



ADMISSIONS POLICY

Last Review Date	September 2026
Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson
Version	V2 23/09/26
Changes since last review	-
Next Review Date	September 2027

This policy explains who may be referred to The Ark, how we decide whether a placement is suitable, and the safeguards and agreements required before a pupil starts. It is intended for families, schools and other commissioners. Our referral form, placement agreement and internal admissions procedure contain the operational detail.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Ark offers small group, practical and outdoor alternative provision with targeted social, emotional and engagement support. A placement supplements the education arranged by the pupil's school; it is not a school place, or a replacement for the full curriculum. The commissioning school remains responsible for the pupil's wider education, attendance recording, safeguarding oversight and regular review of the placement.

Our present offer is for pupils who remain on the admission register of a school and whose school commissions the placement. We do not currently accept direct parent applications, children who are electively home educated, or pupils without a school place. A family may make an initial enquiry, but only a commissioning school can make a formal referral. Where a local authority wishes to commission a different arrangement, the Director will first review our service scope and legal position; this policy does not itself authorise that arrangement.

REFERRAL AND INITIAL DISCUSSION

Parents and carers should speak with the pupil's headteacher, SENCO or other nominated school contact if they are interested in The Ark. The school may contact our DSL/School Liaison to discuss the provision and arrange an exploratory visit for the pupil and parent or carer, with school staff where helpful. A visit is an opportunity to hear the pupil's views and assess fit; it is not an offer of a placement and need not always precede the school referral.

The school sends our referral form through an agreed secure route, identifies a named commissioning contact and supplies enough relevant information for a safe suitability decision. We discuss the proposed outcomes, the pupil's own views, the views of parents or carers, practical access arrangements and the school's continuing educational offer. The Ark may request a meeting or further records before deciding. We will not set a start date simply because a place is available.

SUITABILITY AND FAIR ACCESS

The Lead Coordinator assesses each referral individually with the Director where needed, considering whether the proposed activities, staffing, environment and capacity can meet the pupil's educational, support and safety needs. We consider reasonable adjustments and other practical support for disabled pupils. We do not refuse a referral solely because of disability, special educational needs, a protected characteristic, a diagnosis or a history of difficulty attending school. If we cannot safely meet identified needs after considering reasonable adjustments, we explain the specific reason to the school and discuss alternatives or changes to the proposed plan.

The assessment considers the pupil's age and developmental needs, desired outcomes, communication, mobility and sensory needs, behaviour and any risks to the pupil or others, relevant health and medication needs, safeguarding information, the group and site environment, and transport or handover arrangements. Any decision is based on current evidence and recorded. A parent or school may raise a concern about the decision through our complaints procedure; the commissioning school remains responsible for identifying suitable education if a placement does not proceed.

INFORMATION AND AGREEMENTS BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Before confirming admission we agree the placement plan with the school and, as appropriate, the pupil and parent or carer. The school supplies relevant and proportionate records, including emergency contacts; safeguarding information and the school DSL contact; attendance and exclusion history; education and support plans; any education, health and care plan; personal education plan where relevant; medical, allergy and medication details; and risk assessments or strategies needed to work safely. Information is shared securely and handled under our privacy and safeguarding arrangements.

The school completes its own provider due diligence. We provide written safeguarding assurance about checks on adults working here and agree how we will promptly notify the school about material staffing or other changes relevant to safeguarding. The school and The Ark sign a service level or placement agreement before the start date. This records the named contacts, location and any off-site activities, sessions and duration, fees and cancellation terms, intended outcomes, responsibilities for the wider curriculum and any meals, attendance and absence notifications, safeguarding escalation, information sharing, review date, transport and handovers, and arrangements for ending the placement.

Where a pupil has an education, health and care plan, the school must involve the responsible local authority as required so it can consider whether the plan needs review or amendment. If the school uses a formal off-site direction, it must follow the applicable notification and review rules. These decisions and statutory duties belong to the school and local authority, as applicable; The Ark will supply the information needed to support them.

ATTENDANCE PATTERN AND STARTING

The usual placement is up to two days a week. An individually agreed, time-limited increase to no more than three days a week may be considered where the school demonstrates why it is suitable and confirms the pupil's full education and review arrangements. The written agreement states the reason, end date and review point.

The school confirms the start date only after the referral decision, information, risk assessment and signed agreement are complete. At induction, we introduce the pupil to staff, the site,

activities, expectations, how to seek help or report a concern, and the placement's intended outcomes. We adjust the induction to the pupil's needs and tell the family and school how to contact us.

ATTENDANCE, REVIEW AND ENDING A PLACEMENT

We record attendance for every session and notify the school promptly of attendance, lateness and absence under the agreed timetable. If a pupil is unexpectedly absent, we follow the agreed same-day welfare and escalation process. The school retains its own statutory register and follows up absence, including any further action with the family or local authority. We share progress and concerns promptly, with immediate safeguarding escalation through the agreed contacts and our safeguarding procedure.

The school and The Ark review whether the placement remains safe, appropriate and effective at least every half term, and sooner if needs, attendance, staffing, location or safeguarding circumstances change. We seek the pupil's and family's views. Each review considers attendance, progress against agreed outcomes, the school's wider educational offer, any adjustments, the next review date and a plan for return, transition or other suitable education. The school takes the lead on the pupil's next educational arrangements. We provide a closing summary and agree a managed handover. Serious safeguarding concerns trigger an immediate review and, where necessary, suspension or termination of the placement in liaison with the school and appropriate agencies.