

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Independent school standards: paragraphs 15 and 34

DOCUMENT DETAILS	
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1. Introduction

Orange Tree School (OTS) comprises of two sites. The first site, Orange Tree School, provides education for children who benefit from support within a small, caring environment, and are not inpatients at any of the hospitals. The Ridgeway site educates the young people who are admitted to Ellern Mede Hospital and supports the inpatients in their care.

Orange Tree School caters for secondary school children 11 – 19 who have additional needs and would benefit from a small nurturing environment. It is a low pressure and sensory environment, and students benefit from additional support.

OTS Ridgeway site supports vulnerable children and young people (8-18) who have been admitted to hospital and who are suffering from medical diagnoses, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia, depression or other associated mental illnesses. Whilst they are inpatients at the hospitals, they are entitled to access education to progress their goals, ambitions and aspirations, subject to their health presentation. They can feel safe and regain their self-esteem within the safety of our schools. This school site is for our inpatients is within the hospital's grounds.

Orange Tree School prides itself on catering for children and young people who have found mainstream school too difficult, due to social, emotional or mental health needs or other special educational needs. The children and young people who have been admitted to hospital need somewhere where they can gently re-integrate back into learning in preparation for their discharge back to the community.

Admissions arrangements to both sites are transparent and apply equally to all placing authorities. Referrals are considered from all Local Authorities in line with the admissions criteria. Orange Tree School is not an approved provider under section 41 of the Children and Families Act.

Admission consideration to Orange Tree School:

- Orange Tree School caters for pupils with specific social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- Students may have self-excluded from mainstream school because of severe bullying or other trauma and emotional responses which may lead to EBSA;
- Students may have found mainstream school too difficult due to social, emotional or mental health needs.
- Students may have additional needs or a diagnosis of a neurodiverse condition.
- Students may benefit from a small, calm low sensory environment
- Students may experience social anxiety and/or social communication difficulties

- Students must have an Education, Health and Care Plan and be referred by their placing Local Authority..
- Students must have the commitment and support of their parents/carers to the educational approach and support models used at Orange Tree School.
- The school must be suitable for the child's age, ability and aptitude.
- The child's attendance and education at school should be compatible with the provision of education for the children with whom the child would be educated.
- The attendance of the child at the school would be compatible with the efficient use of school resources.

Our admissions process will evaluate the appropriateness of the placement based on the following:

- If there is a space available.
- Availability of space in the applicant's year group or year group requested or deemed appropriate.
- Availability of space within suitable groups/classes; based on the student's individual needs, and the collective needs of the group/class or whole school.
- An up-to-date EHCP and relevant professional reports that accurately describes the needs of the pupil being referred. This is required for the school to ensure that the needs of the pupil can be met through the provision available.
- Support of the local education authority making the referral.
- Active support and participation from the parent or carer.

Admissions are made on the basis of availability of placements, taking into account the above factors, plus a child's behaviour record and /or learning difficulties and age.

Students are mostly unsuitable for Orange Tree School include the following:

- Significant behaviour difficulties
- Unsatisfactory record of suspensions or exclusions
- Documented record of aggression, violence or anti-social behaviours
- Significant learning difficulties so they are not able to access the National curriculum in general age-related expectations or the students in which they would be educated.
- Students who have a documented history of significantly not being able to follow instructions and rules
- If we feel unable to keep the child safe due to significant risk or significant risk to others
- Students who need specific assistance that the school is unable to cater for due to the building constraints and other students needs such as assistant pets or specific support staff.

Orange Tree reserve the right to decline a placement request on the following grounds:

- The school or year group is full
- We believe the students' needs do not meet the criteria within this policy
- We do not have an appropriate cohort
- We do not have the expertise, provision or staff to meet the needs of the child
- We do not have enough information to make an informed decision
- If a pupil is offered a place that is accepted based on incorrect information or a new need becomes apparent that does not fall within the admissions criteria, an urgent review will be carried out and we may decide to withdraw the placement.

2. Key aspects of the policy

This policy outlines the arrangements for admission to Orange Tree School sites at Ridgeway and at the Orange Tree School. This policy outlines the arrangements for admission to the school through:

1. Roles and Responsibilities
2. Identifying the different admissions procedures based on sites
3. Establishing the criteria for admission
4. Detailing the fees and payments required for admission
5. Explaining the procedures upon admission

3. Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the proprietor to ensure that there is an admissions policy in place. The frequency for review will be determined by the Advisory Board every two years.

The Head Teacher will undertake policy consultation and review, as required. It should be noted that:

- There is ongoing evaluation of the school's systems by the Advisory Board;
- Policies are reviewed individually within the timescale stated on each document;
- Additionally, the policy is reviewed if and when new guidance is issued by the DfE
- It is the responsibility of the proprietor, Headteacher and staff at Orange Tree School to ensure that all steps required within the policy are followed and adhered to.

4. Criteria for Admission

4.1 Orange Tree School

Students should have an EHCP for SEMH and meet the criteria outlined in this policy. Referrals should be made directly by a Local Authority although parents are welcome to visit before this stage.

Attendance Requirements for All Students to OTS

Admission to Orange Tree School is subject to a commitment to satisfactory attendance. Where a genuine reason (such as medical or social/emotional needs) has led to lower attendance prior to joining OTS, there is an expectation that the student's attendance will improve over time. Continued placement at OTS is dependent on this attendance improvement, and students must maintain satisfactory attendance in order to remain eligible to be entered for GCSE and other formal examinations.

Attendance Requirements for Post-16 Admissions to OTS

For admission to post-16 education at Orange Tree School, students must demonstrate a minimum of **60% attendance** either as students at OTS or in their previous school placement. This applies both to general school attendance and to lesson attendance, including for students retaking GCSE subjects. This requirement also applies to students who are already attending Orange Tree School and wish to progress to post-16 study. Exceptions may only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where supported by medical evidence or other relevant professional reports, and subject to the discretion of the Admissions Panel.

The School will admit young people aged 11-19 if they meet the admissions criteria and the admissions panel is confident they can meet their SEN needs including with attendance support. Orange Tree school will not admit new students once they have turned 19. Decisions regarding admissions are made by the Admissions Panel on an individual basis based on the information we have. This is normally made up of the Head Teacher, AHT, SENCO, Admissions lead, Business manager and therapy staff. Other staff may also be invited to the admission panel to contribute at a meeting, if required, especially relating to matters concerning the Special Educational needs, learning needs or therapeutic requirements of prospective pupil.

Students who are younger than 11 are considered on an individual basis.

4.2 OTS Ridgeway

The School will admit any young person aged 8-18 who has been admitted to the Ellern Mede Hospital, subject to funding being agreed by the home local authority. See Appendix 1A for an outline of the processes supporting inpatient education.

The Admissions' Panel will offer a place at the school provided it confidently believes that the following Admissions Criteria have been met:

- The child will benefit from the school's provision;
- The child's admission will not cause detriment to the learning or wellbeing of children already in the school;
- There is room to admit the child within set maximum sizes for the year group and classes;
- The local authority or parent understands and agrees to meet all contractual and financial obligations involved;

Applications will be assessed solely against the criteria above. In making a decision regarding the offering of a place, the Admissions' Panel will take into consideration all available evidence at the time including, for example, external educational advice, information from a previous school and advice from specialist members of staff who have observed the child during a visit to the school (see the admissions procedure below). The school will seek to have all available information during the assessment process. Pupils may be invited into Orange Tree school for taster days based on the information available at the time of the admissions panel meetings. The school reserves the right to use information gathered or presented after a taster day to decline offering a place to students based on the above criteria.

Medical, accessibility, support and specific learning need information regarding the child will be used to inform levels of provision that would be required as part of an offer to ensure the school can meet individual needs.

Parental enquiries, school visits, tours and the admissions process are managed by the school's admissions officer and the SEN team. Local Authorities should send consultations to reception@orangetreeschool.org or admissions@orangetreeschool.org . Interested parents are encouraged to visit and tour the Orange Tree School, either on a school open day or individually (by appointment only). The parents are invited to submit relevant reports and supporting paperwork. This includes professional reports, school reports and the Education, Health and Care Plan, where applicable. Moreover, there may also be a discussion with the pupil's current or previous educational placement and/or a visit. The school will still require an official consultation form from the child's Local Authority before we progress the admissions process any further.

Following consideration of the paperwork, if it is felt Orange Tree School may be able to help the child, the following procedure will be followed:

- a) Parents are invited into the school to discuss the child's strengths and needs, and to enable the school to take an initial view regarding whether the provision it can offer is likely to meet the needs of the child. Following the above meeting,
- b) If the pupil does not meet the admission criteria, or there are no places available, a letter will be sent to the Local Authority informing them of the decision.

- c) After these initial contact meetings, and discussions, if both the school and the family would like to go ahead the prospective pupil is invited to complete taster sessions in school with an appropriate class or other potential students. The usual number of days is two but this can be based on the first taster day and at the school's discretion, circumstances may lead to more or less taster days to enable the school to complete their assessment.
- d) The school aim to complete the process within the statutory 15 calendar days but this may not always be possible if the admissions process has not been complete, and the school will seek an extension.
- e) There will also be a discussion with the pupil's current or previous educational placement.
- f) During their visit to Orange Tree School, the child will follow a taster timetable. The visit should enable the school to assess current levels of needs and difficulties, to identify relative areas of strength and weakness, and to ascertain in more detail what would constitute appropriate provision.
- g) Following the child's visit and the discussions that have taken place, the application will be considered by the School's Admissions Panel. The Panel will review advice from colleagues and reports made by external educational professionals and information provided in the initial risk assessment form completed by the school in liaison with the parents.
- h) Before making a decision, the Admissions' Panel may request further information from the parent/guardian or other professionals, if the Admissions' Panel agrees that this is necessary to inform the decision.
- i) The Admissions' Panel will offer a place provided it confidently believes all the admission criteria have been met.
- j) Completing taster days successfully does not guarantee an offer of a placement if subsequent reports or information indicate we are unable to meet the needs of the student.

The decision to offer a school place will be made in line with the SEN Code of Practice:

- a) Special Educational Needs – can the school meet the child's needs?
- b) Resources – would the placement be an inefficient use of resources?
- c) Current pupils – would the placement be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child will be educated?

If a place is to be offered, the School's Admissions Panel will agree on the levels and types of provision to be made available. This will inform the costing requirements for a school placement offer.

In order to secure a place that has been offered, the Local Authority must confirm acceptance of the placement and agree to the costings. When the local authority confirms that the offer of a place is going to be taken up, Orange Tree School will send a letter confirming this and we will agree a start date.

Once it is decided a child can start at Orange Tree School his/her safeguarding file from their previous education setting must be submitted and received by Orange Tree School within five days of the placement commencing.

The local authority is responsible for making transport arrangements, if necessary, with the parents and will inform the school accordingly.

Transition plans will be made with the local authority, the current school placement and the parents. This will include an induction for the pupil to prepare them for the new school setting and communication with parents over any issues or worries they may have. A home-school agreement will also be agreed by both parties.

5. Fees and Payments

5.1 Orange Tree School

Placement and funding will need to be agreed with the relevant local authority prior to admission. An admissions log and attendance register will be kept in line with DfE guidelines.

Parents (Private Pay)

We **do not** accept private pay students at our Orange Tree Site.

5.2 Ridgeway Site

For pupils who are inpatients at the Ellern Mede Hospital, admission to the school is dependent on fees for education being forthcoming from the home local authority for the young person; or should the young person be an international patient, fees will need to be agreed with parents, insurance or the relevant Department for Education.

The young people who are inpatients at Ellern Mede Hospital will remain on a shared roll at the home school attended prior to admission to the Orange Tree School. Orange Tree School does not take pupils on a sole roll, as once the student is discharged, they will need to be taken off roll as they can no longer access the hospital school site. Orange Tree School will work in collaboration with parents and the home school and the home school's local authority to offer an appropriate education during their admission, and thereafter, to facilitate the young person's reintegration back into their home school.

In special circumstances, where a young person is not on roll at any other school, the young person would be accepted onto the school roll at OTS Ridgeway following discussions with the young

person's local authority. An admissions log and attendance register will be kept in line with DfE guidelines.

Local Authorities

For the hospital school site, fees charged to the home local authority in arrears and are consistent with the DfE Guidance. Fees are charged per day from admission to discharge. The outline of the services provided are explained in Appendix 1A. The provision is made with reference to the following DfE statutory guidance;

"Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs: Statutory guidance for local authorities, January 2013"

"Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023"

"Keeping children safe in education, September 2024"

Parents

Fees will be charged directly as agreed prior to admission and paid in advance.

6. Waiting List

Orange Tree School (main Site)

Where there are no spaces available in the year group for which we have been consulted, you may have the option of being put on the school admissions waiting list for assessment when a space becomes available.

Orange Tree School recognises its statutory duties under:

- The Children and Families Act 2014.
- The SEND Code of Practice (2015).

We acknowledge that the Local Authority must consult with the school when considering placements and that the school has a duty to respond. However, placement may not be possible if:

- The school is unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude, or special educational needs of the child or young person.
- The placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.
- The placement would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources.

When the only reason for not offering an assessment is that the relevant year group is full, Orange Tree School will offer to place the child on a waiting list.

6.1 Criteria for Adding to the Waiting List

A child will be placed on the waiting list where:

- The Local Authority has formally consulted the school regarding placement.
- The child's needs, as outlined in the EHCP, could be met by Orange Tree School **if a place were available**.
- The relevant year group is at full capacity at the time of consultation.

6.2 Process

1. **Acknowledgement** – The school acknowledges receipt of the consultation and confirms consideration of the request.
2. **Decision** – If the year group is full and OTS believe it could potentially meet need; the school will inform the Local Authority that an assessment cannot proceed at this time. If OTS cannot meet need, this will be communicated, and the consultation will be closed.
3. **Offer of Waiting List** – The school will offer to place the consultation on the waiting list.
4. **Confirmation** – The Local Authority must confirm in writing if they wish the child to be added to the waiting list.
5. **Record Keeping** – The school will maintain a dated log of all pupils on the waiting list.

6.3 Prioritisation and Order

- The waiting list will operate on a **chronological basis**, with children placed in the order in which their consultation was received.
- Placement on the waiting list does not guarantee a future assessment or placement.
- In exceptional circumstances, priority may be given where other relevant factors are indicated or the presence of siblings already in the school are relevant.

6.4 Communication

- The school will notify the Local Authority if a space becomes available in the relevant year group.
- The Local Authority must reconfirm their wish for the child to be considered at that time.
- If no response is received within 10 working days, the school reserves the right to offer the place to the next child on the waiting list.

6.5 Review and Removal from the Waiting List

Children will remain on the waiting list until:

- A place becomes available and is accepted.
- The Local Authority notifies the school that alternative provision has been secured.
- The family withdraws their application.

The waiting list will be reviewed and updated on a termly basis to ensure accuracy.

6.7 Monitoring and Oversight

- The Admissions Lead will be responsible for maintaining the waiting list.
- The Senior Leadership Team will oversee implementation and ensure compliance with this policy.
- A report on the waiting list may be shared with the advisory board as part of admissions monitoring.

6.8 Equality and Fair Access

Orange Tree School is committed to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. This policy will be applied consistently across all Local Authority referrals, regardless of the child's background, needs, or home authority.

7. Appendix 1. Procedure for new admissions

A. Orange Tree School

The School Administrator from the Orange Tree School must ensure all relevant details from the young persons' parents or local authority are in place. The information required includes:

- Young person's name
- D.O.B.
- Date of admission
- Home address
- GP's address
- Parent's name, telephone number and email address
- The home local authority SEN Caseworker's contact details where applicable
- Copies of EHC plan and any other relevant documents.
- A full risk assessment is complete
- All home school agreements and information documents have been filled out.

B. OTS Ridgeway

As soon as possible after a new young person is admitted to the Ellern Mede Hospital, the School Secretary from Orange Tree School must obtain all relevant details from the young persons' parents, OTS or the external agency providing the referral. The information required includes:

- Young person's name
- D.O.B.
- Date of admission
- Home address
- Parent's name, telephone number and email address
- Referring Consultant (CAMHS Team) or medical practitioner's name, address, telephone number, email
- Health Funding Commissioner details
- The home school
- The home local authority

As soon as these details are received, the School Secretary must set up a file on the Shared Drive so as the Key Teacher is supplied with all the correct information. The Key Teacher will phone the young person's parents to introduce themselves and obtain additional information about the young person. The additional information may include:

- Key point of contact at the home school
- School address and telephone number
- Any other relevant information which may support the young person to settle into the hospital school.

The Key Teacher will then update the young person's details on the Shared Drive. The Key Teacher will then be responsible for maintaining the young person's file, which includes the pupils Record of Learning, Mental Health Functioning in Education Assessments, a full Contact Record, MDT/CPA Reports and Re-Integration Pack

The School Secretary will dispatch the Parent's Pack to the parents and the School Pack to the Home School and a letter advising the Home Local Authority of admission where appropriate.

8. Fixed Term Exclusions and Termination of Services

At Orange Tree School we always seek to avoid a fixed term exclusion process which is recorded on a student's file and history, which can be detrimental to their mental health. We are also of the opinion that several Fixed Term Exclusions taking place can 'mask' the real issue – that the student needs greater services, assessment and a change of environment. Fixed Term Exclusion can also give out confusing messages to children in our setting, as many have attachment anxiety, so staying at home is a reward and Fixed Term Exclusion could escalate negative behaviour. We therefore prefer to use parental meetings, or for those children with EHC plans, emergency interim annual reviews, and support children to move onto a more suitable setting where appropriate.

We do however have to protect our staff and vulnerable students from serious verbal, physical and sexual assault. We also need to ensure that students are physically attending the setting and making progress through positive engagement. We have strict admissions criteria which reduces the risk of us taking students who are unsuitable for our setting. We carry out a trial prior to agreeing a placement, and there are further criteria to assess the suitability of offering a placement. **If we then offer a place, and the child's behaviour or needs no longer meets the admissions or successful trial criteria and we have significant concerns for the child and potentially their peers, we will class ourselves as no longer being able to meet need.** At such a point we will hold an emergency annual review meeting, and seek to provide parents, and LAs where appropriate, with paperwork to support both parties in finding a more suitable setting that can meet the need of current student presentation.

We continually review all the students against these criteria, as these are essential to ensuring that we are meeting their continued needs, and to protect the integrity of the setting. As a school that provides specialised placements, we take the notion of 'no more harm' very seriously and harm can be done to students if they are forced to attend somewhere that is not suitable, or indeed if they are affected by the actions of others who are unable to adhere to the setting rules and ethos.

In very rare circumstances, if we feel that reasonable adjustments can be made at school and the funding for these can be arranged and agreed, with the LA, then we will continue services with a behaviour plan in place for a period of half a term in order to see if with these adjustments we can still meet need. In these circumstances it is made clear that if inappropriate behaviour happens again, we will have to terminate services, as we have a duty of care to keep students and staff safe.

9. School Exclusions (Permanent)

Orange Tree school reserves the right to exclude young people from the school who consistently do not adhere to the Code of Conduct or there is a serious breach of school rules.

If there are any illegal substance misuse, illegal substances brought to school including tobacco products or alcohol, putting other students in danger, subject a criminal activity, a criminal record or proceedings, your child is at risk of permanent exclusion.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour for Learning Policy, which outlines the procedures for fixed term Exclusions and termination of services due to behaviour.

10. Complaints

If a decision is made that parents are not happy with, they can complain directly to the headteacher in writing and the complaints procedure will be initiated. The complaints procedure/policy is available online.