

# Admissions Policy

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## **Version Control**

<b><u>Ver.</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Comment</u></b>
1	September 2023	Initial document

This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

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## 1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- explain how to apply for a place at the school
- set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply.

## 2. Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on the following advice from the Department for Education (DfE) in respect of the [School Admissions Code](#).

As an academy, Cumbria Academy for Autism is required by its funding agreement to comply with the code, and with the law relating to admissions as set out in the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. Introduction

We believe that referrals and admissions to the school should involve a partnership building process with families and Local Authorities (LAs), designed to ensure that the school can meet the needs of prospective students. The admissions process is founded on an appreciation of how difficult it can be for families to navigate their way through the process of finding the right school for their child. It recognises the need for the process to be clear, and when a place is given to a child, that the transition into school is planned appropriately.

The time frame for the admissions process depends on a number of factors including:

- the nature, quantity and quality of referral information;
- the need to seek additional consultation, clarification and advice;
- the number of students awaiting assessment;
- the availability of places and the time of year.

## 4. General

Cumbria Academy for Autism is a free special school and is part of The Eden Academy Trust, a special multi-academy trust. The school is a mixed school for boys and girls.

The age range for the school is 3-19 years of age.

Provision is aimed at meeting the needs of young people with Autism. Cumbria Academy for Autism will offer full time places for all its pupils.

All teachers with class teacher responsibility within the school will have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or be on a recognised course leading to QTS, mentored by senior teachers within the school.

Cumbria Academy for Autism provides a range of physical resources, staffing and pedagogical expertise and specialisms to meet the needs of the cohort. This includes staff with significant experience in working with the intended pupil cohort.

Cumbria Academy for Autism complies with all equalities regulations and will not discriminate against any of the school community regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, faith, or disability. The school complies with the Trust's single Equality Policy.

## 5. Admission arrangements

The admissions authority for the school is the LA in which the pupil and their family are resident. The LA makes the arrangements for the identification and assessment of children who have Special Educational Needs. Parents have an important role in this assessment process.

Children can only be considered for placement at Cumbria Academy for Autism if they are first referred on to the school, by the placing LA. The school would expect that all pupils referred on for admission would have a diagnosis by suitably qualified professional for Autism. Pupils may also have other recognised learning disabilities. These include, but need not be limited to:

- Sensory impairment;
- Physical difficulties;
- Medical needs;
- Communication difficulties.
- Learning difficulties

As a result of pre-existing learning difficulty or disability, it is recognised that some pupils may present with behaviours that challenge. However, a key distinction to make is that, whilst some pupils may present with this as part of their needs, the school does not cater for pupils whose primary need is within the category of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), or whose main barrier to learning is shown in behaviours that offer significant challenge, irrespective of whether SEMH has been identified as primary or prevailing need on EHCP documentation.

Similarly, the school is unable to cater for pupils whose sensory processing need is their primary level of need, nor an identified learning need.

Admissions cannot be considered without a viable Education, Health & Care (EHC) Plan in place.

Referrals are accepted at any time and new admissions can take place within the academic year, subject to viable capacity which does not compromise the health and safety of the existing cohort, or otherwise pose detriment to the learning of that cohort. Referrals are made by LAs but in many cases, they begin as enquiries made by parents. We encourage parents and LA representatives to visit the school as part of their search for the most appropriate placement. This is vital because all Specialist Schools are individual in character and provision. Their offers can be subtly different, but this is of crucial importance, and can make the difference to a successful placement in which a pupil may thrive.

In exceptional emergency cases, the LA may agree to an 'assessment place'. This is time limited, for a specific, clearly defined purpose. There will be a shared understanding and mutual agreement on this between all parties, not least between the school, family and funding LA. This will be appropriately funded and resourced.

The school has a notional 54 places for pupils; the number of places that the school has available may be lesser or greater than this depending on the needs of the pupil population at any one time or the resources awarded to it by the LA.

The school will generally accept all pupils directed towards them. However, exceptions may lie if contract measures within a risk assessment cannot be addressed due to:

- Resourcing
- Pragmatic school organisation
- Control measures which lie outside the school's expertise
- Vulnerability of pupils and staff.

It is vital to ensure a smooth transition from another setting to Cumbria Academy for Autism. To this end, the transition process normally includes a visit for a new pupil before commencement, a tour of the school for the family, and liaison between the two education settings. Cumbria Academy for Autism staff may attend a review or professionals meeting in some circumstances where pupil need carries a particular layer of complexity. Pupil visits will include assessments by skilled, senior teaching staff, where pupils are observed alongside peers, and will include observations by skilled therapists working within the Trust, where this is also appropriate.

Cumbria Academy for Autism will endeavour to commence new pupils as soon as pragmatically possible but will need to ensure that facilities including equipment, staffing, procedures, and the correct environment are in place prior commencement of a placement. Pupils will normally start the school on a full-time basis.

The placing LA is responsible for ensuring the true extent of a pupil's needs are fully known, in advance of placement, and ensuring this is correctly resourced through the EHCP process, before placing the pupil formally on role Cumbria Academy for Autism.

A full description of Cumbria Academy for Autism's provision for pupils with SEN can be found in our Local Offer, available on our website.

## **6. Fee structure**

Any pupil admitted to Cumbria Academy for Autism will be funded at a £10,000 base funding level. In addition to this, a top up fee will be charged that is linked to the pupil's needs. These fees will cover all aspects of the pupil's education including delivery of therapies, educational psychology support and any other professional services that the school offers to meet the educational needs of the pupil. The most appropriate banding for a pupil will be set by the school based on

the information contained in the pupil's EHC plan. The bandings and top-up fees currently are:

## **7. Pupil registration and information sharing**

The criteria for admission to Cumbria Academy for Autism is based on the pupil's age, ability, social & emotional skills and their language skills.

## **8. The admissions process**

The school uses professional judgement on the school's ability to meet pupil need when prospective pupils visit the site.

Parents/carers may visit the school informally before any formal request is made and can do so by contacting the school office. However, the school will prioritise visits for pupils who have an EHCP or draft EHCP in place, and for year groups where capacity may exist to take pupils within year.

When a pupil is referred to the school by a LA, we follow this process:

- a) The school reads all associated paperwork describing pupil needs. If it is clear from the paperwork that the school cannot meet pupil needs, the school will write to the LA to explain that at this point.
- b) If paperwork indicates the school may be able to meet needs the school will arrange for a pupil visit as quickly as possible. This will involve the child spending time in an age/key stage appropriate class, usually so they can be seen alongside peers, working with staff, and working with therapists, to triangulate knowledge of child against paperwork received. During this visit, and in combination with provided paperwork, the school observes pupils alongside peers to form judgements around the ability to meet need, the level of need, and the cost of provision when the school is able to meet need.
- c) If pupil needs can be met by Cumbria Academy for Autism, and a place is available, the school will communicate this to the placing LA, and the cost of placement, based on pupil need. The school will also give an indication of possible start date at this point.
- d) The LA will write back to the school, confirming or declining the offer. On confirmation of offer, which will always include confirmation of the funding agreement, school will take over direct liaison with family, outlining a clear plan for transition for the pupil. Documentation required by the school prior to admission will include:
  - The pupil's EHC plan;
  - All relevant medical information;
  - Any reports from pupil's previous school, where appropriate;
  - Any reports from other professionals who have been involved with the child but have not been included in the EHC Plan.

Cumbria Academy for Autism will always contact a host school or parents (in the case of home schooling arrangements) to make any information transfer

arrangement, related to safeguarding, medical and health conditions, and any other statutory processes. Most pupils will start their placement in September of any academic year, and any timescales identified below will assume that.

Communication with parents and placing authorities will ensure the transition is a smooth one and the pupil comes well prepared and confident.

Within the first term, there will be two opportunities to formally meet teaching staff, to understand the curriculum on offer within the key stage, and to receive an update on early progress in which targets will be shared with families. Every pupil at Cumbria Academy for Autism will have an annual review meeting, yearly. This meeting will collate reports from all involved professionals and parents/carers to review progress and set targets.

Effective home - school communication plays an important part in ensuring all pupils make progress at Cumbria Academy for Autism. The school primarily uses ClassDojo, a secure app, for home/school communication. In addition, families may contact class staff using the designated class email address, phoning the school directly, or speaking with staff at the gate.

Families receive termly newsletters, weekly bulletins, and emails and text messages as required from the school, informing them of relevant events, activities, and other information, as pertinent and applicable.

In case of any queries about the school or this Admissions Policy, please contact the school office on 01900 517632 or email [admin@caa.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:admin@caa.cumbria.sch.uk)

## **9. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head and approved under the Board's policy management arrangements and scheme of delegation.