

ACT Schools Admissions Policy

Commitment

ACT Schools is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive and purposeful educational environment in which pupils are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and resilience required to progress towards successful adulthood.

ACT Schools seeks to provide appropriate educational opportunities for pupils who have experienced barriers to accessing or engaging with mainstream education. Through its specialist and targeted provision, ACT Schools aims to support pupils to re-engage with education, develop positive relationships with learning and make progress towards their individual educational and personal goals.

ACT Schools will not unlawfully discriminate in its admission arrangements and will consider applications from pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and/or disabilities in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the school's registered provision and its ability to meet the pupil's individual needs.

ACT Schools will consider reasonable adjustments and appropriate support as part of the admissions process where these are necessary to enable a pupil with a disability to access the school's provision.

Purpose

The purpose of this Admissions Policy is to provide a clear, fair and transparent framework for considering referrals and admissions to ACT Schools.

The policy sets out the criteria and processes used to assess proposed placements, including the availability of places and whether ACT Schools can appropriately and safely meet the pupil's educational, additional learning, social, emotional, behavioural, wellbeing and safeguarding needs within the provision and resources available.

It also outlines the information required to support admission decisions and the arrangements for pupils' transition, placement review and ongoing support.

ACT Schools aims to ensure that admission decisions are made consistently and transparently, with appropriate consideration given to each pupil's individual needs, views, wishes and circumstances, alongside the needs of pupils already attending the school.

Scope

ACT Schools is a registered independent day school providing education for pupils aged 11 to 16 years at Key Stages 3 and 4. It provides alternative and specialist educational provision for pupils who may experience significant barriers to accessing or engaging with mainstream education.

This may include pupils who have experienced exclusion or are at risk of exclusion, pupils experiencing significant anxiety or emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), and pupils experiencing other barriers to regular school attendance or engagement with education.

Responsibilities

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for admissions decisions and the implementation of this policy. The Delivery Director and Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance support the Headteacher in assessing referrals, considering suitability, managing safeguarding and risk considerations, and coordinating the admissions process.

Communication and Storage

The ACT Schools Admissions Policy will be stored:

- Externally via the ACT Schools Website
- Internally via *Calon*, under company information

Capacity and availability of places

ACT Schools currently has an agreed operational capacity of up to 42 pupils. This reflects the current commissioning arrangements and the level of provision that the school can safely and effectively deliver within its available accommodation, staffing, facilities and resources.

The number of places available at any given time may be affected by:

- The school's operational capacity and staffing levels;
- The needs and support requirements of pupils already attending ACT Schools;
- The individual needs and support requirements of the pupil being referred;
- The suitability of the school's accommodation, facilities and resources; and
- The terms of the relevant commissioning arrangements.

The availability of a place does not guarantee admission. Each referral will be considered individually against the suitability criteria set out in this policy, including whether ACT Schools can appropriately and safely meet the pupil's educational, additional learning, social, emotional, behavioural, wellbeing and safeguarding needs.

Where ACT Schools is operating at its agreed capacity, it may be unable to offer a place even if the pupil would otherwise meet the school's suitability criteria. Where appropriate, ACT Schools will liaise with the referring organisation and/or local authority regarding available alternatives.

Funding and commissioning

ACT Schools' provision is currently commissioned and funded by the relevant local authority. The relevant local authority is responsible for the funding arrangements associated with the places it commissions at ACT Schools, in accordance with the terms of the relevant commissioning agreement.

The number of places available at ACT Schools is subject to the current commissioning arrangements and the school's agreed operational capacity. ACT Schools currently has an agreed operational capacity of up to 42 pupils.

A local authority's agreement to fund or commission a placement does not, in itself, guarantee admission to ACT Schools. All proposed placements remain subject to ACT Schools' assessment of suitability, availability of a place and the school's ability to meet the pupil's needs safely and effectively within the provision and resources available.

ACT Schools will work collaboratively with the relevant local authority and other relevant referring organisations throughout the admissions process to ensure that appropriate information is shared and that proposed placements are properly considered.

Where there is a change to the commissioning or funding arrangements, ACT Schools will review the implications for the availability and delivery of places in accordance with the relevant agreement.

Suitability for admission

ACT Schools recognises that each pupil has individual strengths, needs and circumstances. The decision to offer a place will therefore be based on an individual assessment of whether ACT Schools can provide an appropriate, safe and effective educational placement for the pupil.

In considering the suitability of a placement, ACT Schools will assess whether the pupil's educational, additional learning, social, emotional, behavioural, wellbeing and safeguarding needs can be appropriately supported within the school's registered provision and the resources and support available.

ACT Schools will consider whether:

- The pupil's needs can be appropriately met through the curriculum, teaching, pastoral support and additional learning provision available at ACT Schools
- The school can make reasonable adjustments and provide appropriate support to enable the pupil to access education
- Any identified risks can be appropriately managed through suitable support, supervision, risk-management strategies or other reasonable measures
- The pupil's needs are compatible with the specialist nature of the provision and the needs of other pupils within the school
- ACT Schools has sufficient staffing, expertise, facilities and resources to provide the required level of support
- the pupil is likely to be able to engage with the educational provision offered, taking account of their individual circumstances and any identified barriers to engagement
- the proposed placement is consistent with any relevant IDP, additional learning provision, professional advice or other educational information available
- the placement is likely to provide a positive and sustainable educational environment for the pupil

Where appropriate, ACT Schools may seek further information, professional advice or clarification from the referring organisation, local authority, previous educational setting, parent/carer or other relevant professionals before reaching a decision.

The school will also consider the pupil's views, wishes and feelings, together with those of their parent, carer or guardian, as appropriate to the pupil's age and understanding.

Where ACT Schools identifies that additional support or reasonable adjustments may enable a pupil to access the provision successfully, these will be considered as part of the admissions process.

ACT Schools may decline to offer a place where, following appropriate consideration of the available information, it is determined that the school is unable to meet the pupil's needs within its registered provision, operational capacity and available resources, or that the risks associated with the placement cannot reasonably be managed.

Any decision not to offer a place will be based on the individual circumstances of the pupil and will not be based solely on a diagnosis, disability, additional learning need, previous exclusion, behaviour or other protected characteristic.

Where a place cannot be offered, ACT Schools will provide the referring organisation with written confirmation of the decision and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decision and information about the process for requesting a review.

Referral routes

ACT Schools may consider referrals from the following routes:

- Where a local authority commissions ACT Schools to provide education as part of an Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) package. Such placements will be subject to the local authority's commissioning arrangements and ACT Schools' assessment of suitability, availability and ability to meet the pupil's needs.
- Following an assessment, review or other relevant process undertaken by a local authority or other relevant organisation, including the development or review of an Individual Development Plan (IDP), where ACT Schools is identified or considered as an appropriate provision to meet the pupil's identified needs and additional learning provision.

- Where a pupil arrives within a local authority having previously attended a specialist provision or special school elsewhere, subject to referral by the relevant local authority and ACT Schools' assessment of suitability.
- In exceptional circumstances, such as following a significant change in circumstances, sudden trauma or permanent exclusion, where the relevant local authority considers ACT Schools as a potential appropriate provision.
- Following a request from another local authority, subject to the relevant commissioning arrangements and ACT Schools' assessment of suitability, availability and ability to meet the pupil's needs.

Application and referral process

ACT Schools accepts referrals through the relevant local authority and other appropriate referring organisations in accordance with the school's commissioning arrangements. Parents and carers will be involved in the admissions process and their views, wishes and feelings will be considered as part of the assessment of suitability.

A formal request for admission should be made in writing to the Headteacher or designated member of the admissions team. Where the referral is made by a local authority, school or other organisation, the referring organisation should ensure that the pupil and their parent/carer are appropriately involved in the referral process.

The admissions process will normally include the following stages:

1. Initial enquiry or referral

ACT Schools will receive the initial enquiry or referral and establish the basic information required to determine whether the application falls within the school's age range, registered provision, agreed operational capacity and general admissions criteria.

2. Information gathering

ACT Schools will request relevant information to enable the suitability of the placement to be assessed. This may include educational records, attendance information, an IDP where applicable, professional reports, safeguarding information, risk assessments and other relevant information relating to the pupil's educational and support needs.

3. Assessment of suitability

The information provided will be reviewed by the appropriate ACT Schools staff to determine whether the pupil's needs can be appropriately met within the school's registered provision and available resources. Further information or discussions with the pupil, parent/carer, local authority or other professionals may be requested where necessary.

4. Decision

Once sufficient information is available, ACT Schools will determine whether a place can be offered. Decisions will take account of the suitability of the placement, availability of places, the school's agreed operational capacity and the school's ability to provide a safe and appropriate education for the pupil.

5. Notification of outcome

The outcome of the application will be communicated in writing to the parent/carer and/or referring organisation. Where a place cannot be offered, the school will provide information about the reason for the decision and the process for requesting a review, where applicable.

6. Pre-admission planning

Where a place is offered and accepted, ACT Schools will work with the pupil, parent/carer, referring organisation and relevant professionals to agree an appropriate transition and induction plan. This may

include a visit to the school, meetings with key staff, information sharing, consideration of safeguarding and risk-management arrangements, and agreement of any reasonable adjustments or additional support required.

7. Admission and transition

The pupil will begin their placement in accordance with the agreed transition plan. Where appropriate, a phased transition may be used to support successful integration into the school environment. The arrangements will be reviewed and adjusted according to the pupil's individual needs.

ACT Schools will seek to process referrals and admissions in a timely manner. The school will normally acknowledge initial enquiries within 48 hours. Where a placement is considered suitable, ACT Schools will aim to complete the admissions process within three weeks of receiving the information required to make an informed decision. These are target timescales rather than guaranteed timescales.

Timescales may vary depending on the complexity of the referral, the availability of relevant information, the need for further assessment or professional consultation, and the engagement of the pupil, parent/carers or referring organisation.

ACT Schools will seek to obtain sufficient information to determine that the proposed placement is appropriate and that any necessary safeguarding, risk-management and support arrangements are in place before admission.

Initial enquiries and informal visits can be arranged by contacting the Deputy Head Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance at hannahcaddick@acttraining.org.uk

Formal requests for admission should be made in writing to the Headteacher at davidcarroll@acttraining.org.uk

Transport

ACT Schools does not manage or provide transport arrangements to or from the school premises.

Where a pupil is referred by a local authority, transport arrangements and eligibility for transport support will be determined by the relevant local authority in accordance with its own policies and eligibility criteria. This may include specialised transport or the provision of a chaperone where appropriate to the pupil's individual needs.

Parents, carers and referring organisations should discuss transport requirements with the relevant local authority as part of the referral and admission process.

Where public transport is the agreed mode of travel, ACT Schools may, where practicable, support discussions with the relevant local authority, pupil and family to identify appropriate drop-off and collection arrangements.

Monitoring and review of placement

The suitability and effectiveness of each placement will be monitored throughout the pupil's time at ACT Schools and will normally be formally reviewed at least termly, or more frequently where required.

Reviews will consider the pupil's progress, engagement, attendance, wellbeing, behaviour, additional learning needs, safeguarding and the effectiveness of the support and provision being provided.

The pupil and their parent, carer or guardian will be involved in review activities, as appropriate to the pupil's age and understanding.

Where a pupil has an Individual Development Plan (IDP), ACT Schools will work collaboratively with the responsible local authority and other relevant professionals and will contribute relevant information to support the review of the

pupil's needs and provision, where appropriate. Responsibility for the statutory review and maintenance of the IDP will remain with the relevant body in accordance with applicable legislation.

Where concerns arise regarding the suitability or sustainability of a placement, ACT Schools will work with the pupil, parent/carer, referring organisation and, where appropriate, the responsible local authority to consider appropriate support, reasonable adjustments or other measures.

Review of admissions and placement decisions

Where a parent, carer or referring organisation is dissatisfied with an admissions decision or a decision relating to the ongoing suitability or review of a placement, they may request an internal review of the decision.

A request for review should be made in writing to the Headteacher within 10 working days of the decision and should set out the reasons for the request and any additional information the applicant wishes ACT Schools to consider.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the request within 3 working days and will arrange for the decision to be reviewed by an appropriate senior member of staff who was not directly responsible for the original decision, where reasonably practicable.

ACT Schools will aim to complete the review within 15 working days of receiving all information required to undertake the review. The outcome will be provided in writing, including the reasons for the decision.

Where the decision relates to a pupil placed or funded by a local authority, ACT Schools will liaise with the relevant local authority or commissioning body as appropriate.

This internal review process does not affect any statutory rights of appeal, complaint or challenge that may be available under applicable legislation or through the relevant local authority or other responsible body.

Oversubscription and prioritisation

Where ACT Schools receives more suitable referrals than there are places available, ACT Schools will consider the individual circumstances and needs of each pupil in determining priority for an available place.

Priority will be informed by factors including:

- the urgency of the pupil's educational circumstances;
- whether the pupil is at risk of being without suitable education;
- safeguarding and welfare considerations;
- the suitability of ACT Schools' provision to meet the pupil's identified needs;
- the requirements and terms of any relevant local authority placement or commissioning arrangements;
- the needs and circumstances of pupils already attending ACT Schools; and
- the availability of appropriate staffing, accommodation and resources to support the proposed placement.

Where a pupil is looked after by a local authority, this will be taken into account as part of the assessment of priority, where ACT Schools' provision is considered appropriate to meet the pupil's needs.

Priority for an available place will not override ACT Schools' assessment of suitability. ACT Schools will only offer a place where it considers that the pupil's needs can be appropriately and safely met within the provision and resources available.

Changes to or ending a placement

ACT Schools aims to provide stable and sustainable placements for pupils. Where concerns arise regarding the ongoing suitability of a placement, ACT Schools will, wherever practicable, work with the pupil, parent/carer,

referring organisation and relevant local authority to understand the concerns and identify appropriate support, reasonable adjustments or other measures.

Where a placement is no longer considered appropriate or sustainable, ACT Schools will consider the circumstances on an individual basis and will communicate with the relevant parties before any decision is made to end the placement.

Where a placement is funded or commissioned by a local authority, ACT Schools will liaise with the relevant local authority or commissioning body regarding the continuation, amendment or ending of the placement.

In circumstances involving an immediate and significant safeguarding or safety concern, ACT Schools may need to take urgent action to protect the pupil, other pupils or staff. Any such action will be proportionate to the circumstances and managed in accordance with ACT Schools' safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety and other relevant policies.

ACT Schools will consider whether additional support, reasonable adjustments or other appropriate measures may enable the placement to continue before a decision is made that a placement is no longer appropriate or sustainable, except where immediate action is required to address a significant safeguarding or safety concern.

Document / Policy Change Request

All changes to this Policy will be subject to approval by the Headteacher.

Document / Policy Reviewing and Approving

This document will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.

The policy will also be reviewed sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, guidance, commissioning arrangements or the school's provision.

References

- Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- Independent Schools (Provision of Information) (Wales) Regulations 2021
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Government guidance on Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS)
- ACT Equality and Diversity Policy
- ACT ALN Policy
- ACT Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy
- ACT Pupil Health and Wellbeing Policy
- ACT Behaviour Policy
- ACT Attendance Policy
- ACT Complaints Policy
- ACT Data Protection/Privacy Policy

Glossary

- **ALN** – Additional Learning Needs
- **ALP** – Additional Learning Provision
- **EOTAS** – Education Otherwise Than at School
- **EBSA** – Emotionally Based School Avoidance

- **IDP** – Individual Development Plan
- **LA** – Local Authority
- **Pupil** – A child or young person who is being considered for, or is attending, ACT Schools
- **Placement** – The educational provision provided to a pupil at ACT Schools following an agreed referral and admissions process
- **Operational capacity** – The number of pupils ACT Schools is currently able to accommodate safely and effectively based on its commissioning arrangements and available accommodation, staffing, facilities and resources