



ACORN
A Secondary Alternative Provision

Admissions Policy

Date of Issue: September 2023
Next Review Due: September 2024

Introduction

Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) is a school for pupils aged 11-16 who would benefit from a placement away from their mainstream setting.

The aim of the school is to promote inclusion and raise standards of behaviour and achievement by proactive early intervention. This will support partner mainstream schools in reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions.

Pupils are likely, but not exclusively, to have experienced social, emotional or behavioural difficulties; or school attendance issues

Pupils who will benefit from a placement at the *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* are likely to fall into the following categories:-

- Pupils who have had, or are at risk of experiencing suspension from education
- Pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion
- Pupils who are disaffected with mainstream education to such an extent that continuation of a full-time placement in their setting is no longer a positive option
- Pupils who have social and emotional issues which are impacting on their education. This may manifest itself through negative and challenging behaviours or withdrawal from education and school life
- Pupils who have been bullied, or have bullied others
- Pupils who have had patterns of poor school attendance and cannot re-establish consistent attendance at their mainstream setting
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and vulnerable due to a range of social circumstances (e.g. families experiencing risks such as poverty, substance misuse, mental health issues)
- Acorn is also happy to work with the Virtual School to help meet the needs of Children in Care, so long as their needs fall within the parameters detailed above to which mainstream partners adhere

The purpose of this document is to set out the school's admission policy and to demonstrate that pupil admissions will be fair, open and transparent. The admissions policy will:

- Offer schools and academies early intervention placements to meet the needs of disaffected and vulnerable pupils and those who are at risk of permanent exclusion.

- Enable *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* to provide a structured, stable environment which will ensure that we are able to meet the individual needs of each pupil.
- Support the aims of *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* which is to re-engage pupils with learning and reintegrate them to a mainstream education.

We work closely with a wide range of schools within Lincoln City, wider Lincolnshire and into the East Midlands. We have a robust admissions process which referring organisations must follow before a young person starts their education with us. We are determined for the school to be viewed as a partner in fulfilling the education needs of schools and the local community. We are an equal opportunities non-discriminatory school and we therefore welcome applications for admission of young people from diverse backgrounds and with varying needs. Each admission is considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the pupils we welcome are ones which will benefit from the education provision we offer. *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* operates a fair, objective and transparent admissions system that includes a complaints procedure.

Admission Arrangements

The primary aim of *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* is to provide early intervention for schools and pupils and help re-engage pupils with their learning in a mainstream setting. Placements at *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* are commissioned by Service Level Agreement with mainstream partners. In the majority of cases, students are dual-registered.

The Acorn Academy Trust will only admit pupils to the Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) in accordance with DfE guidelines - 'Children of compulsory age can only be admitted to an alternative provision Free School by being referred from local authorities, schools and Academies using their existing referral powers or duties.'

Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) will be run in accordance with all equalities law. It will admit pupils aged between 11 and 16 years who have been referred to the school through one of the referral routes set out below:

1. Referred by a mainstream school which, under general powers in the Articles of the Academy Trust may send pupils, via off-site direction, to an Alternative Provision Academy as part of early intervention measures to address behaviour
2. Referred by a Local Authority after discussion with the Headteacher in order to provide *Safe Space* provision, as a means of reintegrating EHCP students from Special School settings, back into mainstream.
3. Referred by a Local Authority Virtual School, after discussion with the Headteacher in order to provide education on a single-registered basis for Children in Care.

4. Named pupils on application from the local authority, in accordance with a School Attendance Order¹ after consultation with the Secretary of State.
5. Historically, Lincolnshire County Council have had a small number of EHCP mainstream learners at Acorn, on a single registered basis. The inclusion in this policy ensures transparency of intent.

Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) does not accept applications from parents/carers or self-referrals from potential pupils.

The outline of our placement offer is as follows:

- Key Stage Three placements follow a cohort-based approach; with three groups of students admitted annually at the beginning of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms. Students access the school full time for the majority of the term and then engage in a planned reintegration back to their mainstream setting before the term ends. They then receive six weeks of planned *Acorn Outreach*. Our model helps students avoid the risk of exclusion, supports behaviour change, fulfils their potential and raises standards of achievement.
- Placements are available to assist Key Stage 4 students on a full-time and permanent basis until the end of Year 11. We work closely with our mainstream partners to ensure all students are ready for the next stage of their lives be it with a college place or an apprenticeship.

All transition points are facilitated by our Engagement Team; they work in a flexible manner offering bespoke support to reintegrate students back into mainstream education at Key Stage Three or mainstream post-16 provision after Year 11.

Pupil Admission Numbers

Pupils will not be admitted above the published admission number unless there are exceptional circumstances.

School placements are purchased by commissioners on an annual basis, the commissioning process takes place during April – June in readiness for September. Governors will agree the

¹ Local authorities are able to issue school attendance orders if a child is not attending school. These are legally binding upon parents. Such an order might, for instance, be appropriate where a child has a place at Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) but his/her parents are refusing to send him/her to school. The order will require a parent to ensure his/her child attends a specified school.

cost of annual pupil placements and publish this information in our placement information documents.

Purchased placements do not equate to the admission of a named pupil. Placements at *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* are intended to be planned, early interventions which the annual commissioned place model supports. Through the admissions procedure a longer term, fulltime placement can be agreed for Key Stage Four students, however the pupil will always remain dual registered with their mainstream setting, and be subject to regular progress reviews.

Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) aims to maintain a small number of 'emergency placements' each year, not commissioned on an annual basis. This will allow *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* to respond quickly and work with new commissioners each academic year, when existing annual placements have been purchased. Emergency placements will also ensure fair access for pupils whose schools do not commission an annual placement. Applications for pupils on 'emergency placements' will follow the same admission procedure as those for pupils accessing support via an annual commissioned place. When all emergency placements are full the oversubscriptions criteria will apply.

Admission Procedures

Successful referral to *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* are most likely where the following conditions are met for a particular student:

1. That full-time mainstream education whilst currently not deemed appropriate, is the long term aim of school, students and parents.
2. That a personalised education and behaviour programme will stabilise mainstream school circumstances and aid progress and achievement.
3. That there is a clear need for the type of provision on offer and that this provision is not available in the mainstream setting.
4. That the referral is not a direct substitute for provision already identified in an Education Health Care Plan. If specific support is mentioned in an EHC Plan then the referring body should continue to fulfil specific tasks or by negotiation and agreement, devolve the task(s) to The Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School). This will also involve devolvement of funding.
5. That the support available to the young person from other agencies prior to placement continues.
6. That the interests of the young person are the priority.

Prospective students and parents are welcome to visit the Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) prior to the formal referral process

The referral procedure is as follows, and applies once a commissioner has purchased a placement at the *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)*, or when an emergency placement is requested:-

1. Applications for a placement must be made on the *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* referral form and have the consent of parents or carers. All referral forms need to be accompanied with the pupil's most recent PSP and Academic Progress report.
2. *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* will discuss potential referrals both with commissioners and the pupil's parents/carers. In cases where a student's complex needs leads to consideration of longer term support at *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)*, commissioners will be asked to set up a planning meeting to explore in greater detail the needs and capabilities of the learner and the nature of the provision required. Where there is some doubt about whether *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* is the correct provision to meet a pupil's needs, an assessment place/probationary period may be offered.
3. Referrals may be made at any time throughout the year.
4. Placements will be offered to all pupils whose needs can be met by *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)*, subject to published admission numbers.
5. All placements will be reviewed at regular intervals to determine their feasibility. The Headteacher will make decisions regarding appropriateness of placement after consultation with all concerned parties. It is always our aim to enable students to return to a mainstream setting, working with the host mainstream partner at Key Stage Three and suitable post-16 providers at Key Stage 4. In all cases we work to ensure that the provision made for the young person is absolutely in his or her best interests and provides the greatest opportunity for achieving positive outcomes.
6. *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* endeavours to offer successful personalised education to all young people who are welcomed. Sometimes, however valid the placement seems, it may become evident that a young person's stay at Acorn will not work in their best interests. We aim to tailor each young person's provision to suit their individual requirements. If, however, we are unable to meet their needs we will review each case on its merits to agree (for the student's best interests) a more appropriate option for all concerned.
7. The Secretary of State may direct *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* to admit a pupil regardless of the above and that direction shall be binding.

Pupil registration and information sharing

The Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) will make sure that all pupils are registered accordingly in line with section 434 of the Education Act 1996. All part-time and full-time pupils or those attending on early intervention or on fixed term exclusion will remain on the register at the commissioning school and with *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* (dual registration).

Oversubscription Criteria and Appeals

Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School) aims to be flexible in its approach to placement requests and will at all times strive to offer a part-time 3 day per week placement as a minimum to commissioners.

Complaints Process Criteria

Admission Appeals arrangements are not statutory regarding Alternative Provision schools, however at *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)* we want to be as fair, objective and transparent as we can with all stakeholders regarding our admissions procedures.

Commissioners have the right of appeal against the refusal of a place at *Acorn Secondary Alternative Provision (Free School)*. Commissioners wishing to appeal must follow the procedure contained within the complaints policy.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chair, Governing Body

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Headteacher