



FIRST BRIDGE EDUCATION

Admissions Policy



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1. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity with regards to the criteria for First Bridge Education admissions. For Local Authorities, parents/caregivers 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.

2. Definitions

“The School”, “First Bridge School”, as well as “The Centre”, “Early Years” and “First Bridge Centre” are represented by First Bridge Education and will be referred to as either First Bridge, throughout this policy. “Parents” includes the parents, guardians, or carers of a child. Children who attend the school shall be referred to as “pupils” and in early years shall be referred to as “children”. “Suitability Assessment” represents developmental

3. Scope

This policy applies to Parents, Carers, Local Authorities and Placing Provisions who intend to place children within a First Bridge Education School.

Parents, LA's and Placing Provisions are made aware of this policy and its procedures upon consultation with the Admissions Team at First Bridge Education. This policy is also made available on the school website.

This policy is closely linked to the school's SEND Policy, Curriculum Policy and Assessment Policy. These policies can also be found on the school website.

4. Legislation and Guidance

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

- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- School Admissions Code (2021)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The following defines the roles and responsibilities of all who are involved in ensuring that all legislation, guidance, and procedures outlined within this policy are adhered to, with the utmost meticulousness.

5.1. Role of the Admissions Manager

The Admissions Manager is responsible for:

- Overseeing the entire admissions process for new children and pupils and their parents, up until the child is considered 'onboarded' and has started their first day of school.
- Liaising with parents, local authorities, school and clinical staff to schedule and organise suitability of placement assessments.

- Liaising with school and clinical staff to ensure smooth communication of admissions tasks and processes.
- Liaising with Local Authorities to ensure appropriate placements are made, in line with the essential criteria of this policy.
- Keeping all those involved in the admissions and onboarding process up to date, including parents.
- Adhering to and updating this policy.
- Effectively utilising the school's Management Information System (HUBmis) to ensure accurate and effective onboarding of children and pupils

5.2. Role of the Clinical Lead

The Clinical Lead is responsible for:

- Effective and daily communication with Admissions Team to ensure children and pupils are assessed and onboarded in an appropriate and timely manner.
- Ensuring the school has adequate clinical and school staff to meet the needs of the child or pupil being admitted.
- Supporting the Admissions Team with reviewing Education, Health and Care Plans during the school consultation process.
- Handover of all relevant documents related to the child or pupil to the selected school and clinical team.
- The administration and or delegation of assessment tasks required to assess suitability of services, and the ultimate decision on the admission of a child or pupil (in consultation with the Head Teacher and Clinical Director if required)

5.3. Role of the General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Supporting the Admissions Team with all necessary activities in relation to documents required for safe and effective onboarding, including updating the Management Information System (HUBmis).
- Welcoming the family and child on the first day of admission, ensuring the parents receive all of the relevant school policies and procedures.

5.4. Role of the Clinical Supervisor

The Clinical Supervisor is responsible for:

- Liaising with the Clinical Lead and Admissions Team once a placement has been confirmed, to ensure they have all required and relevant information and documentation for the child or pupil's first day.
- Contacting the family, arranging scheduling of the team, and start dates with the Clinical Lead.
- Welcoming the family and child/pupil at the door on the first day of admission.

6. Admissions Criteria

6.1. Essential Criteria

First Bridge is an independent, co-educational therapy centre, early years and specialist school. The centre and school are equipped to support the needs of children and pupils with developmental delays, including autism, who may have additional learning difficulties. Child or Pupil placements range from 39 to a maximum of 48 weeks (year on year dependent).

All children attending the early years setting will be between, 2 years and 5 years old and will have a range of developmental delays and or disabilities. Some may also have a diagnosis of autism. Lack of a formal diagnosis will not preclude admission if the child fits the general profile of the early years and the First Bridge Suitability Assessment. Our Clinical Team indicates our ability to meet needs.

All pupils attending the school will be of school age, 4 years old, up to 9 years old and will have a range of developmental delays and or disabilities. Some may also have a diagnosis of autism. Lack of a formal diagnosis will not preclude admission if the pupil fits the general profile of the provision and the First Bridge Suitability Assessment. Our Clinical Team indicates our ability to meet needs.

Admission to First Bridge school is under condition that all pupils can complete two full academic years prior to the year that they turn 9. This does not include the time it takes to complete the admissions process. This is to ensure an appropriate time frame is included to deliver the necessary level of education and to allow time for a smooth transition away from First Bridge. We will not preclude the admission of a pupil who would receive less than 2 full academic years of education at FBE, however such applications and admission will be assessed and decided on a case-by-case basis, considering a number of additional factors e.g. peer group, behaviours etc".

Children and pupils must be performing at a developmental age or stage that is at least 12 months delayed from their chronological age to constitute the requirement for intensive, therapeutic education.

At all times, children and pupils must be able to keep themselves, the environment and other children, pupils and staff safe, on a maximum staffing ratio of 1:1 (adult: child/pupil).

Children and pupils may have behaviours that are described as 'challenging' but the intensity and frequency of such behaviours should not preclude the efficient education of other children or pupils within the setting, or require additional, installed specialist resources and spaces, and/or staffing.

Children and pupils may or may not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming First Bridge as being responsible for the child/pupil's educational provision.

Children and pupils may also have associated diagnoses such as speech and language delays, ADHD, epilepsy, OCD and/or other health or additional needs which may be met, dependent on First Bridge's ability to provide the specialist support or specific environments required.

6.2. Additional Criteria

The following factors will further inform whether First Bridge is a suitable placement for the child/pupil:

- An appropriate peer group along with academic and social compatibility with the group will be taken into consideration. Where available places cannot be created in the appropriate age/peer group, a place may not be offered at that time.
- The number of children/pupils in each classroom is limited in order to minimise the impact of graduation on transition into and out of First Bridge.

- Children or pupils requiring a staffing level of 2:1 will not meet the First Bridge admission criteria. If, during a current placement, it is deemed necessary by the clinical team to increase the level of support at any time above 1:1 to keep a child, pupil or the environment safe, additional resources will be required. The cost of placement would be adjusted accordingly whilst appropriate transition is discussed (please see our parents handbook, terms and conditions and behaviour and exclusion policy for more information).
- For children or pupils with a physical disability, consideration will be given as to whether accessible places are available, or whether it would be possible to make reasonable adjustments within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. First Bridge is located within residential 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 First Bridge. Should additional resources 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 First Bridge. 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 First Bridge Education. Continued support and partnership of those with parental responsibility/guardianship is essential for the success and viability of any placement.
- The journey time to and from First bridge will be a consideration for day pupils in line with the government issued 'Travel to school for pupils of compulsory school age' guidance (DfE, 2024). As a general rule, travel time for primary aged pupils should not exceed 45 minutes. First Bridge 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.

Each application for admission is considered on an individual basis. In each case our Suitability Assessment process, carried out by our skilled Clinical and Educational Team, is required to evaluate the needs of the child/pupil in line with the following factors set out in the SEND Code of Practice, 2015.

- Whether the provision is unsuitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude, and special educational needs.
- Whether attendance of the pupil or young person at First Bridge would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

Published Admission Number (PAN) for children attending early years: 12

Published Admission Number (PAN) for pupils attending the school: 35

Maximum class group (classroom dependent): 12

Oversubscription places: 0

Site total capacity at any one time: 55

7. Admissions Process

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

7.1. Placement Initiated by Parents/Caregivers

First Bridge encourages parents/caregivers and professionals to visit the provision, prior to stating their preference for a placement. This enables families and professionals to consider whether First Bridge may be a suitable placement for the child/pupil concerned.

We encourage families to contact a range of provisions to support them in their decision-making process. Following a visit and discussion, should parents/caregivers need to fund their place through their Local Authority, they will need to request that their Local Authority apply to, also known as 'consult with', us on their behalf for a place at First Bridge. Alternatively, First Bridge accepts privately funded placements, without support from Local Authorities.

First Bridge recognises that some families explore government-funded nursery places; however, we are unable to accommodate government-funded hours due to restrictions imposed by the government on how and where the funding can be used. In line with school admissions, all Early Years places at our setting must be either privately funded or supported through the EHCP process.

Whether placement is due to be funded privately or through Local Authority, parents/caregivers must complete an Application Form once they have visited and confirmed that First Bridge to be their preferred provision. Where families are requesting placement through the Local Authority, the Local Authority must agree to send First Bridge the consultation documents in order for the application to be considered as fully received.

Once the application has been received and reviewed by the Admissions and Clinical Team, there are four initial potential outcomes:

- An application response letter will be issued, informing the parent that First Bridge will not be able to offer a placement for the child/pupil. The reason for this decision will be outlined in reference to this Admissions Policy as well as the following factors set out in the SEND Code of Practice, 2014 (updated 2024):
 - Whether the provision is unsuitable for the pupil's age, ability, aptitude, and special educational needs.
 - Whether attendance of the pupil or young person at First Bridge would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.
- An invitation to bring the child/pupil to First Bridge for a meeting with the Clinical Team. This will occur when "Additional Factors", as outlined above, have been highlighted in the application form and First Bridge want to identify the extent to which these apply, to ensure the school or early years could meet the needs of the child/pupil. Should it be deemed that the child/pupil could be suitable, a conditional offer letter will be issued. Should First Bridge determine they would not be able to meet needs, a letter will be issued outlining this to the parents/caregivers.
- A conditional offer letter will be issued. This will occur when, based on the information in the form, First Bridge believe that they could potentially meet the needs of the child/pupil. The conditions of the offer will be:
 - Subject to the child/pupil completing the First Bridge Suitability Assessment and considered suitable for services by a member of the clinical team.
 - A deposit equating to 4-weeks of services must be paid OR a letter from the Local Authority, confirming their intention to fund the placement, must be received by First Bridge, within a set time frame, following the Suitability Assessment.
- A waitlist letter will be issued. This will occur when First Bridge does not have an appropriate space for that child/pupil, based on the "Waiting list" criteria below; however, does feel that

they could meet needs, should a space become available.

7.2. Placement Initiated by Local Authority

If a Local Authority recognises that a child/pupil's needs may be best met at First Bridge, then they will make a referral to us directly without families requesting them to do so. First Bridge will respond to this request within 15 days of receiving the Local Authority consultation.

First Bridge's initial response is determined by the documentation received (i.e., EHCP, Annual Review reports, professional reports) followed by contacting the parents/caregivers in order to run an initial observation and assessment with the child/pupil.

The assessment process may, where required, also involve a visit to their current educational placement to conduct observations. We may also have a discussion with staff who know the child/pupil well and questionnaires may be completed at this stage.

A visit to First Bridge will also be arranged, during which time the child/pupil will have the opportunity to look around the setting and engage in some motivating activities with First Bridge staff, children and/or pupils. During this visit a Clinical Supervisor and/or Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst will meet with parents/caregivers and complete further information, including a direct assessment of the child/pupil, as well as seeking information through parental questionnaires.

Where children or pupils do not have a current placement, arrangement may or may not be made to visit the child/pupil at home. This decision will be made by the assessing clinician and based on their professional opinion as to whether this would be required for us to conclude suitability.

If any aspect of First Bridge's assessment process is likely to cause distress to a child/pupil (for example, if a visit to First Bridge without considerable prior planning may be aversive) then we will endeavour to work with families and placing Local Authorities to complete a thorough assessment process, with reasonable adjustments, to support the child/pupil concerned.

First Bridge's staff will always seek, where possible, to gain the views of the child/pupil regarding their future educational provision, wherever possible.

If assessment concludes that First Bridge feels able to meet the needs of the child or pupil, then a formal offer letter will be sent to parents/caregivers and the placing Local Authority.

If the Local Authority accepts the placement, then First Bridge Education will be named on the child/pupil's EHCP. First Bridge assumes that by being named on an EHCP, the placing Local Authority has agreed funding for the allocated place.

If the Local Authority does not agree to the offered place, then parents/caregivers 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 First Bridge will be initiated.

8. New Child/Pupil Transition

When a place has been confirmed and the funding agreed by the parent/caregiver and/or local authority, First Bridge will:

- Send out admission forms to the parent/caregiver 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 setting, the child/pupil's classroom, and Clinical Supervisors.
- Allocate a lead practitioner* (most likely the Clinical Supervisor) to be the point of contact for parents/caregivers during the transition process.

*If required, the lead practitioner will work with the child/pupil, family, existing placement and placing authority to develop a personalised transition plan to ensure that transition into First Bridge is as smooth as possible for the child/pupil concerned. We recognise this as a large period of change for any child/pupil. Therefore, we support transition visits, meetings/phone calls/teams meeting for information gathering.

9. Waiting Lists

A waiting list will be established if:

- At any time where the school PAN has not been reached but the maximum class size of 12 children/pupils has been reached within an area of First Bridge.
- At any time where the PAN has not been reached and the maximum class sizes have not been reached within an area of the provision, but the introduction of a child/pupil would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.
- At any time, where the PAN has not been reached, and the maximum class sizes have not been reached, but there are insufficient staffing ratios, or a supporting clinical and educational team with the capacity to appropriately oversee and manage the child/pupil's placement.
- First Bridge 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 child/pupil class sizes at First Bridge will not exceed 12. 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.

10. Tribunals

First Bridge Education can support SEND Tribunal appeals. Please request for fee information if this situation arises. However, the number of tribunal cases undertaken will be limited at any one time due to the requirement to hold places open for extended periods of time. It may therefore be possible that First Bridge Education is unable to support a tribunal appeal at a given time.

It is essential to provide evidence to First Bridge Education that legal representation has been obtained, before a member First Bridge staff can confirm their attendance to a tribunal.

11. Emergency Admissions

Due to the need for our children/pupils to have 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. Considering the needs of the incoming child/pupil and their families and balancing this with the needs of the existing children/pupils at First Bridge.

It is to be noted, in line with emergency admissions, that First Bridge are unable to provide placements for less than 3 months. Therefore, short-term placements will not be accepted.

12. Appeals

Admissions appeals will be considered by the First Bridge Education independent Appeals Panel and conducted in accordance the School Admissions Code (2021). Should a parent or carer be dissatisfied with the decision of the Admissions Panel, in relation to offering a place to a child/pupil at First Bridge School, an appeal may be made in writing to the Proprietor stating the grounds for appeal.

12.1. Appeal Process

1. Appeal to a decision offering a place to a child/pupil at First Bridge 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 First Bridge Advisory Body and one independent panel member.
4. The hearing will examine in further detail:
 - The context of the original decision
 - Any additional evidence that may support the appeal (parent, LA, medical professional etc.)
 - 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.

13. Funding, Contracts and Fees

All places at First Bridge Education will be offered under specific terms and conditions.

Some children/pupils attending First Bridge 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 placement.

Contractually, all children/pupils will receive a range of support. Additional reasonable services will be provided to enable First Bridge to meet additional specific individual needs as specified in the EHCP or agreed by the Local Authority following the suitability assessment. These services will be confirmed prior to the contract being issued. 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 First Bridge's senior staff team and appropriate medical professionals. Should First Bridge feel able to meet a given need, there will be a tiered system for allocating the additional costs 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.

Fees should be paid in line with the agreements made between First Bridge Education and the parents/caregivers or the placing Local Authority. Fees may be invoiced to more than one funding provider if agreed as part of the terms and conditions.

14. Post Confirmation of Place/Provision

All children/pupils will benefit from First Bridge's integrated therapeutic and educational curriculum and education which also uses a highly differentiated and carefully selected approach (see Learning Pathways and Curriculum Policy).

The school will endeavour to meet appropriate ethnic/cultural requirements. The school have a multi-faith ethos as its foundation and recognises the value and importance of all faith systems.

All children/pupils are provided with a 4-week assessment and settling in period upon entry to First Bridge Education. This is to confirm whether the placement remains suitable and to confirm/determine adequate resources to meet individual needs. A meeting will be held between First Bridge's staff team, parents/caregivers and/or the placing Local Authority at the end of this 4-week period.

15. Version History

This is version two of First Bridge School Admissions Policy. This policy will be updated at least annually by a member of the Admissions Team, and intermittently, when required in line with legislative updates. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal once it has been updated by the Admission team.

16. Legislation and Guidance

Document	Location
Children Act, 1989	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents
Children Act, 2004	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents
SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years, 2020	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009	The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009
School Admissions Code 2021	School admissions code 2021

17. Related Policies

SEND Policy
Assessment Policy
Curriculum Policy