a different setting would be more beneficial for the CYPA we will always offer impartial advice to parents and commissioners.

NB: This version was agreed in February 2020 and supersedes and replaces other versions in circulation.