

TreeHouse School Admissions Policy for Admission September 2023

Introduction

This policy applies to TreeHouse School which is registered with the Department for Education as a Non-Maintained Special School (NMSS).¹ This policy is published on our TreeHouse School website.

The school is owned and run by Ambitious about Autism (AaA) a national charity for autistic children and young people. AaA's vision is for a future where every autistic child and young person can be themselves and realise their ambitions. Our mission is that we stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities. TreeHouse School is funded through Local Authority fees and voluntary income.

The school is located within the London Borough of Haringey and has relationships with Local Authorities across London and the Home Counties.

Our admissions processes consider applications in light of the duties arising under the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Equality Act, and other relevant statutes where applicable.

Admission to TreeHouse School will be by way of the school being named within an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) following the processes set out below in this policy. Where spaces permit and where we have assessed we are able to meet the special educational needs and provision of the child/young person, TreeHouse School may in exceptional circumstances accept privately funded pupils where a family relocate to the UK for work and where the employer pays the fees as part of a relocation package.

1. Admissions Criteria

TreeHouse School will admit autistic children and young people aged 4 to 19 with a primary diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition² (ASC) and who may also have a learning disability. The school may on an exceptional basis admit a child or young person where they demonstrate behaviours frequently associated with autism or who have a similar social communication difficulty to autism.

Funded places in 2023-2024 (Reception to Sixth Form) are up to the Published Admissions Number of 100. A reduced capacity of pupils may be applied based on the needs of the cohort of pupils on roll at the school at any time, where admission of an additional pupil to a class group would impact on the efficient education of others.

Places are usually taken up at the start of the academic year. By arrangement with the Head of School places may be accessed at any time of the year where space is available and depending upon the application of the admissions criteria and needs of the child/young person.

As part of the process of finalising an EHC Plan, parents/carers have the right to request the responsible Local Authority name their preferred choice of school (s 38 (2) (b) (ii) C and F Act).

¹ NMSS schools are included on the Secretary of State's list of eligible school in accordance with section 41.

² Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the designation used by the Department of Education

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Where TreeHouse School is given as a preference, the Local Authority will be required to consult with the Head of School (s 39 (2) C and F Act³). The Local Authority is required to name the parent/carers preference in the EHC Plan unless it can show one of the following apply (s 39 (4) C and F Act):

- that the proposed placement is unsuitable to the age, ability, aptitude and SEN of the child/young person;
- naming the proposed placement is incompatible with i) the efficient education of other children/young people in the setting, and/or ii) the efficient use of resources

Each application to TreeHouse School is considered on an individual basis. In every case, our admissions process evaluates the needs of the individual child or young person and determines whether the school can meet the special educational needs (SEN), provide the special educational provision (SEP) and meet the outcomes in their EHC Plan with reference to the following factors set out above in s 39 (4) of the C and F Act.

Additionally, the following factors will be considered:

- The school may need to provide additional support for a child or young person whose safety or that of others is unusually at risk. This would not necessarily prevent admission. The additional support would be determined by assessment with the cost of the placement adjusted accordingly;
- The distance from the school and the time of travel to school will be considered during the admissions process and any concerns reported.

2. Admissions Process

Where TreeHouse School is given as a preference by parent/carer and that initiates a consultation process by the Local Authority, or where a consultation process is initiated by a Local Authority itself, we will let the parent/carer know the outcome of the consultation unless otherwise advised.

We strongly encourage parents/carers to visit the school prior to making a request for a place at TreeHouse School to their Local Authority. The details of our visit and tour events and how to book a space are published on our website. From time to time there may be situations where we are not able to provide onsite visits. In this situation virtual visits and/or question and answer sessions would be provided.

Following a visit, we ask the parent/carer to request that their Local Authority apply to us on their behalf for a place at the school (this is often described within the process of finalising an EHC plan as 'making a preference').

The Local Authority will consult with the school in line with their statutory obligations. The school will respond within 15 days from receipt of the consultation from the Local Authority.

i) The School Admissions Panel

Applications to the school are processed by the Admissions Team and considered by our School Admission Panel. The panel comprises:

- The Head of School

³ Children and Families Act 2014 is abbreviated to C and F Act in the remainder of this document

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- Assistant Head Teacher/s
- Admissions Manager/members of the admissions team
- Business Manager
- Behaviour Analyst
- Any other professional staff required to support the admissions process

Responses to consultations for a school place are determined by:

- Consideration of the documentation received (i.e. draft or final EHC Plan, Annual Review reports, professional reports)
- Observing the child/young person in some instances where a decision cannot be made on the documentation alone
- Offering an assessment at TreeHouse School for a child/young person in some instances where a decision cannot be made on documentation and observations.

Our observations and assessments should ideally be conducted in the child’s or young person’s current school or educational placement first and then at TreeHouse School. Where this is not possible, individual arrangements can be made including assessment via a home visit or where appropriate a virtual assessment.

In most cases there is no charge raised for the assessment. If the current education placement is a significant distance outside the Greater London area, requiring extended travel and a potential overnight stay, the school reserves the right to charge the Authority for costs incurred for the assessment using a ‘best value’ model for travel and subsistence, in line with our Staff Expenses Policy.

The school’s Admissions Panel will thoroughly consider each application for a school place prior to making a response, and in all cases will comply with the 15-day requirement unless agreed otherwise with the Local Authority.

ii) Outcome of Panel decision

If after carefully considering an application the School Admissions Panel feels it cannot meet the special educational needs and provision of the child/young person, or if admitting the child/young person would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, the applicant's parent/carer and/or local authority will be advised of the outcome. There is a right to appeal this decision. Please see Section 5 below.

If the School Admissions Panel agrees that school can meet the special educational needs and provision of the child or young person, a school place is offered, and the costing provided to the Local Authority. The offer of a place is conditional upon funding being approved and confirmed by the relevant Local Authority. The school assumes, by virtue of being named on an EHC Plan, that the Local Authority has agreed to fund the place. The offer may contain other conditions which will need to be considered by the Local Authority concerned.

It is important to note places are not reserved where offers of a school place are made. Offers will **automatically lapse** after six months. To ensure a place does not lapse either the relevant Local Authority or parent/carer will need to contact the Admissions Team to ask for the offer to remain open. Prompt consideration will be given to this request. Once an offer is over six months old, the School Admissions Panel reserves the right to carry out a new assessment to confirm the offer of a place. If the School becomes oversubscribed, it reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place. Should it need to so, this will be communicated to the Local Authority and parent/carers as soon as possible.

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The school reserves the right to delay commencement of a new placement where funding decisions are made by Local Authority after the statutory deadline set out in Regulation 18 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2015.

3. Reserve List

In the event of the school being full, applicants will be offered the chance to go on our reserve list. Only those applicants whose funding has been agreed by their Local Authority and who request to be added to the reserve list will be permitted onto the list.

In the event of there being more applicants who are eligible for the reserve list than there are available places, the oversubscription criteria will be applied.

4. Oversubscription criteria

When there are a greater number of applicants for a place than the PAN, who meet the admissions criteria, the Admissions Panel will offer places based on the following priority order:

1. Looked after children or previously looked after children;
2. Children with siblings already attending TreeHouse School (for this purpose, sibling includes natural sibling, step sibling, foster sibling and adopted sibling permanently living at the same address);
3. Children with a medical or social need as evidenced by a letter from GP or Social Services
4. The time and date that funding was confirmed by the responsible Local Authority.

i) Tie break

Where two applications are equally ranked within the oversubscription criteria, a tie-break situation will occur. The tie-break priority will be decided on a combination of the individual category 1 to 3 and distance from the home in which they are ordinarily resident to school. The least distance will have the higher priority. Where the distance between the two children's or young person's ordinary residence and the school is the same, a random allocation will be used as a tie break. This process will be independently verified.

5. Appeals

Admission appeals will be considered by the AaAST Independent Appeals Panel and conducted in accordance with the School Admissions Appeals Code⁴ (February 2021) and any subsequent amendments thereof. Appeals must be made within 4 weeks of the decision letter. Further enquiries about appealing should be made to Bernice Sargent at bsargent@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

6. Funding and Contracting

TreeHouse School receives funding from The Department for Education (DfE) through the allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). ESFA funding is allocated based on the date that funding was agreed by the Local Authority and the admission date for the child or young person.

⁴ School Admission Appeals Code Reference: DFE-57508-2012

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The level of funding required is detailed in the offer letter sent to the Local Authority. The school will negotiate the additional (top-up) funding from the Local Authority commissioning a place and these fees are paid by the Local Authority.

The school assumes, by the establishment being named on an EHC Plan, that the Local Authority has agreed to fund the place.

Our school uses the 'National Schools and College Contract' with the Schedule 2 (short form version) and the Schedule 6 for a variation due to General Data Protection Regulation for the contracting of placements together with the Schedule 1 (Arrangements for the Provision of Education, Health and Care in Schools).

In accordance with the ESFA requirements, a contract signed by all parties must be in place prior to the commencement of the placement.

7. Further Information

Website: www.treehouseschool.org.uk

Phone: 020 8815 5424

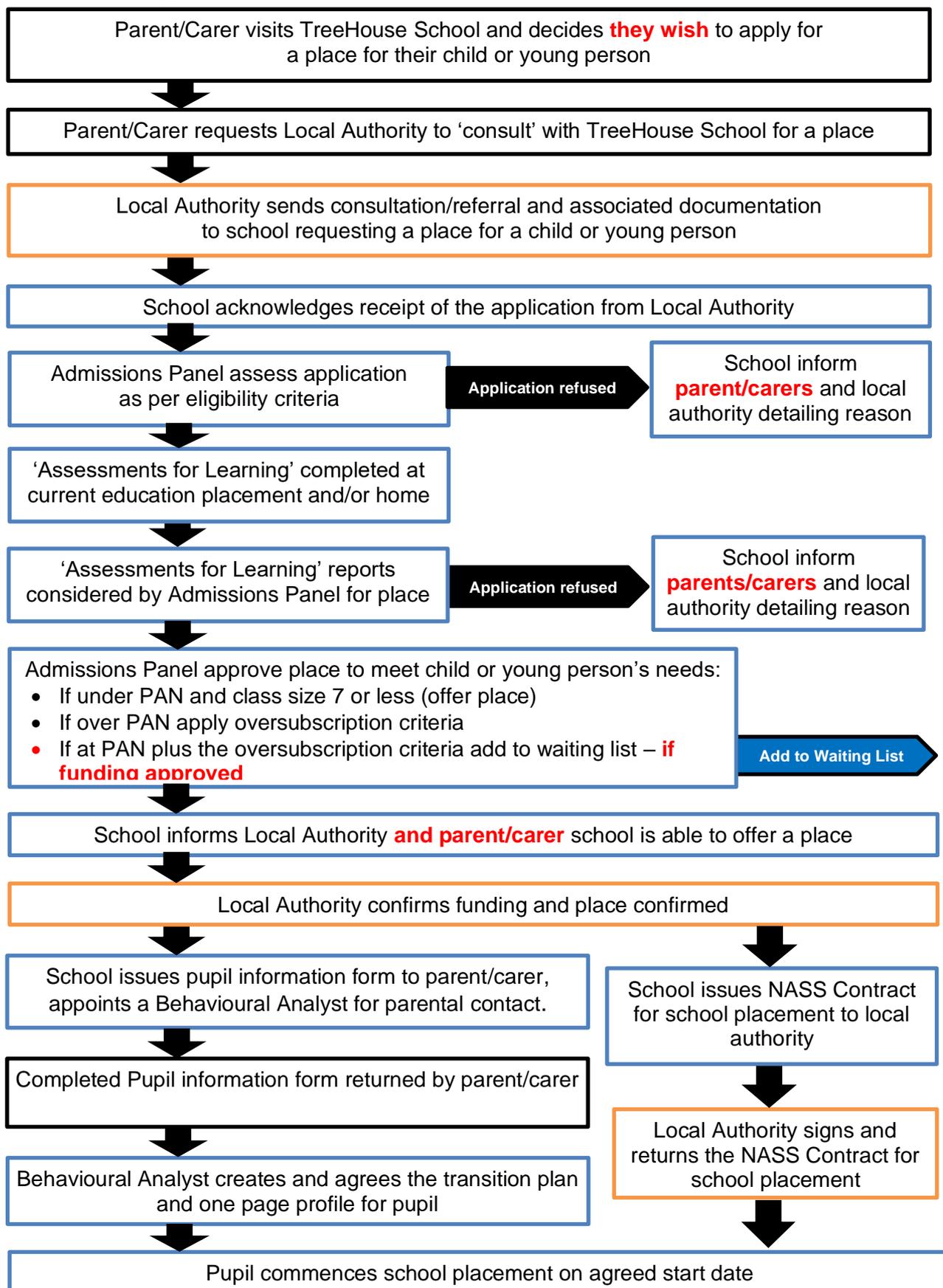
Admissions Team

Phone: 020 8815 5428

Email: admissions@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

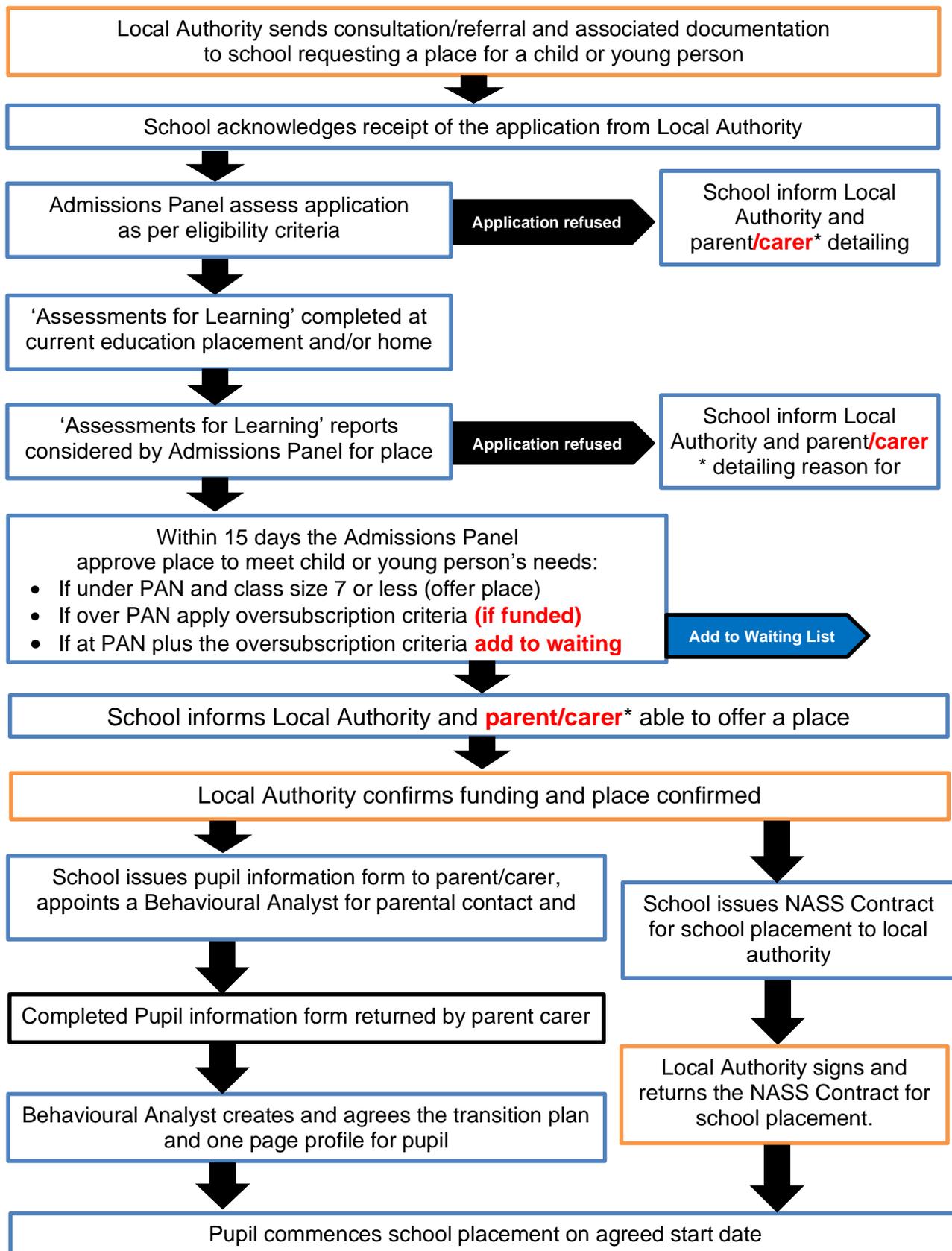
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Appendix A: Application Process (Parent initiated by Preference Expressed to Local Authority)



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Appendix B: Application Process (Local Authority initiated)



* Where directed by the Local Authority a parent would not be informed.

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