Educate U

Admissions and Discharge Policy

Approved by: Susan Evans, Director of Education	**Date:** 15/03/2021
Last reviewed on: 24/08/22 (Susan Evans), 01/09/2023 (Sarah Paoletti, Headteacher), 15/02/24 (Sarah Paoletti) 14/02/25 (Sarah Paoletti) 10/03/25 (Sarah Paoletti), 10/03/26 (Sarah Paoletti), 09/10/26 (Sarah Paoletti)	
Next review date: 09/10/28	

Admission and Discharge Policy

1. Introduction

At Educate U, we recognise that starting or leaving a school can be a significant experience for children and young people, particularly those who have experienced trauma, disrupted education, attachment difficulties or challenges in previous educational settings.

As a trauma-informed independent special school for children and young people ages 5-18, we are committed to ensuring that admissions and transitions are managed sensitively, thoughtfully and with the individual needs of each pupil at the centre of decision-making.

We understand the importance of building positive relationships, establishing trust and providing children, young people and their families with the reassurance and support they need throughout these processes.

Our approach is highly personalised. Information is shared in a way that is appropriate to each pupil's age, developmental stage, communication needs and emotional understanding. Where appropriate, this may involve individual discussions, small-group activities, visual resources and carefully planned transition opportunities.

Our priority is to ensure that every pupil experiences a positive beginning at Educate U and, when the time comes, a carefully supported transition to their next stage of education, training or adulthood.

1.1 Section 41 Status

Educate U is an independent special school and is not approved under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014. As a non-Section 41 school, Educate U is not subject to the same statutory duty to admit a child or young person when named in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

All referrals are considered individually, taking account of the pupil's identified needs, the school's ability to deliver the required provision and the availability of an appropriate placement. A placement will only be offered where Educate U is satisfied that it can safely and effectively meet the pupil's needs, and appropriate commissioning arrangements have been agreed with the responsible local authority.

2. Admission Criteria

Educate U considers each referral individually, taking account of the child's or young person's needs, circumstances and the school's ability to provide an appropriate and effective educational placement.

Our admission criteria include:

- Children and young people aged 5–18, in accordance with the school's registered age range.
- Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Referrals received through local authorities, social workers, parents/carers, schools and other relevant professionals or agencies.
- Pupils who experience school-related anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance, trauma-related needs or attachment difficulties.
- Pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and associated special educational needs.
- Pupils with additional health, communication, sensory or learning needs where these can be appropriately supported within our provision.

We recognise that some pupils may have experienced significant difficulties within previous educational placements, including behaviours that have presented a risk to themselves or others.

A history of physical aggression towards staff or other young people will not automatically prevent a placement from being considered. However, a comprehensive assessment will be undertaken to determine whether Educate U can safely and appropriately meet the pupil's needs, taking account of the wellbeing and safety of the individual, other pupils and staff.

Where assessment identifies that Educate U is unable to meet a pupil's needs, this will be communicated clearly to the referring local authority, together with the reasons for the decision.

3. Admissions Process

Educate U follows a structured admissions process to ensure that placement decisions are informed, transparent and centred around the needs of the individual pupil.

Stage 1 – Initial Enquiry and Information Gathering

On receipt of an enquiry or formal consultation, Educate U will review the information provided by the local authority, parents/carers and relevant professionals.

Stage 2 – Initial Placement Assessment

The SENCO and Lead SENCO will review the referral, considering the pupil's age, level of need, proposed provision and availability of appropriate places within the school.

This initial assessment will establish whether Educate U may be able to offer a suitable placement.

Stage 3 – Further Consultation

Where further information is required, the Lead SENCO will liaise with the local authority's Special Educational Needs Assessment Team (SENAT) to seek appropriate permission to contacting parents/carers, previous educational settings (usually SENCO) and relevant professionals.

This enables the school to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the pupil's needs, previous experiences and the support required for a successful placement.

Stage 4 – Formal Offer of Placement

Where the assessment confirms that Educate U can appropriately meet the pupil's identified needs, the Executive Headteacher will notify SENAT and submit a formal offer of placement.

Any offer will be subject to the necessary placement agreements and commissioning arrangements being confirmed.

Stage 5 – Family Visit and Introduction

Once a placement has been agreed, the pupil and their parents/carers will be invited to visit Educate U.

This provides an opportunity to meet the relevant Head of School, explore the learning environment, discuss individual needs and begin developing positive relationships.

Stage 6 – Transition Planning

A proposed start date and individual transition plan will be agreed in collaboration with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant Head of School.

Transition arrangements will be personalised and may include additional visits, visual transition booklets, photographs of key staff, introductory sessions or a phased start where appropriate, particularly where a student has not been in full-time education for a period of time.

Our aim is to ensure that pupils feel safe, prepared and supported as they begin their placement.

4. Information Gathering and Initial Assessment

To ensure that each pupil receives appropriate support from the outset, Educate U will gather relevant information from previous educational settings, parents/carers, local authorities and professionals involved in the pupil's care and education.

This may include:

- Current EHCP and associated professional reports.
- Previous educational placements and attainment information.
- Safeguarding and relevant social care information.
- Behaviour support plans and risk assessments.
- Medical information and individual healthcare plans.
- Communication, sensory and therapeutic needs.

As a trauma-informed school, we recognise the importance of understanding a pupil's previous experiences whilst remaining sensitive to the impact that discussing these experiences may have on children and their families.

During admission, parents/carers will be supported to complete the school's consent and information-gathering documentation.

A trained member of staff will guide families through the school's trauma-informed assessment documentation. This may include consideration of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), protective factors and other relevant information that helps the school understand the pupil's experiences and support needs.

Information will be gathered sensitively, stored confidentially and used to inform appropriate educational, pastoral and therapeutic support. ACE information will not be used in isolation to determine a pupil's needs or therapeutic pathway.

During the first term, pupils will participate in a range of baseline assessments and observations to establish their individual starting points.

These assessments will inform the development of the pupil's Individual Education Plan (IEP), provision map and personalised learning programme, ensuring that identified needs and EHCP outcomes are appropriately addressed.

5. Discharge and Transition

At Educate U, we are committed to ensuring that pupils leave our school in the most positive and supportive way possible.

We recognise that endings and transitions can be particularly challenging for children and young people who have experienced trauma, loss, disrupted relationships or previous placement breakdowns.

Our aim is for every pupil to leave Educate U feeling valued, confident in their achievements and prepared for the next stage of their journey.

Wherever possible, discharges will be planned well in advance, allowing sufficient time for pupils to prepare emotionally and practically for their next placement.

This includes providing opportunities to:

- Understand and discuss the reasons for their transition.
- Express their feelings, worries and aspirations.
- Prepare for changes in routines, relationships and environments.
- Celebrate their achievements and progress.
- Develop familiarity with their next educational setting or pathway.
- Experience positive and meaningful endings with staff and peers.

We recognise the importance of established relationships and will ensure that transitions are managed with sensitivity, particularly where pupils have developed strong attachments to trusted adults within the school.

6. Planned Discharge

Most pupils leave Educate U as part of a planned and positive transition to their next stage of education or adulthood.

This may include:

- Reintegration into mainstream education, where appropriate.
- Transition to another specialist educational setting.
- Progression into further education or college.
- Vocational education, training or employment-related opportunities.
- Other suitable pathways that support preparation for adulthood.

A contractual notice period of six weeks applies to the termination of placements, subject to the terms of the individual placement agreement and applicable legal requirements.

7. Exceptional Circumstances and Placement Breakdown

Educate U is committed to maintaining placements and supporting pupils through periods of difficulty.

As a trauma-informed special school, our approach prioritises understanding the reasons behind behaviour, adapting provision and working collaboratively with families and professionals to identify appropriate solutions.

We do not use exclusion or suspension as routine responses to behaviour or unmet needs.

However, in exceptional circumstances, it may become apparent that Educate U is no longer able to safely or appropriately meet a pupil's needs despite reasonable adjustments, additional support and appropriate intervention.

Where concerns arise regarding the sustainability of a placement, the school will:

- Review the pupil's current needs, EHCP provision and support arrangements.
- Consider whether additional reasonable adjustments or specialist interventions could enable the placement to continue.
- Review relevant risk assessments and safeguarding considerations.
- Consult with parents/carers, the local authority and relevant professionals.
- Request an emergency EHCP review where appropriate.
- Explore alternative arrangements where the current placement cannot safely or appropriately continue.

Any consideration of ending a placement will be approached sensitively, with the pupil's wellbeing and best interests central to discussions.

Where suspension or permanent exclusion is exceptionally considered, Educate U will follow the legal requirements applicable to independent schools, its published policies and relevant safeguarding and equality duties.

8. Local Authority Requests to End a Placement

Where a local authority proposes to end a pupil's placement at Educate U, including for commissioning or financial reasons, we expect full consideration to be given to the pupil's individual circumstances and the potential impact of the proposed transition.

Particular consideration should be given to:

- The length of time the pupil has attended Educate U.
- The progress they have made within the setting.
- Established relationships with staff and peers.
- The pupil's emotional wellbeing and attachment needs.
- Their connections with the wider school and local community.
- The suitability and readiness of any proposed alternative provision.
- The potential impact of an unplanned or accelerated transition.

For pupils who have attended Educate U for a significant period, or where a change of placement may present substantial emotional or educational challenges, transition planning should begin several months in advance wherever practicable.

Educate U will work collaboratively with the local authority, parents/carers and relevant professionals to ensure that any proposed transition is carefully considered and appropriately supported.

Where the school is named in a pupil's EHCP, any proposed change of placement must be managed through the relevant statutory processes.

9. Decision-Making and Responsibilities

Decisions relating to admission, placement suitability and discharge will be made through appropriate consultation and informed by the individual needs of the pupil.

The Executive Headteacher has responsibility for determining the school's position regarding the suitability and continuation of a placement, in consultation with the relevant Head of School, SENCO and other professionals as appropriate.

Any decision to propose the termination of a placement will be made with the knowledge of the Proprietors and Directors, following careful consideration of the pupil's needs, safeguarding responsibilities, contractual arrangements and relevant legal requirements.

Where a pupil has an EHCP, Educate U will work with the responsible local authority, recognising its statutory responsibilities for maintaining and amending the plan and securing appropriate educational provision.

Parents/carers and the pupil will be involved in discussions wherever appropriate, ensuring that their views are heard and considered.

10. Monitoring and Review

The Executive Headteacher will oversee the implementation of this policy, supported by the Heads of School, SENCO and wider leadership team.

Admissions and discharges will be monitored to ensure that processes remain consistent, transparent and responsive to the individual needs of pupils.

This policy has been developed with due regard to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, relevant SEND legislation, safeguarding responsibilities and the school's commitment to providing safe, inclusive and personalised education.

The policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance or school practice require it.