

TreeHouse School Admissions Policy for Admission September 2024

1. Introduction

This policy applies to TreeHouse School which is registered with the Department for Education as a Non-Maintained Special School (NMSS). 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 2010, and other relevant statutes where applicable.

2. Admissions Criteria

TreeHouse School will admit autistic children and young people aged 4 to 19 with a primary diagnosis of autism spectrum condition¹ (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 2024-2025 (Reception to Sixth Form) is up to the school's capacity 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 that maintains the plan to name their preferred choice of school (s 38 (2) (b) (ii) Children and Families Act (C and F Act)). 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 Act). 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.

¹ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the designation used by the Department of Education

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- 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:

- Whether 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.

3. Admissions Process

Parents/carers must be asked by their Local Authority to give their school preferences at the time a draft EHC plan is issued. Occasionally there may be other circumstances - whether parent/carer or Local Authority driven - when a new school place is sought. 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.

If following a visit, a parent/carer is interested in a place at the school, they must contact their Local Authority to ask them to consult² with us. 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 without parental knowledge, we will communicate the decision to the Local Authority and in most instances to the parent/carer unless otherwise advised.

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.

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
- Assistant Head Teacher/s
- Admissions Manager/members of the admissions team
- Business and Contracts Manager
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Specialist
- Any other professional staff required to support the admissions process.

² This is a process whereby the Local Authority makes a formal request to ask whether TreeHouse School can meet the SEN and SEP of a child or young person as set out in their EHC plan and whether a place at the school will be offered. As part of this process a Local Authority may send a number of documents pertaining to the child/young person including their EHC plan, annual review and reports from other professionals.

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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 the School Admissions Panel agrees that TreeHouse 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 may contain other conditions which will need to be considered by the Local Authority concerned. We will communicate the decision to the Local Authority and in most instances to the parent/carer unless otherwise advised.

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.

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 with our Appeals Panel (please see below). This right to appeal is independent of the right to mediation or to appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) set out within the C and F Act and the Special Educational needs and Disability Regulations 2014.

Where offers of a school place are made these are **not reserved** until such time that a Local Authority notifies the school in writing that they agree to fund the place and the school confirms a space is available. Conditional offers will **automatically lapse** after six months. To request that 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 and must provide the reasons why. 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 over capacity, 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.

4. Reserve List

Where we are unable to offer a school place because we are at capacity (having taken into account our duties under the Children and Families Act and SEND Code of Practice) we may decide to open a reserve list. For a child or young person to be added to our reserve list, the Local Authority must first have agreed to fund a place at the School. A reserve list will operate for class groups and key stage. Pupils on the reserve list for their appropriate class group will be ranked in accordance with the criteria below:

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 who require a place specifically at TreeHouse School, as supported with appropriate evidence;
4. The time and date that funding was confirmed by the responsible Local Authority.

When a place becomes available in a class operating a reserve list, the relevant Local Authority will be notified.

5. Appeal Arrangements

If a parent or carer is unhappy about a decision made by the Admissions Panel, they can appeal to the AaA Appeals Panel. Appeals must be made within 4 weeks of the decision letter. This is separate to any remedy available under the SEND legal framework.

6. Funding and Contracting

i) Funding

Our 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.

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.

ii) Contracting

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.

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7. Further Information

Website: www.treehouseschool.org.uk

Phone: 020 8815 5424

Admissions Team

Phone: 020 8815 5428

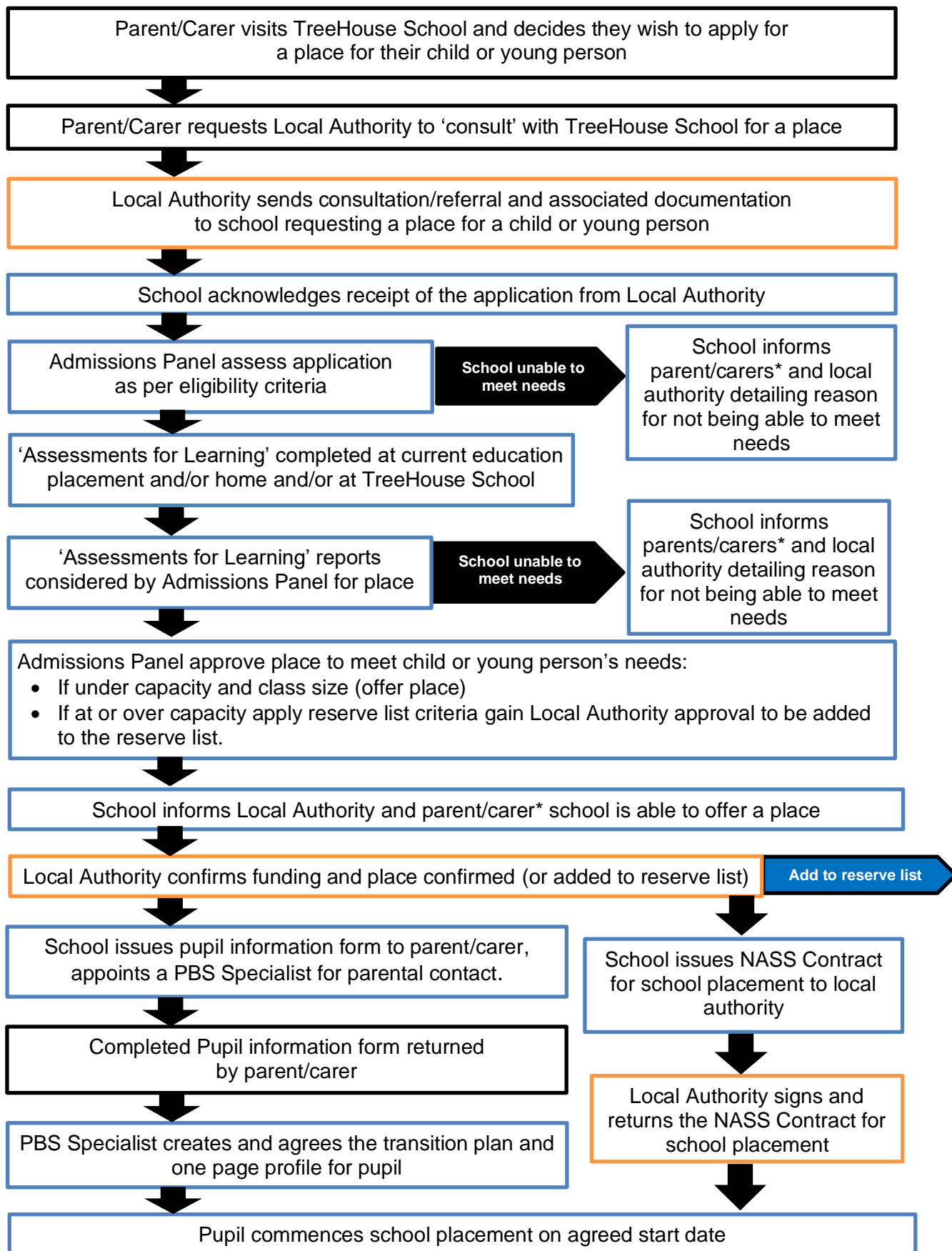
Email: admissions@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

Other school policies and further information can be found via the following [link](#):

- Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Compliments and Complaints Policy

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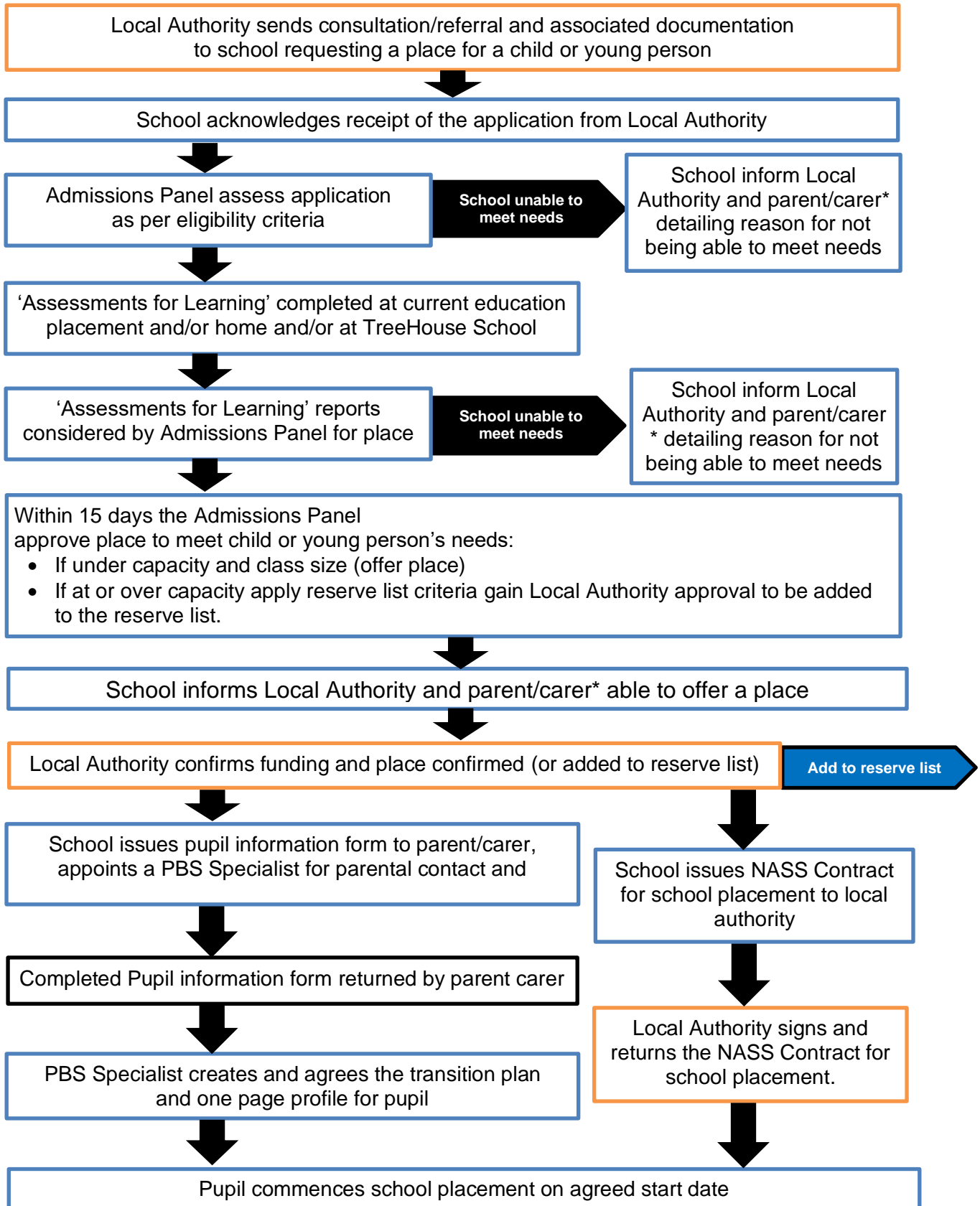
Appendix A: Application process parent initiated by preference expressed to local authority



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

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Appendix B: Application process Local Authority initiated



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