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Gretton School is owned and operated by Newcome Education, a subsidiary group of Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside all of these policies in order to ensure an awareness of the bigger picture. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy, the Health and Safety Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

In all the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. [Department for Education guidance](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- Peninsula HROnline
- Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)
- Carecheck (DBS)
- Educare (online CPD)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gretton School is an independent specialist provision for children and young people who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum condition (ASC) as their main presenting need and meet the criteria listed below under Section 2. The school offers co-educational, day and weekly boarding placements for students aged 5-19, currently with a provision to admit up to 200 students.

Gretton School uses ‘identity first’ language when communicating about autism (in line with guidance from the National Autistic Society and research), as this has been shown to be preferred by most autistic people, who see autism as integral to who they are and not something that they ‘have’. However, Gretton School is guided by the individual and will always ask them how they prefer to be described.

Gretton School is part of a wider group of specialist schools operated by Newcome Education for children and young people with a range of special educational needs and disabilities, including social and communication disorders and Specific Learning Difficulties. Student class sizes are managed to ensure small groups, which provide students with an appropriate peer group, according to key stage and ability levels.

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 Gretton School be named in the young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and the local authority will consider this request. However, the local authority is not under a specific duty to secure a place, and nor is Gretton School under a (section 43) duty to admit a particular student.¹ However, Gretton School follows the spirit of the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, and Admissions Code (December 2014) when considering placements.

2. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Applications first have to meet our eligibility criteria after which (through our admissions procedure) it is decided whether there is any reason why we *cannot* meet the young person's needs and offer a place.

2.1. Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for young people applying are:

- (a) There is support for the application from those with parental responsibility for the young person;
- (b) the student has a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition²;
- (c) the student has a proposed, draft, or final 'Education, Health and Care Plan' (EHCP);
- (d) the student is typically cognitively able³. Gretton School has moved away from using terminology such as 'high functioning autism', but identifies that a learner is working within two years of age-expected targets;
- (e) the student lives within a reasonable distance of the school. Government guidance states that the travel distance from home to school as a general rule should not exceed 45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for secondary students.⁴ Gretton School

¹ Education and Skills Funding Agency (4th May 2018). *Guide for independent special institutions on applying for inclusion on the Secretary of State approved list*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-to-be-on-the-approved-list-of-independent-special-institutions/a-guide-for-independent-special-institutions-on-applying-for-inclusion-on-the-secretary-of-state-approved-list>

² Gretton School accepts any equivalent diagnosis (e.g. autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or Asperger Syndrome);

³ It should be noted that Gretton School is an independent and selective school, and so may select students based on 'general or special ability or aptitude' in accordance with Schedule 11, Paragraph 8 of the Equality Act 2010.

⁴ Department of Education (2014). *New home to school travel and transport guidance*. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295189/Home_to_School_Transport_Consultation_Document.pdf

appreciates that due to the limited nature of SEN provision that longer journey times may be unavoidable, and so will not necessarily preclude a referral. Also, journey times may be longer for boarding placements, as travel will only be at the start and end of each school week.

- (f) that the student may be private (including international) fee paying or local authority funded. Referral circumstances of private fee paying students would be at the Headteacher's discretion, but it should be noted that all places are currently funded by local authorities.

2.2. Assessment of whether Gretton School can 'meet need'.

We consider the young people who apply on an individual basis. Where a student meets the eligibility criteria (as set out in 2.1) we will only decide not to offer a place if Gretton School:

- (a) considers itself to be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs of the student; and/or
- (b) the placement would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others, and/or the efficient use of resources.⁵

Assessment of whether we can meet a learner's needs is a very difficult process and can depend on a variety of factors such as: the journey time they would face; whether their chronological year group is working at a compatible level (with differentiated curriculum); whether they would have a socially compatible peer group; and whether we have the right academic offer.

In line with the Equality Act 2010, Gretton School does not discriminate on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Gretton School will make reasonable adjustments to ensure young people with disabilities receive the same provision, as far as possible, as the other young people in our care. It should be noted that Gretton School is allowed to be selective based on academic ability⁶.

The school's ability to meet need is based on our current cohort and the learner's presentation at the time of assessment. Should an application be unsuccessful, however, we understand that the learner's needs (and our cohort) may change over time. It is for this reason that we welcome reapplications one year after a previous decision has been made.

⁵ This follows the spirit, and reflects the wording of, section 39(4) of the Children and Families Act 2014

⁶ It should be noted that Gretton School is an independent and selective school, and so may select students based on 'general or special ability or aptitude' in accordance with Schedule 11, Paragraph 8 of the Equality Act 2010.

2.3. Priority Considerations

Our referrals are considered on a 'first come first served' basis and it should be noted that all learners at Gretton have SEND, EHCPs and their needs should be considered as a priority. However, Gretton School recognises that children in care are amongst the most vulnerable children in society, therefore there is great importance in finding these young people an appropriate educational setting as quickly as possible. Gretton School will therefore give first priority to 'looked after' or 'previously looked after' children.

2.4. Waiting list

Gretton School does not hold a waiting list where there is no available space in a year group as we believe this gives 'false hope' to parents/carers wishing to explore places who may then hold off from seeking alternative provision. However, we do still encourage local authorities to submit applications for these year groups, so we can give them a formal response.

2.5. Appeals

As an independent specialist setting Gretton School is not bound by the School Admissions Code 2022⁷ and does not have an appeal process in relation to our admissions process. However, it should be noted that we handle our referrals with the utmost care and attention and should you be unhappy, you are welcome to raise your concern with the admissions team, or make a complaint to the school under our 'Parental Complaints Policy', the latest version of which can be found on our website.

3. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

Gretton School's admission procedure has up to six stages:

Stage	Description
1 Enquiry	<i>Via website, telephone, or email or Open day tour</i>
2 Application	<i>Submission of paperwork by LA to apply for a place.</i>
3 Gretton Panel	<i>Review of EHCP paperwork at Gretton School's Panel to decide whether to bring forward application</i>

⁷Department of Education (2022) *School Admission Appeals Code Mandatory requirements and statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities and admission appeals panels*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1108077/School_Admission_Appeals_Code_2022.pdf

4 Assessment (Visit Day)	<i>The young person is invited to visit Gretton School where they will go through some academic materials, meet with a member of the school leadership, and be offered some time in a classroom.</i>
5 Outcome	<i>The outcome is communicated to both the local authority and parents/carers by a report (in the case of offers) or letter (where we are unable to meet need) stating the reasons why.</i>
6 Transition	<i>If the offer is agreed by the local authority, the student will start on transition to Gretton School.</i>

3.1. Enquiry

The following avenues may be explored to provide further information about Gretton School:

Website: www.grettonschool.com

Telephone: 01223 277438 (Option 2)

Email: admissions@grettonschool.com

School visit: <https://www.grettonschool.com/open-day-information>

3.2. Application

In order to make an application:

- (a) a digital copy of the young person's EHCP paperwork (along with any supporting documentation) should be sent to admissions@grettonschool.com;
- (b) The paperwork should be shared by the young person's **local authority**. Gretton School cannot accept EHCPs sent by parent/ carers⁸
- (c) Gretton School will confirm receipt of the application and whether or not it meets the minimum eligibility criteria set out in Section 2.1 above.
- (d) Paperwork will be sent for 'Gretton Panel'

⁸ Due to the need to engage the local authority at the outset, and for transparency, Gretton School is unable to accept paperwork shared directly from parents, and it must come via the local authority. The local authority need not be in support of placement, but can share the paperwork as a 'parental preference'.

3.3. Gretton Panel

All applications meeting the eligibility criteria set out in **Section 2.1.** will be taken to a weekly panel meeting consisting of the school leadership team as well as the admissions team.

At the panel, the teams will discuss any applications received and assess whether there is any reason why Gretton School *cannot* meet the young person's needs in principle, following the principles set out in **Section 2.2.**

For any applications that Gretton School can potentially meet the need of, the young person will be invited to an Assessment (Visit) Day. Otherwise, the application will be declined at this stage.

3.4. Assessment / Visit Day

If it is decided at Panel that Gretton School may be able to meet need, the young person and their parents/carers will be invited to Gretton School for an assessment / visit. It will be held in the morning or afternoon and usually last for a few hours.

We will also send a 'Google Forms' questionnaire to parents/carers asking for more details about the young person and for permission to send a similar form to the young person's last educational setting.

The visit day will be held on the first available date in term time. It will consist of:

- a tour of the school;
- a meeting with a member of the school leadership team;
- an educational exercise (involving maths and english work);
- time in a classroom; and, where applicable
- a boarding assessment.

Learners will be provided with a visual timetable ahead of the visit. The parent questionnaire contains space to provide any additional information on how to best support the young learner on the visit day.

3.4. Outcome

Once Gretton School has reached a decision, we will notify both the family and local authority that Gretton School is either:

- (a) offering a day and/or boarding place, and will prepare a report outlining the offer;
- (b) unable to meet the student's need at this current time, and will prepare a letter outlining reasons why;
- (c) Seeking further clarification (by asking the student to come back in, or by speaking with professionals involved in their care)

Where an offer is made, it will be held open for a period of **3 months** from the date of the offer letter. Where parents and the local authority need further time to reach agreement then the offer will be held open at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Gretton School will support any tribunal process, signing any requisite orders specifying a place will be held open, as well as attending as a witness if invited and available to do so.

3.5. Transition to Gretton School

Where the local authority confirms acceptance of an offer, Gretton School will:

- (a) Give the local authority and parents/carers a proposed start date. Gretton School starts learners throughout the academic year in order to reintegrate learners into the school environment as soon as possible.
- (b) Require an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) 'student contract', which must be signed by the local authority (or fee payer) and received by Gretton School at least 2 weeks before placement starts.
- (c) Ask the parents/carers to attend a 'pre placement' welcome meeting to ensure a shared understanding of placement and expectations.
- (d) Provide a transition plan. The young person will start on a reduced timetable and days in school, which will increase on a gradual basis. The dates and times will be provided in a visual calendar once the placement has been confirmed.

While we realise this can be a difficult time for parents/carers managing childcare, the transition allows the student uptake time for longer journeys and tiredness, while getting used to a different environment. We also consider the needs of those already on roll, for whom the addition of another learner to their class may take some adjustment.

3.6. Transportation

Gretton School is not responsible for the transportation of students to and from school and this should be arranged by parent/carers through the Local Authority Transportation Team on agreement of placement.

5. TIMESCALES

As an independent specialist setting, Gretton School is not bound by the duty to give a response within 15 working days of a consultation request. Due to the pressures faced both within school and local authority processes, it can take some time to arrive at a decision. However, Gretton School endeavours to work as quickly as possible to give learners outcomes. Gretton School has set itself the following targets

- (a) To review all applications sent within 10 working days during term time, to give an initial indication as to whether the application will be taken forward
- (b) Where applicable, to invite learners in for an assessment / visit day within 2 working calendar months of their application (allowing for school holidays, which may extend this period)
- (c) To give an outcome to the local authority within 10 working days of the learner being invited in for assessment days, and within 3 calendar months of applying to the school.

It should be noted that all times are approximations and subject to change.

Appendix 1: Admissions Flowchart



