

Admissions Policy

(Independent School Standards: Parts 15 & 34)

Important note: The term 'Spark' or 'Spark Academy Group' applies to both our tutoring and independent school settings, also referred to as 'provision', 'school' or 'organisation' interchangeably.

Guidance & Legislation

- [School Admissions Code 2021](#)
 - [School Admissions Appeals Code](#)
 - [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#).
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**We Build Communities
Where Everyone Belongs,
Grows & Thrives.**



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Section 1: Clarifying Our Provisions

Our Provision

We are committed to providing a nurturing, therapeutic, and inclusive learning environment for children and young people with a range of special educational needs, particularly those who are neurodivergent, have social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs, or require an alternative to mainstream education. Every pupil has an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). Our provision is tailored to pupils whose strengths and needs align with our curriculum, therapeutic offer, and staffing structure.

Specialist, Needs-Led Setting

Our Spark Vale Academy Independent School has an agreed admission number of 45 pupils. While we aim to meet a broad range of needs, there are some specialist or clinical requirements that fall outside of our current registration, resourcing, or staff expertise. For example, we are not currently resourced or registered to offer:

- Continuous 1:1 supervision during the entire school day
- Clinical mental health or CAMHS-level interventions
- On-site psychiatric care or full-time therapeutic placements
- Education for pupils whose needs require a hospital school or residential therapeutic setting
- Interventions that require daily oversight by medical professionals

In these instances, we will work transparently with the pupil's placing authority and family to assess whether our provision is a suitable match and where it is not, we will support redirection to a more appropriate setting.

We do not exclude based on diagnosis, label, or background. Every child is considered holistically, and decisions are always based on the individual's needs, the well-being of existing pupils, and whether we can deliver a high-quality, therapeutic, and safe education in line with their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), where applicable.

Visiting Our Specialist School

At our provision, we warmly welcome interest from families, professionals, and local authorities. We understand how important it is for families to explore a provision before making an informed decision. However, we are equally committed to protecting the emotional safety, dignity, and stability of the vulnerable pupils currently in our care.

To balance these priorities, all visits to our school are carefully planned and supervised, in line with our safeguarding responsibilities, the SEND Code of Practice, and our therapeutic ethos.

What We Offer During Visits

- Pre-booked visits only, by appointment to avoid disruption and respect individual pupil routines
- Individual or very small group visits, arranged at times that minimise sensory overload or dysregulation (e.g. avoiding lunch or transition times)
- The option to visit after school hours, or when pupils are not present, for more in-depth discussions
- Staff-led walk-throughs, with no unsupervised access to children or sensitive areas
- A confidential space to speak with the Headteacher, SENCO, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or relevant staff, to discuss needs and next steps
- Clear information about our curriculum, therapeutic model, and support systems without compromising the privacy or safety of any pupil

Safeguarding Emotional Safety & GDPR During Visits

We take our safeguarding and data protection duties extremely seriously.

All visitors must:

- Sign in, present valid ID, and be accompanied by a member of staff at all times
- Do not take photographs or recordings. This is strictly prohibited to protect pupil confidentiality and comply with UK GDPR regulations
- Understand that no information about specific children, their needs, or their placements will be shared or discussed with others without explicit, lawful consent
- Respect that some pupils may become dysregulated by the presence of unfamiliar adults, and as such, visits may be restricted to certain areas or times

Where a formal consultation from a local authority has been received, we may offer a more tailored visit in line with a prospective placement discussion. In all cases, decisions are guided by what is in the best interests of current and prospective pupils.

Collaborative Admissions Process

Our admissions process is values-driven and person-centred, involving:

- Careful review of all EHCPs, reports, and consultation documents
- Liaison with the pupil's current setting and relevant professionals
- Pupil-centred assessments, where appropriate
- Discussions with parents and carers to co-create a supportive transition plan
- An emphasis on relational safety, therapeutic readiness, and long-term success

Where needed, we will work closely with the local authority to arrange transition support, co-design reintegration packages, and provide bespoke scaffolding to promote emotional security.

Equity, Inclusion & The Right to Learn

All admissions decisions are made through the lens of **inclusion, dignity, and fairness**. We uphold our duties under:

- **The SEND Code of Practice (2015):** ensuring all pupils are supported according to their individual needs and educational outcomes
- **The Equality Act 2010:** ensuring that no pupil is discriminated against based on protected characteristics, background, or disability
- **Independent School Standards:** ensuring we promote welfare, safety, and a culture of respect, belonging, and therapeutic care

We continually reflect on our provision and remain open to development where it is in the best interests of our learners and our community.

Section 2: Referral & Admissions Process

Standard Referral & Admissions Process

Formal referrals to our schools are made by a pupil's local authority's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team, either in writing, via email or using an online portal. These referrals are made with, or without, initial parental consent/preference. Our fees are always provided on request to SEND teams

- Referrals for Spark Vale Academy (Independent School): office@sparkvaleacademy.co.uk
- Referrals for Spark Academy Tuition Services: refer@spark-academy.co.uk

Families can express a preference for our school through their local authority's SEND team and should they consider us able to meet the pupil's needs, the SEND team will usually contact us to discuss a potential referral.

Referrals for placements are initially received by the referrals officer before being passed on to the relevant senior leader. Referrals typically include the pupil's education, health and care plan (where appropriate, as sometimes the pupil's needs are in the process of assessment) and associated reports.

An assessment is made based on the initial documentation provided and the SEND team will be written to confirming whether a potential placement may or may not be available (or the online referral will be declined if it is decided that the schools cannot meet the pupil's needs).

If a placement is available and the schools and placing authority agree that the pupil's needs could potentially be met (or if our offer is shortlisted as part of an online tender process), the documentation review is followed by an offer of an initial assessment for the pupil and family to visit the school (a representative from the referral agency and any other professionals involved may also attend where appropriate). At this point, relevant senior leaders will also explore with parent/carer and the SEND team whether the pupil has, or has had, involvement with social care services in order to gather as much information as possible, including information from a previous setting.

Following the initial assessment visit, a decision on a placement offer will often be made and communicated by the referrals officer within one day. Alternatively, an additional assessment (sometimes known as a 'trial' day) will be scheduled for as quickly as possible, and always within a week. Following this second face-to-face assessment day, a final decision on a placement offer will be made and communicated by the referrals officer within one day.

If the placement is confirmed by both the schools and local authority (usually following a decision at SEND Panel), an admission date for the placement will be arranged. This can only be agreed once the schools are in receipt of completed pupil forms. The schools also ensure that within seven days of the pupil starting, a family interview is completed by a lead therapist.

A potential placement offer is made only on the basis of a placement being available and senior leaders agreeing that the pupil's needs are likely to be met.

Distance from our schools is not part of the admissions criteria.

In-Year Admissions

The Local Authority can apply for a place for their child at any time outside the normal admissions round. As is the case in the normal admissions round, all children whose EHC plans name the school will be admitted if the school has places available.

If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. When a space becomes available, it will be filled by one of the pupils on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria listed in this policy. Priority will not be given to children on the basis that they have been on the waiting list the longest.

Oversubscription Criteria

All children whose education, health and care (EHC) plans name the school will be admitted before any other places are allocated. In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order until all places are filled.

Highest priority will be given to looked after children with an EHCP and all previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school.

Appeals

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you will be informed why admission was refused and given information about the process for hearing appeals. This will come from the Local Authority. If you wish to appeal, you must set out the grounds for your appeal in writing and send it to the appropriate Local authority.

Section 3: Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Headteacher & Proprietor every year.

Whenever changes to admission arrangements are proposed (except where the change is an increase to the agreed admission number), the governing board will publicly consult on these changes. If nothing changes, it will publicly consult on the school's admission arrangements at least once every two years.