



REFERRALS, ADMISSIONS & DISCHARGE POLICY

1. Introduction & Purpose

1.1. This Referrals, Admissions & Discharges Policy outlines a structured approach in Hartmore School in respect of the management of placement inquiries, referrals, assessments, new admissions and discharges.

1.2. The objectives of this Policy are two-fold. Firstly, it is essential in business terms that appropriate placement inquiries are managed in such a way as to maximise the opportunity to progress them to a successful admission and stable placement. Secondly, the welfare of existing children, the stability of the school, and the success of any new placement are significantly dependent on ensuring the child is admitted to the school in a way in which they feel welcome and positive about their new school.

1.3. The principles outlined in this policy should be followed in all cases, as should the lines of responsibility and authority detailed here.

1.4. Hartmore School is an independent special school for children with SEMH and complex needs.

2. The Process

2.1. Hartmore School provides 'Spot Purchase' provision. That is, local authorities contact the school directly with a specific child they wish to place and ask for an expression of interest. Contractual arrangements with Placing Authorities are limited to individual children.

2.2. Placing Authorities contact Hartmore School based on previous experience of good outcomes for other children they have placed, recommendation of other authorities.

2.3. Initial inquiries are responded to by the school either making an expression of interest where we think we can help and meet the needs of the child or not making an expression of interest where we think we can't help, meet the needs of the child, or the child is not a good match for the children already in our care.

2.4. Any expression of interest will include be accompanied by our fees brochure which details of the different levels of provision available to meet a child's needs and the costs of the provision. At this stage no decision will be made on the level of provision which might be required to meet a child's needs.

2.5. Local Authorities will then decide if they would like a place in the school and send additional information. Hartmore School will review thoroughly all paperwork sent, contact previous schools or social care to seek further information, or request more paperwork from the local authority. Hartmore School can then complete an appropriate Risk Assessment informing the decision on whether or not to make a formal offer of a placement.

2.6. Typically, the Headteacher will invite the parents or carers to visit the school (without the child's knowledge if possible), and whenever possible visit a child himself in their current educational provision before making a formal offer of placement.

2.7. Hartmore School has a strict Fee Structure based on levels of need. In most circumstances, this is non-negotiable.

2.8. Only when the Local Authority formally requests a placement should the child become involved directly. It is generally not deemed appropriate for any child to commence preparing themselves for a new school placement that may not actually happen. It is important that the parents, carers and professionals agree the placement may meet the child's needs prior to them becoming fully involved in the process. If at all possible, vulnerable children should not experience a 'rejection' in being considered unsuitable.

3. Preparing for Placement

3.1. Once a placement has been formally requested and the school has received written funding agreement can Hartmore School begin the process of discussing a start date and beginning the transition process.

3.2. There is no set timescales for the decision-making process. In some cases specific staffing or changes to the provision may need to be in place before the placement can start. But in all cases the school will do their best to provide a start date as soon as possible after the formal request for a placement has been made.

3.3. Hartmore School typically manages a careful transition over a few weeks. There is a Transition Policy which details the thinking behind this and everyone's role within it. A copy of this is provided, along with a transition timetable for the initial weeks. This is shared as a draft and is agreed by everyone as a plan before the commencement.

3.3.2. The first element on any transition timetable is a visit for the child, with the parents or carers to the school. The purpose of the visit is to introduce the child to their new school, informing them what they may expect. They will be shown around and meet staff and other pupils. The child will be encouraged to ask questions. Further, they should be given the opportunity to contact the school afterwards, to ask any additional questions. One of the prime objectives of the visit is to help the child feel that the school want them, and want them to be happy here.

3.4. If it has not already been done, on an earlier visit, the school will share with the parents or carers the Working Together Policy, which is an agreement between home and school to help ensure a successful partnership approach.

3.5. Where there is a significant time-gap between agreeing a placement and the actual admission taking place, the school will maintain contact with the parents/carers and Local Authority over this period, via telephone and emails to ensure everyone's expectations are managed leading up to the start of the placement.

4. Managing the Admission

4.1. On the day of the child's first visit, all staff will be made aware and the child will be greeted by the Headteacher or a senior member of staff.

4.2. Moving to a new school is an extremely significant day in the child's life, and can often be a very difficult or challenging experience for them. Every effort will be made to keep their anxiety to a minimum during their first visits. It should be remembered that first impressions count.

4.3. The child may be anxious and even ambivalent. No matter how much work has gone in to preparing them, it is likely they will still find the experience disorientating, confusing and frightening. Staff must take this account, even if the child themselves appears full of bravado.

4.4. All new pupils should also be shown their classroom, where they will be sitting, books with their name on. It is important to show that everything to make them feel welcome has been done, and that their arrival has been prepared for.

4.5. Sensible precautions may need to be taken to ensure that the new pupil is kept safe. There may be an urge to run away. A period of close supervision and individual attention is often required for the first weeks.

4.6. New pupils need to understand why they have been offered a place in the school. Many children are confused, and/or feel they are being punished. This is especially true if the child has recently had a school or placement breakdown. They may still feel hurt, rejected, angry and fearful the same thing will happen again. Carefully, slowly and sensitively the child needs to have a full and honest picture of the decisions that have been made for them.

4.7. New pupils need to understand about the various expectations of the school. This should be explained in a sensitive and positive way. It should also include what they can expect to do in a school day and the sort of activities we do off site.

4.8. The new pupil needs to be introduced to the other pupils as naturalistically as possible. It is unhelpful to try to force friendships. However, it can help a child settle if another child acts as a sort of 'buddy' during their first few weeks.

5. Discharge

6.1. Hartmore School are committed to ensuring that pupils leave in the most positive way possible; ideally believing their placement has secured them a brighter future.

6.2. All discharges are ideally planned several months in advance. It is important that pupils are given the opportunity to 'work through' the variety of issues that inevitably arise. This includes managing sensitively relationships with staff and children

6.3. A minimum notice period of 6-weeks is agreed in the contract, prior to admission.

6.4. Most pupils leave Hartmore School positively, either to return to mainstream school, college or other opportunity for further education, training and preparation for employment.

6.5. On rare occasions, it will become clear to Hartmore School, the Local Authority, parents/carers and other key stakeholders that Hartmore School is not able to meet the child's needs on an on-going basis, and they would be better served in another establishment. In some extreme circumstances this decision may need to be expedited for the safety of the pupils, other pupils staff or others. For full details see Exclusion Policy.

6.6. In circumstances where the Local Authority wished to end the placement at Hartmore School (e.g. for financial reasons) it is expected they fully take into consideration the length of time the pupil has been placed, their relationships with staff and their links with the local community prior. In cases where the child has been in the school for a long period, their discharge should be planned over several months, rather than the minimum 6-weeks.

6.5. Any decision to discharge a pupils be made with the key professionals from the Local Authority, along with parents/carers and other key stakeholders as appropriate.

6.6. Whenever possible the school will have identified the new school and will work with them in a managed transition between the two schools.

6.7. The final decision on the appropriateness of ending any placement is that of the Headteacher. However, this will only be done with the full knowledge of the directors and after careful consideration.

7. Policy Review

7.1. This Referrals, Admissions & Discharges Policy was reviewed in October 2022. The next review is due in September 2024.