

Phoenix Arch (formerly Vernon House) Admissions Policy Jan 2013

Aims

Phoenix Arch seeks to provide a warm and safeguarded learning environment for pupils with social communication and interaction needs and/or for pupils who are functioning at the higher end of the autism spectrum. Pupils will either have statements identifying autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

All pupils are likely to have a social and communication difficulty that seriously impedes the development of social relationships and causes substantial and extensive barriers to learning.

Children may have a formal diagnosis of autism, Asperger Syndrome, oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), pathological demand avoidance (PDA), social communication disorder (SCD), semantic pragmatic disorder (SPD) or pervasive developmental disorder - not otherwise specified (PDD – NOS). Pupils may also have a secondary diagnosis of dyspraxia, dyslexia/dyscalculia or ADD/ADHD.

Provision

Phoenix Arch School is a 35 place primary special school. The curriculum, resources and teaching approach are differentiated and modified to meet the needs of pupils with severe communication and interaction needs who may require a nurturing environment and a highly structured approach.

The school takes a holistic approach to pupil's development and learning and all teachers work with therapists in planning and delivering a creative curriculum. Planning takes the pupil's preferred learning styles into account to enable and promote opportunity for individuals to access the national curriculum in a personalised way that promotes personal growth, development and well being.

Children will be taught in small classes of a size appropriate to their ability and needs. Children also have the opportunity to work in small groups. All staff are trained in understanding and meeting the needs of pupils with ASD and SEBD, having been trained in using Positive Management techniques with an emphasis on assessing what the child 'feels, needs, wants' as a way of moving forward and teaching the child alternative responses to stressful situations. Staff are experienced in working with pupils with a wide range of complex difficulties. There is a Reflection Room and a Time Out Room.

There are good facilities for ICT which is both integrated across the curriculum and also taught discreetly. Pupils have the opportunity to cook as part of the curriculum and to develop independent living skills. Trips and outings to develop knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom enhance learning and the school has its own minibus to facilitate this aspect of provision.

The school has its own Speech and Language therapist and Occupational Therapy is currently provided by the NHS. Pupils receive one-to-one sessions for targeted interventions and assessments as identified on their statements. The Speech and Language therapist has identified time to plan with teachers and supports targeted class or group interventions in class, as appropriate.

We offer the TAMHS project at Phoenix Arch School. This supports families and pupils therapeutically, following the principles of the Marlborough Family Service, an NHS organisation with a well-established reputation for supporting children and families.

Pupil Profile

The school will cater for pupils whose general cognitive ability indicates to professionals that they will be able to access the national curriculum when it is appropriately differentiated and modified and when the approach to learning is highly structured and positive with low levels of arousal. Pupils may have a mixed profile of attainment or moderate learning difficulties.

Pupils will be able to develop verbal communication but may need additional support such as Makaton and visual cues. They will have developed some self-help skills and have the potential for greater independence.

Pupils may have challenging behaviour and would benefit from a specialist approach to managing their needs. Behaviours may include:

- Severe difficulties in following instructions, classroom/setting routines and in maintaining attention to task which make it impossible for the child to participate in most ordinary classroom/setting activities without a high level of support and structure.
- Atypical behaviour, such as obsessive, challenging and/or withdrawn behaviours, some severe; an inappropriate use of language, difficulties in motor imitation and control; and substantial evidence of distress or emotional disturbance without obvious cause.
- Inappropriate social behaviour leading to rejection by peers and social isolation.
- Significant sensory differences which affect perception and experience and can result in abnormal responses to sensory stimuli in the environment.

Admission criteria

A child is eligible to be offered a special school placement at Phoenix Arch if they meet the following criteria:

- The child presents as described above.
- The child has a statement of SEN or is currently undergoing a statutory assessment of their needs under the 1996 Education Act.
- There is evidence from the statutory assessment that the child will benefit from access to a modified curriculum within a special school environment.

- The child's profile is banded within the range 3 – 6.
- A place is available.

In exceptional cases a child who does not fully meet the criteria may be considered for a placement at Phoenix Arch. Individual cases will be discussed by the Complex Panel and in such cases the final decision will rest with the Local Authority who will explain the basis for such a decision.