



ADMISSIONS AND REFERRAL PROCEDURE

FOR PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, PARENTS AND CARERS

This page explains how a child is referred to The Ark, what happens before a place is agreed and who to contact at each stage. Placements are commissioned by a school or local authority. Families are welcome to ask about The Ark, but a parent enquiry or visit does not itself reserve a place.

1 INITIAL CONTACT

The first step is to contact Helen, our Designated Safeguarding Lead and School Liaison, through The Ark's published contact details. A school can describe the child's needs, intended outcomes and proposed days.

Helen Mcgloughlin: 07754 315 387 | info@thearksmallholding.co.uk

Parents and carers can also make an enquiry; Helen will explain the provision and ask them to speak with the child's school or, for an education otherwise than at school arrangement, or their local authority contact about a formal referral.

2 VISIT THE ARK

We can then arrange an introductory visit for school staff, with or without the child and parents or carers. A parent or carer and child may also visit as part of the discussion with the prospective school/organisation. The visit lets everyone see the setting, ask questions and discuss whether our activities and support are likely to be suitable. We will consider the child's views and any access needs.

3 SEND A REFERRAL FORM

If the school wishes to proceed, it completes The Ark referral form and sends it through the agreed secure route. For a local authority-commissioned EOTAS or EOTISC placement, the named local authority officer completes or coordinates the referral and confirms the wider education package. We ask the school/organisation for information needed to assess suitability and plan safely, including the intended outcomes, support needs, relevant education and health plans, risk and safeguarding information, emergency contacts and proposed timetable. We may ask for further information or a discussion before making a decision.

Helen and the appropriate Ark staff consider each referral individually, including any reasonable adjustments. We tell the school/organisation whether we can offer a suitable placement, whether anything further is needed, or why a referral cannot proceed. We

agree the proposed placement with the school/organisation before telling the family that a start date is confirmed.

4 SAFEGUARDING VISIT AND CHECKS BY THE SCHOOL/LOCAL AUTHORITY

A commissioning school may arrange a separate site visit to complete its safeguarding audit before the child starts. We welcome this and can provide our relevant policies, site and risk information, written assurance about staff safeguarding checks and the proposed arrangements for reporting attendance and concerns. A local authority commissioner can carry out its own due diligence in the same way. The school or local authority remains responsible for deciding whether our provision is suitable for the child it is placing. We agree how any questions or actions from the visit will be resolved before the placement begins.

5 AGREE THE PLACEMENT AND START DATE

When the referral has been accepted and the pre-start checks and information are complete, The Ark and the commissioning school or local authority agree and sign a service level or placement agreement. This records the sessions, start date and planned review, intended outcomes, named contacts, transport and handovers, safeguarding and attendance reporting, information sharing, fees and arrangements for changes or ending the placement. Where a school and local authority are both involved, the agreement makes clear who leads each part of the wider education package. The start date is confirmed only after these arrangements are in place.

6 THE PLACEMENT STARTS

On the first session, we welcome the child, introduce staff and explain the site, activities, boundaries, how to ask for help and what the placement aims to achieve. We record attendance for every session and share updates with the commissioner, and with the school where applicable, under the agreed arrangements. The commissioner and The Ark review the placement at least every half term and sooner if needs or circumstances change.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Our Admissions Policy explains eligibility, suitability decisions, attendance patterns and responsibilities in more detail. Helen can provide the referral form and discuss the documents a school or local authority needs for its safeguarding audit. Families with questions about a school placement should contact their school; families whose education package is arranged by a local authority should contact their named officer.