



The Mulberry School
Admissions Policy
Author: Zoe Kirby

Date created: May 2021

Updated: August 2021

Introduction:

The Mulberry School is an independent specialist provision for children and young people who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum condition (ASC) and or moderate learning difficulties (MLD); as their main presenting need(s) and meet the criteria listed below. The school offers co-educational, day placements for students aged 8-16, currently with a provision to admit up to 36 students. The Mulberry School is part of a wider group and Adult Services operated by IBC Healthcare.

Student class sizes are managed to ensure small groups, usually groups of 6, which provides students with an appropriate peer group, according to key stage and ability levels. Where possible, placements will commence at the beginning of an academic term, although consideration will be given to individual circumstances. Where appropriate a gradual transition will be planned, involving multi-agency liaison and school visits.

As a registered independent school (not listed by the Secretary of State under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014), those with parental responsibility and the young person concerned may request that The Mulberry School be named in the young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and the local authority will consider this request.

Criteria for Admission:

Places are usually offered for the start of September. However, The Mulberry School appreciates that students may be out of education for a variety of reasons, when it is important for them to return to full time education. Therefore, The Mulberry School does take admissions at other times of the year, subject to the Head Teacher's discretion. All referrals are considered on an individual basis. Where students meet the eligibility criteria, a place will only not be offered if, after assessment, it is considered that The Mulberry School would not have suitable provision to meet the student's needs.

Eligibility Criteria:

The eligibility criteria for students seeking a placement, before a referral will be taken forward, include:

- The Mulberry School having space in an appropriate class/peer group. Where an appropriate group is full, The Mulberry School does hold a waiting list. When availability again arises in the appropriate group, you will be invited to submit consultation paperwork to be reviewed. As no time frames can be given for the waiting list it is important that other suitable provisions are also explored.;
- the student having a diagnosis of autism and or moderate learning disability. Due to the variation in diagnostic terminology, students may be diagnosed with an autism spectrum condition (ASC), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or Asperger Syndrome, as well as MLD and additional special educational needs;
- the student must have a proposed draft, or final, Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- that all those with parental responsibility are in support of the placement and in agreement with the strategies and ethos of the school. Continued support of those with parental responsibility and partnership with The Mulberry School is essential for the success and viability of any placement; and
- that the student may be private (including international) fee paying or local authority funded. Referral circumstances of private fee paying students will be at the Head Teacher's discretion.

Students from outside the UK – for information:

The UK government already published the future skills-based immigration system white paper in December 2018. This effectively detailed that only independent schools will be able to sponsor EEA (European Economic Area) children who come to the UK for their education from 2021:

It is the Government's intention that the same checks will apply to students from the EEA. All students coming to the UK under the future system will be sponsored by the institution at which they are studying, as is currently the case for non-EEA students. We recognise that this will increase the volume of students whom institutions will need to sponsor.

This will be similar to the current process for non-EEA nationals, who must obtain a Tier 4 visa in order to come to the UK to study. So, from 2021 all overseas students (from the EU and otherwise) must now obtain sponsorship from their chosen institution. Ultimately, this means only independent schools will be able to sponsor overseas students.

Most notable independent schools will already have a sponsorship licence in place. However, the majority of UK independent day/boarding schools also set a rough idea of the percentage of international students they are willing to take per academic year. These places will undoubtedly become more competitive now students from the EU will be classed as 'international' and will require sponsorship too.

Assessment as to whether The Mulberry School is a suitable provision for the student:

All referrals are considered on an individual basis and The Mulberry School will only decide not to offer a place, to a student that meets the eligibility criteria, if: (a) it considers The Mulberry School to be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs of the student; (b) and/or that the placement would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others, and/or the efficient use of resources.

The Equality Act 2010 applies to all schools and school admissions, and The Mulberry School does not discriminate on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Mulberry School will take reasonable steps to avoid the substantial disadvantage to a student with disability under the Equality Act 2010. It will use its best endeavours to make reasonable adjustments, where possible, to ensure equality of outcomes.

The Mulberry School provides a broad and balanced curriculum of education for all of its students, and the national curriculum is an important element of this. Drawing on the Statutory Inclusion Statement (2000) The Mulberry School follows the three guiding principles by 'setting suitable learning challenges; responding to pupils' diverse learning needs'; and 'overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils'. Admissions into Key stage 3 and 4 will also take into account current programmes of study, to ensure the effective delivery of accredited qualifications which relate to desired destinations and outcomes. There may be circumstances where the assessment process indicates that a student will require a higher level of support and resources to meet their additional complex needs. On these occasions The Mulberry School would require complex needs funding in addition to the core school fee.

Admissions Procedure:

The Mulberry School's admission procedure has five stages: enquiry; application; assessment; and (if applicable) offer & transition stages. These stages are outlined below:

Enquiry Stage:

- The Mulberry School strongly encourages those with parental responsibility to visit the school prior to applying for a place at The Mulberry School.
- Those with parental responsibility or the local authority are able to contact the Marketing & Referrals Administrator by:

Email: zoe.kirby@ibccs.org

Website: <http://themulberryschool.com/admissions/>

Telephone: 07903 435119

They may request a copy of the school prospectus, discuss the school provision and/or enquire about the admission procedure.

- Appointments to visit the school are available on request, providing an opportunity to tour the school and meet with various staff members.

Application Stage:

Applications for student placement can be made by parents or carers with parental responsibility directly, or by contacting the local authority, and sending The Mulberry School the student's final or draft EHCP, in addition to the appendices (supporting documentation) referred to in Section K of the EHCP.

Following a letter of consultation and receipt of paperwork from the local authority, the Assessment Team will review the documentation and, where possible, respond to the local authority within 15 working days to:

- confirm receipt of documents;
- request further information from the local authority, if required;
- send parent or carer questionnaires and school questionnaires to provide further current information on the student's needs and to support their assessment;
- confirm in principle that The Mulberry School may be able to meet the needs of the student and to arrange further assessment; or
- advise that The Mulberry School are unable to meet the needs of the student at this time.

Assessment Stage:

Where The Mulberry School may be able to meet the needs of the student in principle, an assessment will be arranged. Assessments vary depending on timescales, availability and the student's needs and may involve:

- attending The Mulberry School, for approximately half a day;
- visiting the student's home; and/or
- visiting their current education provision.

Following assessment The Mulberry School will notify those with parental responsibility and the local authority that The Mulberry School is either:

- Offering a place, and will prepare a report outlining the offer;
- unable to meet the student's need at this current time, and will prepare a report outlining reasons why;
- recommending a further assessment visit, to explore other aspects of the placement (such as exploring social and educational compatibility with another class group);
- seeking further clarification from professionals as to suitability of placement (this might include an Educational Psychology assessment).
- An assessment report will be sent to those with parental responsibility and the local authority within 10 working days of the final assessment, outlining The Mulberry School's decision regarding placement. Any offer letter will include details of fees, support level, proposed amendments to the EHCP and a start date.
- It should be noted that The Mulberry School is unable to reconsider applications made for placement within 12 months of an assessment decision declining to make an offer.

A Typical Assessment Visit:

Where students are invited to The Mulberry School for an assessment visit, this may include, but not be limited to, the student having:

- a tour of the school;
- a meeting with a the Headteacher and proposed class teacher;
- an educational assessment;
- a classroom observation;
- where appropriate baseline assessment of cognitive abilities prior to placement decision.

Offer (if appropriate):

Where an offer is made, it will be held open for a period of 3 months from the date of the offer letter, in which time the local authority should notify The Mulberry School of its acceptance or decline of the offer.

Where the local authority declines an offer, and those with parental responsibility choose to appeal the local authority decision not to support placement, the offer will be held open until the outcome of the tribunal has been determined. The Mulberry School will comply with assessments and visits as required by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Tribunal (SENDIST).

Transition (where appropriate):

Where the local authority confirm acceptance of an offer, the school will contact those with parental responsibility and the current school (if applicable), to commence transition planning and an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) will be issued. An IPA is The Mulberry School Admissions Policy.

A start for the student will be agreed, and the IPA must be signed by the local authority (or fee payer) and received by The Mulberry School at least 2 weeks before placement starts. A student will only be able to commence their placement at The Mulberry School once the IPA is finalised.

The Mulberry School will send a welcome pack to those with parental responsibility, including information about the school, consent forms and student information forms, including 'My Profile' documentation.

Previous school files and other relevant professional reports will be requested from the local authority, including safeguarding records.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) will be sent to those with parental responsibility within three weeks of admission and will be reviewed on a termly basis.

Gradual transition plans will be reviewed regularly with an aim to move towards full-time attendance as soon as is appropriate.

Admissions Sequence:

Enquiry Stage:

Local Authorities, parents and carers can make an enquiry via, telephone or email. Visits to school welcome.

Application Stage:

Local Authority to consult with parents, carers and The Mulberry School for a placement.

Local Authority, or parents, carer to send exploration letter to The Mulberry School, along with the child's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and all appendices from Section K.

The Mulberry School acknowledges receipt of these documents within 15 days indicating eligibility and whether The Mulberry School in principle can meet needs; or NOT as applicable.

Assessment Stage:

Agreed dates and times at The Mulberry School, student's current school, or home.

Where applicable:

Inform those with parental responsibility that the placement is appropriate and make an official offer.

Seek clarification from other professionals and or recommend further assessment.

Inform Local Authority and those with parental responsibility that an offer will not be being made and reasons why.

Report completed and sent within 10 days of decision being made.

Offer and Transition Stage(s) if applicable:

Offer letter sent to LA with Assessment report, including details of fees, including details of support level, and proposed amendments (if required) to the EHCP and proposed start date.

LA and those with parental responsibility decide whether to accept placement offer, (offer held open for 3 months).

Transition planning commences in agreement with those with parental responsibility, IPC's (Individual Placement Contracts) are issued and start date agreed. These must be signed and returned to The Mulberry School at least 2 weeks prior to agreed start date.

All consent forms to be returned to the school prior to student admission / start date.

Student transition to commence to The Mulberry School.