



Nurturing to Learn

Admissions Policy

Admissions Policy

School: ELMS School **Review cycle:** Annual **Next review:** April 2027

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how admissions to ELMS School are considered and managed. It reflects the legal framework for admissions to a maintained special school and should be read alongside the child or young person's education, health and care plan (EHCP), the local authority's consultation processes and the school's SEND, behaviour, equality and accessibility policies.

2. School context and designated cohort

ELMS School is a maintained special school for pupils aged Year 1 to Year 11. The school provides specialist education for pupils whose primary need is social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and whose presentation is accompanied by learning difficulties which mean they require a highly adapted curriculum, therapeutic support and a specialist peer group.

Pupils may also present with overlapping needs and experiences, including ADHD, autism, speech, language and communication needs, attachment needs, trauma-related responses and disrupted patterns of school attendance. Many pupils join the school after periods of part-time timetables, exclusion or time out of education.

The school offers a differentiated curriculum from primary through to secondary phase. Years 1 to 8 follow a primary-style model with adapted national curriculum content, while upper school pupils access subject specialist teaching and accredited pathways, including entry level, functional skills and selected GCSE or vocational courses where appropriate.

3. Suitability of placement

The school is ordinarily appropriate for pupils whose EHCP describes SEMH needs alongside learning difficulties and whose profile indicates that they require:

- a specialist therapeutic and relational approach to behaviour, regulation and engagement
- a curriculum adapted significantly from age-related expectations
- smaller classes, structured support and targeted intervention
- a peer group with similar levels of social, emotional and learning need
- graduated transition, co-regulation and high levels of pastoral support to re-engage with education

The school will not treat cognitive scores, attainment data or a single assessment outcome as automatic exclusion criteria. However, the school is not ordinarily an appropriate placement where the child or young person's profile indicates that they can successfully access a mainstream curriculum or another specialist provision designed for pupils working broadly in line with age-related expectations, because ELMS School's curriculum, therapeutic approach and peer group are specifically designed for pupils with SEMH and associated learning difficulties.

In all cases, suitability is considered through the EHCP consultation process, taking account of the child or young person's age, ability, aptitude, special educational needs, the provision specified in the EHCP, the existing cohort, staffing, available places, health and safety considerations, and the efficient education of others and efficient use of resources.

4. Legal framework

Admissions are made in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, the Equality Act 2010 and local authority procedures for maintained special schools. Where a parent or young person

requests that ELMS School is named in an EHCP, the local authority must secure that placement unless one of the statutory exceptions applies.

A place may be refused only where ELMS School is unsuitable for the child or young person's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or where attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources.

The school does not operate mainstream-style oversubscription criteria. Placement decisions are made through consultation with the local authority as part of the EHCP process.

5. Consultation and admission process

When the local authority consults ELMS School, the headteacher, acting on behalf of the governing body, will consider whether the school can meet need safely and appropriately within its designated provision. This will usually include review of the following:

- the EHCP and all recent professional advice, including educational psychology, medical, therapeutic and risk information where available
- the child or young person's presenting SEMH needs and associated learning profile
- current attainment, engagement and access to learning
- communication profile, regulation needs and vulnerability factors
- whether the school has space in the relevant year group and whether the peer group and curriculum are appropriate
- whether placement can be made without adversely affecting the efficient education of others or stretching provision beyond reasonable capacity

Where appropriate, the school may invite parents or carers and the child or young person to visit. A visit does not itself determine the outcome of consultation; the decision remains part of the formal local authority process.

The school will respond to consultations within the timescale set by the local authority and will give clear reasons where it considers the placement unsuitable.

6. Equality, non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments

ELMS School is committed to equality of opportunity and will not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity.

The school recognises its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and prospective pupils. This duty is anticipatory. The school will therefore consider in advance what adjustments may reasonably be required to enable access to education, transition arrangements, the curriculum and wider school life.

Reasonable adjustments do not alter the school's designated specialist purpose. The key question remains whether ELMS School is the appropriate provision identified through the EHCP process. Where adjustments are reasonable and compatible with the efficient education of others, the school will work with the local authority, parents and other professionals to secure them.

7. Transition arrangements

Once a place has been agreed by the local authority and the school is named in the EHCP, transition will be planned carefully. The transition programme will be tailored to the child or young person's level of need and may include visits, shorter initial sessions, transport planning, visual or social communication supports, liaison with the previous setting and phased integration where appropriate.

The aim of transition is to enable the pupil to begin school safely, build trust and increase attendance over time. Some pupils may require a graduated transition because of anxiety, dysregulation, trauma history or prolonged absence from education.

8. Curriculum and peer group considerations

As a specialist SEMH school for pupils with associated learning difficulties, ELMS School must consider whether a child or young person will be able to access, and benefit from, the school's curriculum model and peer group. This includes consideration of learning stage, communication needs, therapeutic need, social maturity and readiness for the school's pathways to accreditation and preparation for adulthood.

This means the school may advise that another placement is more suitable where a pupil's profile indicates that they require a substantially different curriculum model, a different level of cognitive challenge, or a different type of specialist provision from that offered at ELMS School.

9. Capacity, safety and efficient education of others

In considering consultations, the school will take account of published or agreed capacity, class composition, staffing, therapeutic capacity, accommodation, transport implications, safeguarding and the impact of admission on the efficient education, safety and well-being of the existing cohort.

The school may conclude that, although it is specialist provision, a placement cannot reasonably be made at a particular time if doing so would compromise safe operation, significantly disrupt the education of others or exceed the resources available to deliver the provision set out in the EHCP.

10. Monitoring and review

The governing body will review this policy annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, local authority arrangements or the school's designated provision. The headteacher will monitor consultation responses and admissions patterns to ensure decisions remain lawful, consistent and aligned with the school's specialist purpose.