



Quest Academy Admissions Guidance

Quest Academy

Admission Guidance

Quest Academy is a School for children and young people, aged 9 – 19 years who have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or an autistic spectrum condition. When at full occupancy, the Free School will provide 80 places across all age groups. For a child/young person to be admitted to the school, his/her placement must be agreed by a local authority (LA) and named in the child/young person's education health and care plan ('EHCP') (formerly statement of special educational needs). A child without an EHCP will require an assessment of their needs for an EHCP and the support of the local authority.

The two routes of admission are:

1. A Local Authority names the school in the EHCP and the school must admit (sole registration with MacIntyre)
2. A Local Authority places a child in the school for assessment purposed for up to 20 weeks (dual registered between MacIntyre and child's current school)

This guidance is in place to ensure that all involved in the admission procedure work in partnership, enabling informed decisions, and planning to be in the best interests of the child/young person. The guidance promotes the rights of all students regardless of disability, ethnic background, language, culture, faith or gender

Why Quest Academy is named on an EHCP

The Quest Academy is a Special School and as such does not have admissions criteria, therefore if the school is named on the EHCP then we will accept the referral. We work closely with Local Authorities, primarily Warwickshire in the case of this school, and they will not name Quest Academy unless they feel that we can support the child.

An EHCP will name Quest Academy where the child's Local Authority identifies the school as the most appropriate to meet the needs of the child/young person. Quest Academy is often named in an EHCP if the parents/carers have expressed a preference for special school placement, OR the parent/carers preferred a placement in mainstream school, but evidence shows that no reasonable steps could be taken by the LA or existing school to overcome the 'incompatibility with the efficient education of other pupils'. In most cases, although the child/young person will have been supported through a high level of additional resources within their mainstream placement, all reasonable steps will have been exhausted.

Many of our students will have previously found going to school a challenge and may have had difficulties in coping within a mainstream environment and therefore accessing an appropriate curriculum. The child/young person often has a history of persistent, complex and long-term learning needs and will often be working at a national curriculum level below their chronological age.

At the point of referral, many children/young people have additional, associated and sometimes a complexity of needs which may include:

- Autistic Spectrum Condition
- Social and emotional needs;
- ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder);
- ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder);
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD);

- Tourette's syndrome;
- Mental Health Difficulties;
- Speech and Language Difficulties;
- Dyslexia;
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).

Evidence is also likely to exist of:

- Learning difficulties in a range of curriculum areas, with greater difficulty in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, and understanding concepts;
- Inadequate progress despite appropriate and sustained interventions within the child's/young person's existing placement;
- Life-skills well below age-appropriate levels;
- Vulnerability as a result of their diagnosis or learning needs;
- Sensory difficulties;
- Difficulties with social development, communication and interaction;
- Emotional difficulties including anxiety, distress or other factor arising from an inability to cope with social interactions particularly within existing school placement;
- Poor communication & self-advocacy skills.

Other factors that can impact on a child's/young person's ability to succeed in their current placement may include:

- A child in the Looked After system
- Significant input from Health and Social Care
- Significant illness or mental health issues in the family
- A history of bereavement, separation, loss, neglect or abuse
- Family breakdown or poor family support network

Quest Academy aims to support young people to improve their own well-being, focusing on their communication, social, emotional and mental health as central to the delivery of the school curriculum. We include learning to build positive relationships and learning that will help children and young people understand and shape their own emotions. We have a holistic and non-judgemental approach to supporting behaviour that empowers the child or young person to engage in education. We support children and young people to recognise their challenges and barriers to learning and teach them alternative ways of responding to difficult situations. The school aims to support students to become socially responsible, polite and caring young adults, who value the lives of others and the environment in which they live.

Our students benefit from a curriculum that focuses on developing academic potential, social, vocational and life skills and learning that is practical and often outside the classroom.

Underpinning the admissions process

1. Quest Academy accepts referrals from Local Authorities (LAs). Whilst we welcome approaches from parents, the school cannot proceed to the admissions stage without a local authority naming the school in a child's Education Health and Care Plan.
2. For children who are undergoing assessment for an EHCP, parents/carers may indicate to the LA that they would like Quest Academy to be named as the school of preference within their child's EHCP. The LA will consider parent/carers' preferences but may not agree to the school of preference. In such circumstances parents have the right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND).
3. Prior to the admissions process and the school being named on an EHCP, parents or carers are encouraged if they wish to make a visit to the school, preferably before the completion of a statutory assessment or Annual Review. The focus of any visit is upon parent/carer viewing the school. The school will not comment on the appropriateness of the provision for the child/young person before the completion of the admissions process.
4. If requested and appropriate, key staff from Quest Academy will attend an Annual Review at the child's/young person's existing school.
5. We will support families whose children are referred to the Free School with access to a Family Footings Advisor. Family Footings introduces families to the benefits of using person centred thinking tools and other key skills to assist parents when they are interacting with professionals involved in their children's lives. This is especially useful during times of transition to help families to:
 - Feel listened to
 - Be more in control of their lives
 - Work in partnership with services to find the best outcome for their child
 - Feel more connected into their local community
 - Express their aspirations for their life both now and in the future.

Admissions Process

The process of admission to Quest Academy is as follows:

1. The Local Authority will send a copy of the child's/young person's Education, Health or Care Plan, latest annual review and any other relevant paperwork to the school for consideration.
2. All children/young people will be visited in their current school placement and home if possible. This visit forms part of the admissions process but may happen before or after the initial meeting with parents/carers, as follows:
 - The Principal will invite the child and his/her parents/carers in for a pre-placement meeting and tour of the school. The Principal, will then arrange for a designated member of staff to visit and observe the child/young person in their present setting and at home. They may additionally talk to any relevant professionals including an educational psychologist if involved.
 - If it is not clear from the paperwork, that the school can meet the child/young person's needs, the Principal will organise for a designated member of staff to visit and observe the child/young person in their present setting and talk to all relevant professionals including educational psychologists. There may be the need to go back to the LA to negotiate funding for additional support and/or expertise.

3. The Principal will confirm the top-up funding level with the LA, agree a start date and arrange the admission of the student.
4. The LA will arrange transport in accordance with its own Home to School Transport policy.

Pre-placement meeting/visits

The pre-placement meeting and visits to current school/home are designed to gather up to date information from children/young people, their parents/carers and professionals in support of the admissions process (please see appendices 1-4 for template documents used during home/family visits). The information sought will typically include feedback on:

- What motivates the child/young person and an understanding of what support works well;
- Previous school placement(s) and experience(s);
- Academic ability, national curriculum levels and skills that the child/young person has developed;
- Behaviour in different environments and behaviour strategies that have worked well;
- Whether the child is looked after and if so the name of the contact person and key personnel in the placing authority;
- Family organisation and an understanding of significant people in the child/young person's life The child/young person's and their parent/carers' expectations of what the school can do The child/young person's and their parent/carers' aspirations for the future;
- An understanding of religious and cultural needs;
- Current EHC planning or previous Statement of Educational Needs;
- Current multi agency involvement, feedback and outcomes of any assessments including a CAF if in place;
- Information regarding any particularly vulnerabilities;
- Information regarding attendance, any fixed term exclusions.

The student will wherever possible take a central role in the pre-placement visit. He/she have the chance to talk about themselves and their experiences. The student will also be invited to join a class or play in the playground, supported by an experienced member of the staff team. If it is not possible for the student to attend (if, for example, it would cause severe anxiety) the student will be observed during the visit to their current setting and at home.

Arrangements made to help the children's/Young people's transition into School

The school will liaise with the parents and carers and/or the current educational setting to see what transition arrangements will best suit the child/young person. Transitions are often difficult for children who have social, emotional and mental health needs or an autistic spectrum condition. An induction programme, appropriate to the individual child/young person, will be drawn up to support transfer to Quest Academy. It is essential to consider mechanisms/strategies that may make the process easier for each child/young person. This may include visits by key staff between schools.

The school is keen to work closely with families to ensure that the whole family's needs are taken into consideration when looking at suitable placements and transition arrangements (please see appendices 1-4 for template documents used during home/family visits). Social stories and photographs of the school and staff will be offered to the children/young people as well as visits/part-time placements to the school so that the child/young person and their family feel fully prepared for

the move to Quest Academy. Any visits will be planned with parents/carers and will be bespoke to individual needs.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: First home visit template

Appendix 2: Second home visit template

Appendix 3: Family information template

Appendix 4: Transition to school file contents