



MacIntyre Academies

Venture Academy

Admissions Policy

| Version | Purpose/Change | Responsibility | Date |
|---------|--|---------------------|----------|
| 1 | New policy | Principal | Oct 2020 |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Section numbering addedChange of job role from Principal to Executive PrincipalFamily Footings Facilitator added as main contact for admissions/transitionsChange of term – 'students' changed to 'pupils'Section 6 – addition of points 6,7 and 8 | Executive Principal | Oct 2022 |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review as per policy schedule – no changes made | Executive Principal | Sep2023 |

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|-----------------------------|---------------------|
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Admissions Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Venture Academy is a school for children and young people aged 9 to 16 years old who have social, emotional and mental health needs and/or autistic spectrum condition. When at full occupancy, the academy will provide 50 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).

2. Purpose

To ensure that all involved in the admissions procedure work in partnership, enabling informed decisions in the best interests of the child/young person.

3. Scope

The admissions policy is relevant to all members of the Trust Board, Local Advisory Board, staff, parents, pupils and Local Authority representatives who are involved in the admissions process to Venture Academy. The policy promotes the rights of all pupils regardless of disability, ethnic background, language, culture, faith or gender.

4. Rationale

A placement at Venture Academy should always arise from a process that identifies the school as an appropriate and positive choice and best meets the needs of the child/young person. Many of our pupils will have previously found going into school a challenge and may have had difficulties in coping within a mainstream environment and therefore accessing an appropriate curriculum. Venture 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 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 pupils to become socially responsible, polite and caring young adults, who value the lives of others and the environment in which they live.

Our pupils 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.

5. Principles underpinning the admissions policy and procedure

1. Venture Academy accepts referrals from Local Authorities. Whilst we welcome approaches from parents/carers, the school cannot proceed to the admissions stage without local authority support.
2. Venture Academy can be considered if the parent/carer has expressed a preference for special school placement which is referred to the SEN team within the LA and then on to Venture Academy OR the parent prefers a placement in mainstream school, but evidence shows that no responsible steps could be taken by the LA or existing school to overcome the 'incompatibility with the efficient education of other pupils'.
3. Prior to the admissions process, 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 the 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. 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.
5. During the admissions process, children/young people will be visited in their current placement and at home if possible.
6. If requested by the LA and deemed appropriate, key staff from Venture Academy may attend an annual review at the child/young person's existing school.

6. Admissions Criteria

Venture Academy admissions criteria are:

1. The child/young person must have (or is currently undergoing assessment for) an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to a social, emotional and mental health need (or BESD under previous code) and/or an autistic spectrum condition such as Asperger's syndrome as the main barrier to learning.
2. At the point of referral, many children/young people have additional, associated and sometimes a complexity of needs which may include:
 - Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
 - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
 - Tourette's Syndrome
 - Attachment Difficulties
 - Mental health difficulties
 - Speech and Language Difficulties
 - Dyslexia
3. The child/young person will have a history of persistent, complex and long-term learning needs and will often be working at a national curriculum level below their chronological age.
4. Evidence is also likely to exist of:
 - Moderate 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/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 and self-advocacy skills.
5. Other factors that can impact on a child/young person's ability to succeed in their current placement may include:
- A child looked after (CLA)
 - 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
6. As a specialist provider where our classes are smaller and our buildings less spacious than mainstream schools we do have to look at all requests for placements in terms of the needs of the child (as set out above), in the context of the provision we can make and also how a child will 'fit' with the peer group in their likely class with us. This can mean that at times we have to make the decision not to offer a place, as placing the child in a classroom or the school with certain others might cause the child further difficulty such as (but not limited to):
- A possibility of regression in their self-regulation and learning behaviours due to how others around them may present and then influence their responses
 - An increased likelihood of conflict for example where a number of children who are hypervigilant would be placed together in a class
 - Placing a number of pupils with very similar early life experiences in a class together, which this can present regularly in unsafe behaviours that could then make the school environment unsafe for the child or others
 - Children from families that have been previously involved in conflict with each other in a previous setting or the community
 - We do not generally accept placements of immediate family members, step-siblings or first cousins into the school, as in our experience this can (understandably) create a situation of 'looking out for' or simply 'looking for' each other, that can impact negatively on engagement in learning and make it more difficult to contain and restore issues of conflict.
7. We would also have to review any requests to place a child with a previous history of threats and/or use of weapons in school or the community, drug use, sexually inappropriate behaviour towards children or arson/ firelighting in the context of how we can adequately safeguard against those behaviours in order to protect everyone. This may result our school not agreeing to the placement or entering into discussion with the local authority about how safety can be ensured e.g. use of additional staff support or a therapeutic or personal development package bespoke to the child being agreed.
8. In respect of pupils already on our role, we will always consider that the admission of any one child/young person must not be detrimental to the learning of the other pupils already placed in the Academy

7. Admission Process

The process of admission to Venture Academy is as follows:

1. The Local Authority will send a copy of the child's/young person's Education, Health and 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. The visit forms part of the admissions process but may happen before or after the 'admissions interview' with parents/carers, as follows:
 - a) If it is clear from the paperwork that the school can meet the child/young person's needs, the Admissions Team will invite the child and his/her parents/carers into school for a pre-placement interview. The Principal will then arrange for the Family Footings Facilitator 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.
 - b) If it is not clear from the paperwork that the school can meet the child/young person's needs, the Principal will organise for the Family Footings Facilitator to visit and observe the child/young person in their present setting and talk to all relevant professionals including educational Psychologists. In this situation, the child/young person's parents/carers will be invited to the school for a tour if they have not already visited.
3. Following the admissions interview or current placement/home visit, the school will endeavour to decide promptly. The school acknowledges that parents/carers have often been through many assessments in the past and will aim to let parents/carers know the outcome as quickly as possible. The decision will be communicated to the parents/carers and the LA including a proposed start date.
4. Once a decision has been made, the Executive Principal will agree a fee level with the LA, confirm a start date and arrange the admission of the pupil.
5. If the school decides that it cannot meet the child/young person's needs, the Authority will be advised of the reasons for this decision in a form that can be shared with parents/carers.
6. The LA will arrange transport in accordance with its own Home to School transport policy.
7. If the school is full, it cannot offer a place as this would compromise the safe and effective education of the children/young people already on roll.
8. Following the admissions procedure, If a place at the school is not offered, parents/carers may indicate to the LA that they would like Venture Academy to be named as the school of preference within their child's EHC plan. The LA will consider parents/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).

8. Pre-placement Interview/visits

The pre-placement interview 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 to 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 parents/carers expectations of what the school can do, the child/young person's and their parents/carers aspirations for the future;
- An understanding of religious and cultural needs;
- Current EHC plan or previous statement of educational needs;
- Current multi-agency involvement, feedback and outcomes of any assessments including in a CAF is in place;
- Information regarding any particular vulnerabilities;
- Information regarding attendance, any fixed term exclusions.

The pupil will wherever possible take a central role in the pre-placement visit. He/she will have the chance to talk about themselves and their experiences. The child/young person will 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 pupil to attend, for example it could cause extreme anxiety, the pupil will be observed during the visit to their current setting and at home.

9. Arrangements to help 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 difficulties or an autistic spectrum condition.

An induction programme, appropriate to the individual child/young person will be drawn up to support transfer to Venture Academy. It is essential to consider mechanisms/strategies that may make the process easier for the 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.

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

Appendix 1: Information From Initial Family Visit

Date/Time _____ of _____ visit:

Name _____ of _____ staff _____ member _____ visiting:

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|--|---|--------------|-------------|
| Childs name: | | | |
| Parent/Carers name(s): | | | |
| Sibling(s) name(s) and age(s) | | | |
| Contact numbers | | | |
| Email address | | | |
| Home address | | | |
| Best method of communication | Mobile | Email | Post |
| | Home number | | |
| | Any times (good/bad) | | |
| Childs' current school and contact name | | | |
| Professionals involved with your child | Name | | |
| | Role | | |
| | Contact details (email and phone number) | | |
| | Can we contact? | Yes | No |
| | Name | | |
| | Role | | |
| | Contact Details (email and contact number) | | |
| | Can we contact? | Yes | No |
| Discussed confidentially? | Yes | | |

A good day for (childs name)

Imagine a brilliant day from your child's perspective. How would it start? What would he/she do or where would he/she go? Who would be there?

Think about routines, foods, activities, places, people and dreams (e.g. loves trains but has never been on one)

How would we know this was a good day? What would your child be saying/doing/showing us?

A bad day for

Now imagine your child's worst possible day. How would it start? Where would he/she have to go and what would he/she be expected to do? What would be forgotten or not done? Who would be there?

How would we know this was a bad day? What would your child be saying/doing/showing us?

Thinking about school...

What has worked well in the past for your child? (Favourite subjects, ways to learn, activities, sports, group size, environmental factors, training or experience staff had, relationships with different adults or peers, transport, lunch/playtimes, routines, therapies etc)

What hasn't worked well in the past for your child at school? (Use same headings above to prompt)

What has worked well in the past for your family? (Day to day communication with school, chance to be involved in school life, input into strategic stuff (recruitment, school improvement planning), reviews, support school has given you, transport, siblings issues/support, adult learning)

What hasn't worked well in the past for your family? (same headings as above)

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Anything else you want to tell us?

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Anyone else you would like us to talk to? (names, roles and contact details)

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Is it ok to share this document with other key school staff?

Yes

No

