

Admissions & Exclusion Policy

Updated: January 2023
Version - 1

This document relates to Article 28 (***Every Child has the Right to an Education***) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Orbis Education & Care

Subject: Admissions and Exclusions Policy

Policy

Orbis Education and Care consists of 5 Independent Special Schools that provide education for children/young people with autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and or Social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) aged 5 to 19 years. In some cases, younger children may be considered who would benefit from an earlier move to our specialist environment. We do not cater for emergency admissions.

Admission Criteria

- In most cases children and young people will have a statement of special education needs, education health care plan or individual development plan that details the pupil's diagnosis and interventions needed to provide the education package.
- Children/young people have a need for a specialist provision.
- They cannot be catered for within their own local authority.
- Their parents have a preference for a specialist school and/or residential placement.
- All paperwork relevant to the child/young person, including the pen portrait, previous IEP, behavior management plan, risk assessment and any previous therapist reports etc.
- The Orbis Education and Care referral form should be available for review by the Senior Management Team prior to an assessment being considered.

Referral process

Referrals will be accepted from Local Authorities and commissioning bodies.

An assessment form will be sent to the placing authority for completion, containing the reason for the referral and other relevant information that our schools required to make an informed decision of suitability of the placement. Other up to date copies of the child's/young person's Statement of Educational Needs, recent reports/reviews from current school, residential/respite placement plans and any other reports that give an up to date picture of the child/young person will be required prior, e.g. Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist and Occupational Therapist.

Assessment

Assessments will be undertaken by designated members of the senior leadership team at the school and can take place over several days. Where possible the potential child/young person will be observed in both the school and home environments. During the assessment, information will be gathered with the parents/carers/staff from each environment and the young person if possible.

The assessment team will complete an initial assessment and paperwork based on their findings and this information will be used to provide a cost to the local authority which will include staffing ratios and therapeutic provision.

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A successful referral will lead to an offer of an assessment. Unsuccessful referrals will be notified, giving a reason for the decision not to proceed.

Once the school has received written confirmation from the LA that the offer of placement has been accepted, the school will recruit/assign a competent staff team to the child.

Transition planning to the School

Once a place has been formally offered and accepted a transition plan will be agreed with all concerned parties. This will be guided by the individual child/young person's needs and will be supported in the most appropriate format.

The transition process may include:

- Information on the class/home for the child/young person that includes the school/homes expectation of the child/ young person and what he/she can expect of staff.
- Information on the school/home for the child/young person's parents that includes the complaints procedure.
- A program of planned visits, including a day and overnight stay (where applicable) to the school by the child/young person.
- Ideally support and teaching staff to meet the child/young person in their current environments.
- Parents and previous care/school staff to meet with school and care staff to develop specific individual programs for the child/young person prior to admission.
- Where applicable, input from the child/young person will be sought.

All offers of placement are subject to the child/young person being supported at an agreed staffing ratio throughout the transition process. The levels of support beyond this period will be discussed at the baseline multi-disciplinary review which takes place in the first month, and the review following the organisations transitional assessment period (TAP). Where there are high support needs for a child/young person, this ratio will be assessed and agreement reached prior to admission to ensure the child/young person's Care Plan can be implemented.

Where the support needs of a child/young person increase following admission, Orbis Education and Care will notify the Placing Authority as soon as possible and a review meeting will be arranged to discuss implementation of plans and staffing ratio's.

Admission

When each child/young person becomes a pupil or resident he/she will, where appropriate, receive an admissions pack with details of policies, photographs of the school and consent forms that need to be signed by the parents/carers/those with parental responsibility.

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Each child/young person will be appointed a 'Class teacher' and draft timetable. The schools admissions register will be update to include the new pupil and their annual review will be booked, based on the date of their most recent review.

Exclusions

All staff working within Orbis Education and Care and Priority Childcare are committed to providing the very highest quality of service for pupils that attend the school. As a specialist school we recognize that in order to ensure a positive atmosphere based on a sense of community and shared values it may, on occasions, be necessary to exclude an individual or individuals for a fixed period when the safety or wellbeing of pupils and/or staff are being compromised. In such cases it may be necessary to follow the procedures outlined in this policy. It should be noted that the school reserves the right to cease any pupil's placement during their transition assessment period if it is felt that the placement is not appropriate for the pupil, or if other pupils are being put in danger as a result of the placement.

Strategies implemented for a stable school placement.

- Staff will be trained in the school's therapeutic model and follow this model at all times when working with the pupil.
- All pupils will have a detailed behavior support plan that highlights triggers and early warning signs, along with actions staff can take to ensure the pupil remains happy and engaged in school life.
- The school will work closely with parents/carers and the local authority
- The school will provide a curriculum that is engaging, bespoke and individualized to the pupils needs
- The school will have a flexible approach and the ability to adapt timetables and activities should the pupils presentation begin to change
- The school will consult with various clinical specialists such as clinical psychologists requesting advice and if appropriate, direct assistance.

The Decision to Exclude

This decision to exclude a pupil will only be made if:

- The physical or emotional safety of pupils or staff is being regularly compromised.
- A pupil has knowingly and frequently flouted school rules
- A pupil commits an act which may be deemed illegal in the eyes of the law, or which may bring the school into disrepute.
- A pupil has bullied, intimidated, or caused physical, emotional or psychological hurt to another pupil.
- The pupil has consistently caused significant environmental damage to the school and property.

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The decision to exclude a pupil will only occur when:

- The Director of Education, Head of Education and staff believe that they have done all that they can for the pupils concerned.
- Exclusion can be on disciplinary grounds only. A pupil may be excluded either permanently or for a fixed period(s) that do not exceed 45 days in any one school year. A pupil may not be excluded for an indefinite period. This procedure applies to all of our pupils.

Factors to consider before making a decision to exclude.

Exclusion should not be imposed in the heat of the moment, unless there is an immediate threat to the safety of others in the school or the pupil concerned. Before deciding whether to exclude a pupil, either permanently or for a fixed period, the Head Teacher should:

- Ensure that a thorough investigation has been carried out.
- Consider all the evidence available to support the allegations, taking account of the school's behavior and equal opportunities policies, and, where applicable, the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Allow the pupil to give his or her version of events in appropriate means of communication.
- Check whether the incident may have been provoked, for example by bullying, including homophobic bullying, or by racial or sexual harassment.
- If necessary, consult others, but not anyone who may later have a role in reviewing the Head Teacher's decision, for example a member of the Board of Directors.
- The standard of proof to be applied is the balance of probability, i.e., if it is more probable than not that the pupil did what he or she is alleged to have done, the Head Teacher may exclude the pupil. However, the more serious the allegation, the more convincing the evidence substantiating the allegation needs to be. This is not the same as requiring the criminal standard to be applied but it does mean that when investigating more serious allegations, Head Teachers will need to gather and take account of a wider range of evidence (extending in some instances to evidence of the pupil's past behavior), in determining whether it is more probable than not that the pupil has committed the offence. Where a police investigation leading to possible criminal proceedings has been initiated, the evidence available may be very limited. However, it may still be possible for the Head Teacher to make a judgment on whether to exclude the pupil.

Early intervention and alternatives to exclusion

The Multi-Disciplinary Team will adapt a wide range of preventative programs to enable us to refer pupils identified as being at risk of exclusion to appropriate support. Exclusion, whether fixed period or permanent, should be used as a last resort when all other alternatives have been exhausted, but there will be circumstances where exclusion is appropriate.

When exclusion is not appropriate Exclusion should not be used for:

- Minor incidents such as failure to do homework.

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- Poor academic performance
- Lateness or truancy
- Breaches of school uniform rules or rules on appearance (for example, relating to jewelry, body-piercing, hairstyles, etc.),
- Punishing pupils for the behavior of their parents, for example where parents refuse, or are unable, to attend a meeting.

Informing pupils and parents/carers about the exclusion

- Where a pupil exhibits continuing challenging behavior and strategies employed have had no effect, the Head of Education should warn the pupil (if appropriate) and parent, of the possibility of a fixed period or permanent exclusion if our strategies for managing the behavioral difficulties do not appear to be effecting any change. This would also trigger an emergency meeting with parents/carers, staff, clinicians, social services and funding authorities.
- The Head of Education, who excludes a pupil, will ensure that the parent is notified immediately, ideally by telephone. The initial telephone notification will be followed up by a letter within five days. Exclusion will normally begin on the next school day, but if it has arisen following a major incident it may take effect immediately in which case, the parents will be contacted, and the pupil collected or transported home by school staff. This is clearly dependent on whether the exclusion is for a residential or day pupil.
- If the Director of Education decides to extend a fixed period exclusion or to convert a fixed period exclusion into a permanent exclusion, they will notify the parents and Funding Authorities accordingly, in writing. The letter will explain the reasons for the decision, the parental right to make representations to the Board of Directors and state the means by which such representations may be made. All correspondence should be in plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon.

The bullet points below set out details of what will be included in letters about fixed periods and permanent exclusions, content of the Director of Education letter to parent notifying of the pupil's fixed period exclusion

- the period of the fixed period exclusion (in school days) and the date and time when the pupil should return to school.
- the reasons for the exclusion and the circumstances surrounding the decision, including the steps taken to try to avoid an exclusion.
- the arrangements/conditions for enabling the pupil to continue at the school and the revision of any behavior programs and strategies.
- the parent's right to make representations to the company Board of Directors
- who to contact if the parent wishes to make representations to the Board of Directors, with any deadline for receipt of written representations.

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Content of the letter to parent notifying of the pupil's permanent exclusion

- the date the permanent exclusion is effective from
- the reasons for the exclusion and the circumstances surrounding the decision, including the steps taken to try to avoid an exclusion.
- Any relevant previous warnings, meetings, fixed period exclusions or other disciplinary measures e.g., Signed Positive Behavior Support Plans, incident forms.
- the parent's right to make representations to the Board of Directors
- who to contact if the parent wishes to make representations to the Board of Directors with any deadline for receipt of written representations.

Informing Orbis Education and Care and Priority Childcare and the relevant Funding Authorities

The Director of Education will inform the Board of Directors and Funding agencies immediately of all exclusions. All exclusions, for whatever period, will be formally recorded by the school's Head of Education in a formal log.

For each exclusion the school will provide:

- the name of the pupil
- the length of the exclusion
- the reason(s) for the exclusion
- whether the pupil is looked after by the Local Authority
- In the case of a 'looked after child' their local social services department will be informed.

Appeals against a permanent exclusion.

The responsibility for constituting the appeal panel and appointing the members and a clerk rest with the company.

Considerations following a fixed period exclusion.

- The school's obligation to provide education continues while the pupil is on the roll and must be met during a fixed term exclusion. In all cases of more than a day's exclusion, work should be set and marked. The head teacher considering whether to exclude a pupil for a longer fixed period, for example for more than 15 school days, should plan:
- How the pupil's education will continue during the period of exclusion
- How the time might be used to address the pupil's problems

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- What educational arrangements will best help with the pupil's reintegration into the school at the end of the exclusion?
- The head teacher should arrange a reintegration meeting with parents/ social worker following the expiry of a fixed period exclusion. This should be an opportunity to discuss how best the pupil can return to school. However, a fixed period of exclusion should not be extended if such a meeting cannot be arranged in time or the parents do not attend, as such a meeting is not a statutory requirement.

Equality Impact Statement

All relevant persons are required to comply with this policy and must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in relation to Age, Disability Gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation. If you, or any other groups, believe you are disadvantaged by this policy please contact the Regional Manager for the service.

Policy Reviewed: January 2023

Policy Review Date: January 2024

Signature:  **Director of Education)**

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