



## ADMISSIONS POLICY

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APRIL 2021

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## > 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive document to share with staff, other professionals, families and other interested stakeholders. The policy incorporates the vision, values and aims for Merrywood's admissions policy to ensure that each and every child that attends Merrywood and achieves personal success.

Many children will come from a number of local authorities, our children have a diverse mix of nationalities and languages. Due to the complex nature of the children that attend Merrywood, we offer a tailored approach to our curriculum; including academic learning, play therapy, life skills and Personal, social, Health and Citizenship Education.

We believe that Merrywood is a safe, secure and equal school that supports children's individual needs. The staff and the school community work hard to ensure that a nurturing approach supports all children through their education, providing a bespoke approach to each child depending on their current needs.

At Merrywood, all aspects of school life are designed to create a sense of stability, inspire and engage children back into learning. We do this through a mix of a learning curriculum, creative approaches and essential life skills. The roles of communication, therapy, reflective practice, motivation and engagement are key to all we do and underpin our approach to learning.

## > 2. Purpose

### **The purpose of this policy is to:**

- Ensure the school discharges its legal responsibilities.
- Ensure the school is able to meet the needs of the children referred & the requirements of the statement/ Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- Ensure new referrals do not adversely affect the learning of those children already attending.
- Ensure it is inclusive in its approach to all of our children's needs.
- Ensure admission is linked to the school ethos and vision for learning.

## > 3. Criteria of children

Below is a list of diagnosis and experiences that a child may present with:

- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Attachment issues
- Anxiety
- ADHD
- ASD / Asperger's / PDA
- PDD
- ODD
- OCD
- Dyslexia or Dyspraxia
- Tourette's
- Insomnia
- Self-harming
- Suicidal idealisations
- Depression
- Experienced trauma in their lives
- Lived within a violent and abusive home
- Low self-esteem
- Display challenging behaviour
- Attention and concentration difficulties
- Speech and language and communication difficulties
- Sensory needs
- Literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Looked After Child
- Parent with Mental Health Needs
- Parent with substance and alcohol misuses
- Excluded from mainstream education

In addition to this the children will require the following support:

- Therapeutic environment and interventions
- Small classroom settings
- Nurturing and home like environment which is stable and consistent
- The space to explore their own feelings, emotions and behaviours
- The outdoor wilderness that brings nature into a child's learning, therapy and social development and enables children to care for things, such as animals, plants and their environment.

## > 4. Procedures

We are located on the M25 and will consult with all areas. The majority of our consultations are located from London boroughs, Surrey, Kent, Sussex and East Sussex.

1. Children are referred for placement by the Local Authority Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Team.
2. All children attending Merrywood on a full time basis have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The requirements of the EHCP are considered as part of the admissions process.
3. Merrywood uniquely offers education to only 16 children so therefore may not always be able to offer guest placements. If it suits the child and we have capacity, we may consider some children on the role of a mainstream school who request support (a guest placement) or a dual placement at Merrywood. Dual placements are requested via the Local Authority. Guest placements are arranged between the school leads of both schools if there is capacity to support.
4. Each child referral is considered on the basis of need. If they have not already visited the child & their parents/carers will be invited to do so.
5. If the school consider they are unable to meet the special educational needs of the child the Local Authority will be informed and additional resources requested. The Local Authority will notify the parents/carers of the decision.
6. Where the school is unable to meet a child's needs the parents/carers have a right to appeal to the Local Authority who made the referral.
7. Merrywood's unique small school means that we have to ensure that we consider the whole school when accepting referrals for Merrywood. All places above that number will be negotiated on an individual basis with the LA.

## > 5. Consultations

We work with children who already have an Educational Health Care Plan and where Merrywood can be named as the preferred school. We are aware of the apprehension that comes from the process of moving children from mainstream schools to alternative/special schools and this is taken into full consideration when discussing school placements.

Merrywood does not want to admit a child whose needs we are not able to meet, we do not want to cause further disruption to a child's learning and therefore have an admissions procedure that allows both child and parent to view Merrywood, but allows Merrywood to assess whether we are the best school for the child.

1. The Local Authority will ask Merrywood to consult with them in regard to a child's place, they will provide the paperwork available – child's Educational Health Care Plan or Statement and other reports, this will be assessed by a multi-disciplinary team to ensure we can meet the initial needs of the child. If the team feels Merrywood could offer a place, it would then create a support package plan for the child. Please be aware that our multi-disciplinary team will make a decision based on the school as a whole and will take into consideration the needs of every child.

If the parent contacts Merrywood directly – a visit will be arranged to discuss things further. Unless a parent is paying the fee's privately, at this stage it is simply a visit to see the school and then will be down to the parent to contact their Local Authority. A place will not be offered unless a full consultation has been approved by the Local Authority.

2. If Merrywood feels it can offer a position within the school, then the admissions team will arrange a home visit to get to know the child and home. This will act as a Q+A session for both parent/carer and the school.
3. Following the success of steps 1 & 2 – a visit will be arranged for parent/Carer and child to visit Merrywood.
4. The child's previous school placement will be contacted for more information if required.
5. The child will then attend a taster session with Merrywood. This will serve as a way of seeing if the daily structure suits the child's needs.
6. We will consult with parents/carer, Local Authority, previous therapy teams and school's placement to seek advice on what they feel the child needs. This will support our model of best partnership practice and ensure that we have the best possible start with the child, should a place be offered.

7. If Merrywood believes we have carried out all of the procedures needed to make the best judgement on successful placement, whilst meeting the needs of the child, then we will make a formal place offer to the Local Authority and inform the parent / carer. We will include an outline of any proposed transition plan and support plan.
8. The final decision will be made by the Local Authority who will inform the parent / carer accordingly.
9. Merrywood will agree a start date once the placement is confirmed by the Local Authority. Merrywood will write to the parent / carer to provide all the information required by us. Forms will need to be completed before the child starts at Merrywood.
10. Our family support worker will support the start of a placement at Merrywood.

## > 6. Dual Placements

Dual Placements with mainstream schools can be provided for some children with Special Educational Needs and have a valid EHCP.

All applications will be considered using the following criteria

1. Consultation paperwork from the local authority.
2. Merrywood is able to meet the needs of the child as written in the education, health and care plan (EHCP) and in the context of the needs of the whole school.
3. It is felt that the child will benefit from part time provision and resources at Merrywood.
4. The child, with support from his/her parents/carers and main stream school staff wants to attend Merrywood.
5. The placement is supported by the child's Local Authority.
6. Any costs incurred by Merrywood will be agreed beforehand then reimbursed by the mainstream school or Local Authority.

## > 7. Resources

Available documents to support a child's admission to Merrywood:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Equality & Inclusion Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Merrywood Emotional Wellbeing Policy
- Merrywood SEN Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

## > 8. Equal Opportunities

Merrywood supports the right of all children and staff to equal access and opportunities regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, social circumstances, ability/disability and sexuality. Merrywood adopts an inclusive approach to children's needs.

## > 9. Health & Safety

Health and safety issues are described fully in the school Health & Safety Policy. It is the responsibility of each adult to report health & safety issues without delay.

The health and safety of the child referred and the present children will always be considered as part of an admission decision. A risk assessment, including an individual fire risk assessment may need to be carried out.

## > 10. Professional Development

All staff are provided with training opportunities to deliver the curriculum where appropriate. Training needs will be linked to staff appraisal, staff interviews and school improvement plan.

Additional training will be provided for staff where a child admission results in an area of special educational needs not previously resourced or where staff skills and knowledge are not felt to be adequate for the additional need.

**Date:** April 2021

**Date of review:** April 2022



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