

# ABBNEY SCHOOL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

## ADMISSIONS POLICY



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Other relevant policies:

Attendance policy

Child an Adult Safeguarding policies and procedures

Transition policy

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## 1. Introduction

Abbey School for exceptional children is an independent co-educational day and residential special school. The school is equipped to support the needs of children and young people with autism who may have additional learning difficulties and who may also exhibit behaviours that challenge families or services.

Pupil placements may be for day, 38 week (weekly or half termly) or 41 weeks (weekly or termly).

## 2. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity with regard to the criteria for admissions for local authorities, parents/carers and Abbey School's Admissions Panel and to ensure that processes, procedures and decisions are fair, transparent and consistent. This policy will outline the criteria for admissions, the admissions process and the system for appeals.

## 3. Legislation and guidance

This policy is written in the context of and in compliance with;

- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- School Admissions Code (2014)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)

## 4. Admission Criteria

### 4.1 Essential Criteria

- All pupils will be aged between 4-19 years and have a diagnosis of autism<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>2</sup>
- Pupils' may also exhibit behaviours described as challenging to families, services and/or themselves
- All pupils' will be in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), naming Abbey School as being responsible for the child or young person's educational provision.
- Pupils' may also have associated diagnoses such as ADHD, epilepsy, OCD and/or other health or additional needs which may be met dependent on Abbey School's ability to provide the specialist support or specific environments required.

### 4.2 Additional Factors

The following factors will further inform whether Abbey School is a suitable placement for the child or young person:

- An appropriate peer group along with academic and social compatibility with the group will be taken into consideration. Where available places cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Lack of an autism diagnosis will not preclude admission if the pupil fits the general profile of the school and the school's pre-admissions assessment indicates the ability to meet needs.

created in the appropriate age/peer group, this may mean that a place cannot be offered at that time.

- The number of pupils in each year group is limited in order to minimise the impact of graduation on transition into and out of the School.
- The number of pupils requiring a staffing level of 2:1 will be limited at any one time. Requiring such a staffing level will not preclude admission, however, consideration will be given at the time of application to the number of 2:1 provision packages currently being supported in line with the overall needs of the school. Staffing levels will be reviewed each term. Should additional resource be required then the cost of placement would be adjusted accordingly.
- For children and young people with a physical disability, consideration will be given to whether accessible places are available or whether it would be possible to make reasonable adjustments within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. Abbey School is located within listed buildings and as such does have limitations as to the environmental adjustments that are possible.
- If there is a secondary diagnosis, including but not limited to Down Syndrome, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Mental Health Needs and Genetic Disorders, consideration will be given as to whether these needs can be met within the staffing structure and expertise at the school. Should additional resource be required then the cost of placement would be adjusted accordingly.
- Consideration will be given as to whether long term medical needs can be accommodated within the staffing and provision model at the school. Medical needs requiring on site nursing care cannot usually be accommodated.
- All those with parental responsibility/Guardianship should be in support of the placement and in agreement with the approaches, values and ethos of Abbey School. Continued support and partnership of those with parental responsibility/guardianship is essential for the success and viability of any placement. A thorough home-school agreement will be in place.
- The journey time to get to and from school will be a consideration for day pupils in line with the government issued *New home to school travel and transport guidance* (DfE, 2014). As a general rule, travel time for primary aged pupils should not exceed 45 minutes and for secondary aged pupils, should not exceed 75 minutes. Abbey School appreciates that due to the limited nature of SEND provision, that longer journey times may be unavoidable, and so this will not necessarily preclude admission. Journey times may be considerably longer for residential pupils as travel will only be at the start and end of the week, half term or term.

Each application for admission is considered on an individual basis. In each case, our assessment process is required to evaluate the needs of the child or young person in line with the following factors set out in the SEND Code of Practice, 2015.

- Whether the school is unsuitable for the child/young person's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs.
- Whether attendance of the child or young person at Abbey School would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

Pupil Admission Number (PAN): 75 (45 day, 30 residential)

Maximum class group:	6
Oversubscription places:	0

## 5. Admissions Process

The admissions process can be initiated by either parents/carers or the placing Local Authority.

Abbey School encourages parents/carers and professionals to visit the school prior to stating their preference for a placement. This enables families and professionals to consider whether the school may be a suitable placement for the child/young person concerned. We encourage families to visit a range of provisions in order to support them in their decision-making process.

Following a visit and discussion, parents/carers will need to request that their Local Authority apply to, known as 'consult with', us on their behalf for a place at Abbey School.

Alternatively, if a local authority recognises that a child or young person's needs may be best met at Abbey School, then they will make a referral to us directly without families requesting them to do so.

The school will respond to this request within 15 days of receiving the Local Authority consultation.

Abbey School's initial response is determined by the documentation received (i.e. EHCP, Annual Review reports, professional reports) and by observing and assessing the child or young person. The assessment process will involve a visit to the child/young person's current educational placement where observations will be conducted. We will also have a discussion with staff who know the child/young person well and questionnaires may be completed at this stage. A visit to Abbey School will also be arranged during which time the child/young person will have the opportunity to look around the setting and engage in some motivating activities with Abbey School staff and pupils. During this visit, a senior staff member will meet with parents/carers and complete further information seeking and parental questionnaires.

Where children do not have a current school placement, arrangements will be made to visit the child or young person at home.

Where an application for a residential placement has been made a further assessment will be conducted in order to ensure that the child or young person's needs can be met by the residential provision in addition to the day school.

Where distance precludes the child or young person from visiting Abbey School (for example when applying for a residential placement where the home setting is some distance away), then Abbey School staff will visit the child or young person's home in addition to their current placement in acknowledgement that the 'home' setting may be the same as the school setting.

If any aspect of Abbey School's assessment process is likely to cause distress to a child or young person (for example, if a visit to Abbey School without considerable prior planning may be aversive) then we will endeavour to work with families and placing authorities to complete a thorough assessment process with reasonable adjustments in order to support the child or young person concerned.

Abbey School staff will always seek to gain the views of the child or young person regarding their future educational provision wherever possible.

If assessment concludes that Abbey School feels able to meet the needs of the child or young person, then a formal offer letter will be sent to parents/carers and the placing

Local Authority. The letter will stipulate time requirements for parents to accept the placement and for Local Authorities to agree or decline the placement.

The placement will be offered under the terms and conditions of the National Schools Contract.

If the Local Authority accept the placement, then Abbey School will be named on the child or young person's EHCP. Abbey School assumes that by being named on an EHCP, the placing Local Authority have agreed funding for the school place. If the Local Authority do not agree to the school place then parents/carers have the right to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).

Once a placement and start date has been agreed the process of planning transition and induction into Abbey School will be initiated.

## 6. New Pupil Transition

When a place has been confirmed and the funding agreed by the local authority, Abbey School will:

- Send out pre-admission information forms to the parent/carer to complete and return. The fully completed forms must be returned at least two weeks in advance of the start date.
- Send out visual supplements e.g. photographs of the school, the pupil's classroom and teachers. Additional photographs will be sent of the residential accommodation for residential pupils.
- Allocate a lead practitioner to be the point of contact for parents/carers during the transition process.

The lead practitioner will work with the pupil, family, existing placement and placing authority to develop a personalised transition plan in order to ensure that transition into Abbey School is as smooth as possible for the child or young person concerned.

## 7. Over-subscription Criteria

The Oversubscription criteria will comply with the School Admissions Code (December 2014) and specifically paragraph 1.7 and 1.8.

If the school is oversubscribed, the priority for admission will be given to those children/young people who meet the criteria below:

1. Looked After Children and previously Looked After Children (as defined in paragraph 1.7 of the School Admissions Code)
2. And thereafter, the full, half or step siblings who are twins or children from a multiple birth or existing pupils, living permanently at the same address
3. And thereafter, the full, half or step siblings of existing pupils living permanently at the same address.
4. And thereafter, the qualifying children of staff who have sufficient service under paragraph 1.39a of the School Admissions Code
5. And thereafter, children of UK service personnel in accordance with paragraph 2.18 of the School Admissions Code
6. And thereafter, children as defined under paragraph 1.39a of the School Admission Code, who are eligible for pupil premium.
7. And thereafter, children as defined under paragraph 1.39a of the School Admissions Code, who are eligible for service premium

8. And thereafter, children who are twins or children from a multiple birth
9. Lastly, distance from school as defined by time using route planner software from home postcode to school postcode.

Where two applications are equally ranked within an individual category, a tie break situation will occur. The tie-break priority will be decided on a combination of the individual category 1 to 9 and category 10, where the least distance will have the higher priority. Where the distance between the two children's/young person's home and the school is the same, a random allocation will be used as a tie break. This process will be independently verified.

## **8. Waiting list**

A waiting list will be established if:

- During the school year, where the PAN has not been reached but the maximum class size of 6 pupils has been reached within an area of school.
- During the school year, where the PAN has not been reached and the maximum class sizes have not been reached within an area of the school, but the introduction of a pupil would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.
- During each school year, where the school has reached PAN plus the oversubscription criteria.

Abbey School will maintain a clear, fair and objective waiting list in ranked order in accordance with the oversubscription criteria above.

To meet the special educational needs of each individual pupil, class sizes at Abbey School will not exceed 6. Waiting lists may therefore, operate in class or year groupings.

When a place becomes available in a class/year group operating a waiting list, the relevant family and Local Authority will be notified.

## **9. Tribunals**

Abbey School are able to support SEND Tribunal appeals, however, the number of tribunal cases undertaken by the school will be limited at any one time due to the requirement to hold school places open for extended periods of time. It may therefore, be possible that the school is unable to support a tribunal appeal at a given time.

## **10. Emergency Admissions**

Due to the need our children and young people have for a planned transition, we do not take emergency admissions. However, we endeavour to work as responsively as possible with Local Authorities and with families to provide a start date as soon as is feasible, taking into account the needs of the incoming pupil and their families and balancing this with the needs of the existing pupils at Abbey School.

## **11. Appeals**

Admissions appeals will be considered by the Abbey School independent Appeals Panel and conducted in accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the School Admissions Code (December 2014).

Should a parent or carer be dissatisfied with the decision of the Admissions Panel in relation to offering a place to a child or young person at Abbey School, an appeal may be made in writing to the Proprietor stating the grounds for appeal.

## *Process*

1. Appeal to a decision offering a place to a child at Abbey School received.
2. A hearing will be convened within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.
3. Appeals will be heard by an appeal panel comprising two members of the Abbey School Advisory Body and one independent panel member.
4. The hearing will examine in further detail
  - a. The context of the original decision
  - b. Any additional evidence that may support the appeal (parent, LA, medical professional etc)
  - c. The appeal panel will then form a final response, after consideration of all supporting evidence. The decision of the appeal panel will be final.
5. The minutes from the appeal hearing will be sent to the parent/carers and local authority within 10 working days.

## **12. Funding, Contracts & Fees**

- All places at Abbey School will be offered under the terms and conditions of the National Schools Contract.
- All pupil's attending Abbey School are funded by the Local Authority in which they reside, and it is therefore, essential to have agreement in writing from the placing Local Authority to fund the School Placement.
- Contractually, all pupils will receive a range of supports. Additional reasonable services will be provided to enable Abbey School to meet additional specific individual needs as specified in the EHCP or agreed by the Local Authority following the School's pre-placement assessment. These services will be confirmed prior to the contract being issued.
- Residential pupils will be registered with a local GP upon admission to the School and will be supported to have their medical needs met through local community facilities. Support to attend medical appointments local to the school is provided at no additional cost. However, support and expenses to enable pupil's attendance for non-emergency medical appointments (e.g. consultants, hospital investigations) not local to the school may incur charges for transport and additional staff. This is to be agreed between the Placing Authority & Local Health Authority<sup>3</sup>. Incontinence supplies/support must remain the responsibility of the Placing Authority.
- Complex medical procedures that require additional support and training to non-medical staff will be considered through a joint meeting between senior School staff and appropriate medical professionals. Should Abbey School feel able to meet a given need, there will be a tiered system for allocating the additional costings required to support high health needs.
- Highly specialist dietary needs can be supported but may require additional funding. Dietetic support must remain the responsibility of the Placing Authority.

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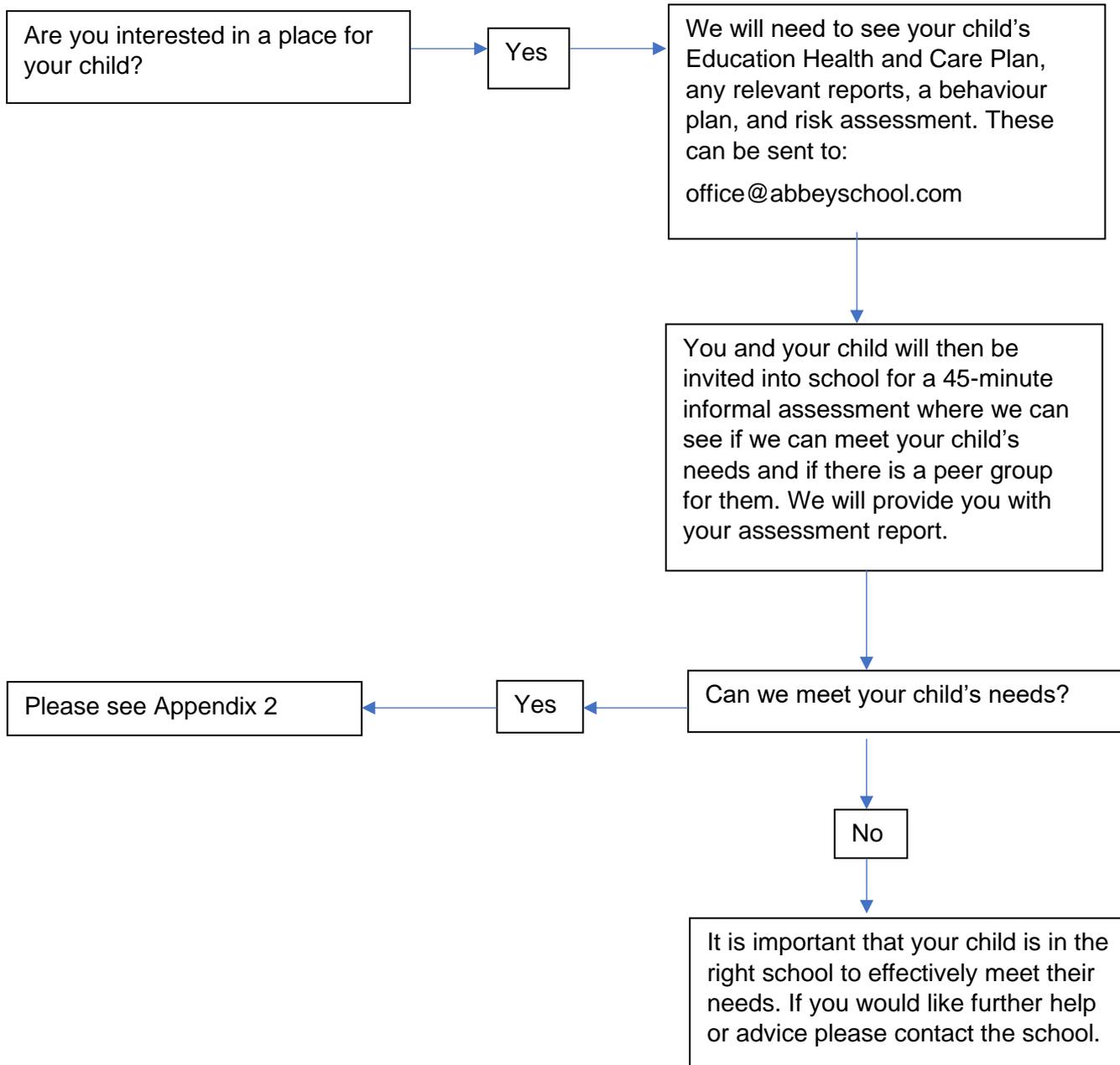
<sup>3</sup> Department of Health Publication Who Pays? Establishing the Responsible Commissioner  
<http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2011/DEP2011-0404.pdf>

- Fees should be paid in line with the agreements made between Abbey School and the Placing Authority as detailed in the NAS Contract. Fees should be invoiced to one funding provider only.

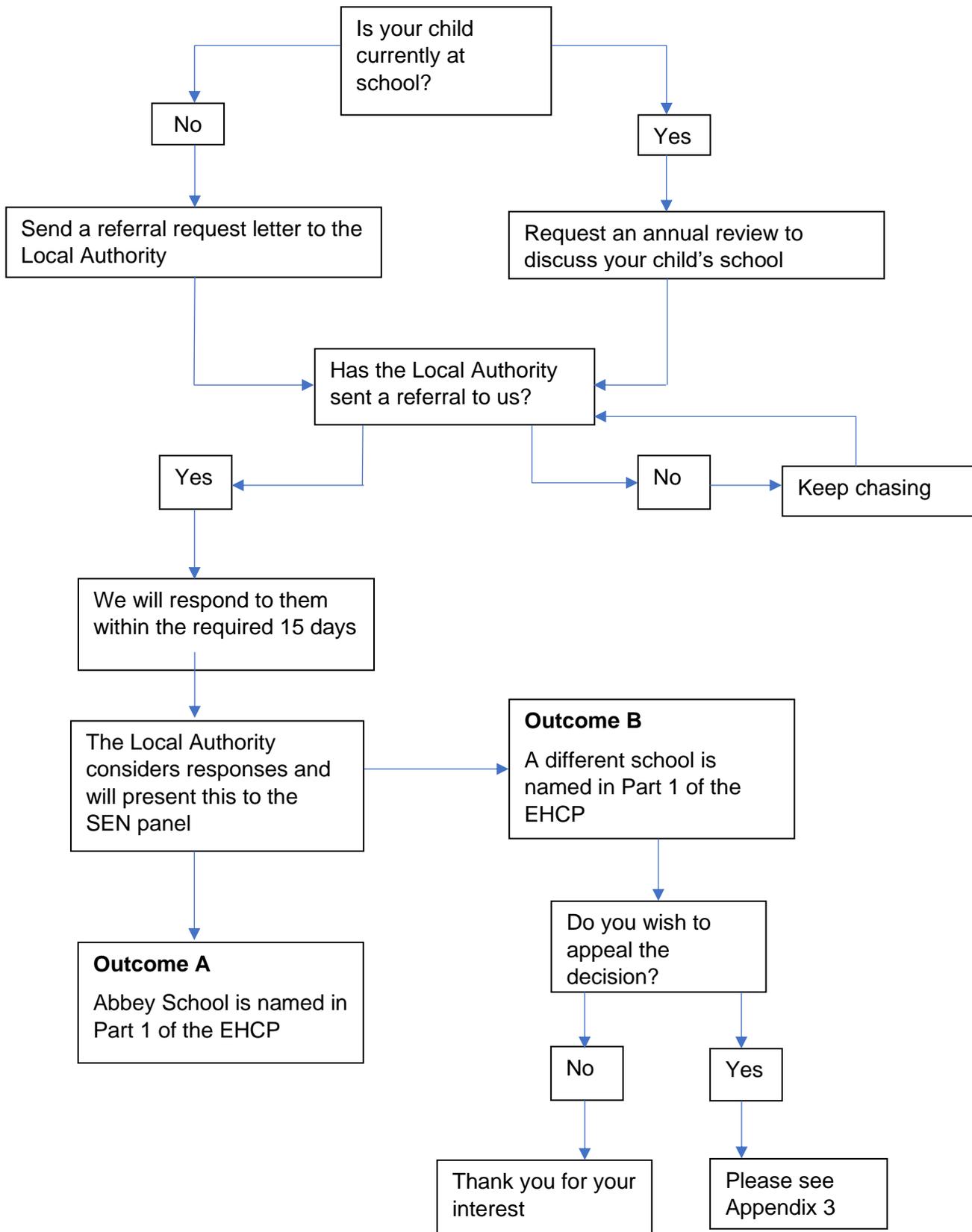
### **13. Post confirmation of placement/provision**

- All pupils will benefit from a broad and balanced education, a highly differentiated National Curriculum and (for residential pupils) a programme of learning throughout their waking day as outlined in the School's prospectus, Statement of Purpose, website and other information.
- The School will endeavour to meet appropriate ethnic/cultural requirements. The School has a multi-faith ethos as its foundation and recognises the value and importance of all faith systems.
- Residential pupils will be required to return to School on a Sunday evening or as arranged by the Care Manager after weekends or School holidays.
- All pupils are provided with a 6-week assessment and settling in period upon entry to the school in order to confirm whether the placement remains suitable and to confirm/determine adequate resource to meet individual need. A meeting will be held between school staff, parents/carers and the placing Local Authority at the end of this 6-week period.

## 14. Appendix 1: Is this the right school?



## 15. Appendix 2: School placement agreed



## 16. Appendix 3: Getting the support and representation you need

