



Education Services

## Policy: Admission to Specialist Provision – Procedure

Last Updated: Nov 2014

### 1 Introduction

1.1 West Lothian Council is committed to meeting the needs of all learners in mainstream schools wherever possible. Where children and young people require a higher level of support than can be offered within mainstream schools, Specialist Provision, or a special school not managed by the Council, may be appropriate.

- 1.2 Specialist Provision (Special Schools and Classes managed by West Lothian Council) has a single catchment area covering the area enclosed by the boundary of West Lothian Council. Requests for placement in West Lothian Specialist Provision may be made by parents/carers of children with additional support needs, or by a young person having additional support needs, who reside both within and outwith West Lothian.
- 1.3 All Specialist Provision is non-denominational (not linked to any particular religion). No Specialist Provision is denominational (linked to a particular religion) including Specialist Provision located within a building or campus also used by a denominational school, or Specialist Provision under the management of the Headteacher of a denominational school.
- 1.4 Decisions regarding the level of support to be provided will take account of the presumption that children and young people will be placed within a mainstream school wherever possible, the requirement to meet the needs of all children and young people through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework, and will be made within the context of the Continuum of Support. Further details of these considerations are included in this Policy and Procedure.
- 1.5 Children and young people can be considered for Specialist Provision, or a special school not managed by the Council, through the annual transition process, through referral to the Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) by a Child's Planning Meeting or through a placing request made by their parent/carer or by a young person having additional support needs.
- 1.6 A Child's Planning Meeting is a meeting of relevant professionals which co-ordinates and makes decisions regarding appropriate support in terms of the GIRFEC framework. The parent/carer and child or young person are invited to attend and are key partners in the process.
- 1.7 The Admission to Specialist Provision Policy and Procedure will apply to admission to the full range of Specialist Provision including provision made to meet Specific Language Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Complex Needs, Severe and Complex Needs and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs.

## 2 Getting it Right for Every Child

2.1 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) requires multi-agency planning and provision for meeting the needs of all children and young people. The GIRFEC approach is to put the child or young person and their family at the centre of decision making and to take action at the earliest opportunity in order to give all our children and young people the best possible start in life.

2.2 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a national framework. All professionals working with children and young people will follow the same frameworks for assessment, planning and support.

## 3 The Continuum of Support

3.1 The Council operates within a clearly defined Continuum of Support with four levels under which the additional support needs of children and young people are identified, assessed, planned for and met.

3.2 The needs of children and young people at Levels 1 to 3 will generally be met in mainstream schools. All mainstream schools are provided with specific funding to meet the additional support needs of children and young people. Headteachers have responsibility for the relevant deployment of staff and resources to meet the needs of the children and young people in their school. In addition to this, a wide range of outreach services, both Education and multi-agency, can be accessed directly by mainstream schools to meet the needs of individual children and young people.

3.3 Children and young people thought to require Specialist Provision following assessment through the Child's Planning Meeting process will be considered by the Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) which will determine whether the child or young person's needs require to be met through access to Specialist Provision.

3.4 The four levels of the continuum of support are as follows:-

Level 1:	Needs are met within the classroom by the class teacher. Differentiation/modification to the curriculum/environment may be required.
Level 2:	A higher level of differentiation and other support strategies (possibly in consultation with other agencies out with education) are meeting the child or young person's learning needs. Should a high level of differentiation and other support strategies <u>not</u> meet the child or young person's learning needs then support through an Individual Educational Programme (IEP) (with or without consultation with another agency) is implemented. If targeted input is needed from another support service, a request for service will be submitted to that service. As and when coordination of support is required, a Child's Planning Meeting will be held. The outcome of the Child's Planning Meeting will be the Child's Plan. The Child's Plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Level 3:	The child's additional support needs requires input from two or more support services and/or different agencies. At this level all children and young people will have a Child's Plan, continue to have an IEP (if appropriate) and should be considered for a Co-ordinated Support Plan.
Level 4:	Children and young people thought to require Specialist Provision following assessment through the Child's Planning Meeting process will be considered by the Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) which will determine whether the child or young person's needs require to be met through access to Specialist Provision, or a special school which is not managed by the Council.

3.5 Although it is expected to be the norm that provision to meet the needs of children and young people will be made in terms of the four levels of the Continuum of Support as set out above, the Council will consider the needs of each child individually and provide supports assessed as necessary to allow each child or young person to achieve their full potential.

#### **4 The Senior Officer Review Group (SORG)**

4.1 All admissions to Specialist Provision, and requests to attend special schools not managed by the Council, are determined by the Senior Officer Review Group (SORG).

4.2 SORG comprises senior representatives from the following partner agencies:

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Representatives</b>
Education	Additional Support Needs (ASN) Manager Education Officers (ASN) Principal Educational Psychologist
Social Policy	Senior Manager with responsibility for Practice Teams Senior Manager with responsibility for Residential Units Manager of Children and Young Peoples Teams Manager of Child Disability Team
Health	Consultant Community Paediatrician Manager of Speech and Language Therapy Service
Reporter	Authority Reporter
Legal Services	Representative from service

#### **5 Annual Transition Process – Consideration by Senior Officer Review Group (SORG)**

5.1 The Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) will consider referrals of children and young people at the key transition stages of entry to Pre-School; Pre-School to P1; P7 to S1; and post 16.

5.2 Dates for these meetings along with the associated deadlines for submission of appropriate assessment materials are communicated to Headteachers and partner agencies at the start of each school year. Multi-agency assessments will be co-ordinated by the school or pre-school establishment.

5.3 The Initial Review Group (IRG) is a group of multi-agency professionals set up by SORG that meets three times a year to make recommendations regarding the needs of children entering pre-school provision and how these can be met. Dates for these meetings along with the associated deadlines for submission of appropriate assessment materials are communicated to Headteachers and partner agencies at the start of each school year. Referrals to this group can be made by a range of multi-agency professionals.

5.4 Referrals of children and young people at the Pre-School to P1 and P7 to S1 transition stages are considered by a group of multi-agency professionals set up by SORG, and recommendations made to SORG. The professionals involved will be drawn from the same agencies as are represented on SORG. This group is set up due to the large number of children and young people to be considered at these key transition stages.

5.5 SORG will consider:-

- Single Child's Plan (Assessment of wellbeing and outcome of Child's Planning Meeting from the previous six months)
- Individualised Education Programme (IEP)
- Education Chronology
- Educational Psychology proforma (where appropriate)
- Relevant up-to-date multi-agency reports (from within last 6 months)
- Attendance information
- Any other relevant information provided to or requested by SORG.

5.6 SORG will consider the individual needs of the child or young person and the support strategies required to ensure an appropriate learning and care environment for the child or young person, and determine a suitable placement based on the information submitted, and following the **Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines**.

5.7 Attendance at any Specialist Provision or other school in the pre-school or primary stages does not guarantee placement in any Specialist Provision, or a particular Specialist Provision, at the primary and secondary stages. The exception is specialist provision which caters for children and young people of ages 5-18 (i.e. Beatlie School and Pinewood School) where in most cases children and young people placed in the primary stage will progress to the secondary stage of the same provision.

5.8 SORG will inform parents/carers and schools of its transition decisions by letter by the end of April, following relevant statutory timescales.

5.9 There is no right of appeal against a decision of SORG following consideration of a referral of a child or young person at the key transition stages.

## **6 Referral by a Child's Planning Meeting – Consideration by Senior Officer Review Group (SORG)**

6.1 Children and young people thought to require Specialist Provision following assessment through the Child's Planning Meeting process, will be considered by the Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) which will determine whether the child or young person's needs require to be met through access to Specialist Provision, or a special school which is not managed by the Council.

6.2 All other support available within the Continuum of Support should have been implemented in mainstream schools before referral to SORG.

6.3 SORG meets regularly throughout the year. Dates for these meetings along with the associated deadlines for referrals are communicated to Headteachers and partner agencies at the start of each school year.

6.4 Referrals to SORG by a Child's Planning Meeting should include the following for consideration:-

- Single Child's Plan (Assessment of wellbeing and outcome of Child's Planning Meeting)
- Individual Education Programme
- Chronology
- Educational Psychology proforma (where appropriate)
- Relevant up-to-date multi-agency reports (from within last 6 months)
- Attendance information
- Any other relevant information provided to or requested by SORG.

6.5 SORG will consider the individual needs of the child or young person and the support strategies required to ensure an appropriate learning and care environment for the child or young person, and determine a suitable placement based on the information submitted, and following the **Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines**.

6.6 SORG will inform parents/carers and schools of its decisions by letter following each meeting following relevant statutory timescales.

6.7 There is no right of appeal against a decision of SORG following consideration of a referral by a Child's Planning Meeting.

## **7 Placing Requests – Consideration by Senior Officer Review Group (SORG)**

7.1 Parents/carers of children with additional support needs, or a young person having additional support needs, may make a placing request to the Council for admission to a school managed by the Council, or a special school not managed by the Council. SORG will consider all placing requests for specialist provision. A placing request can be made at any time, including at points of transition or when other consideration of the child's or young person's needs is being undertaken by the Council.

7.2 The Council will place the child in the school requested (or meet those reasonable fees and other reasonably necessary costs in relation to a special school not managed by the Council) unless a legal 'ground of refusal' exists. If the Council refuses a placing request, it must give a reason why, that complies with education law.

7.3 The 'grounds of refusal' are set out in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. The main 'grounds of refusal' are:-

- The education normally provided at the school is not suited to the age, ability and aptitude of the child or young person.
- The child or young person does not have additional support needs requiring the education or special facilities provided at the school.
- Admitting the child or young person would require the employment of an additional teacher.
- Admitting the child or young person would require spending a lot of money, for example on providing an additional classroom.
- Admitting the child or young person would be seriously detrimental to the child or young person's education or other children and young people' education.
- Admitting the child or young person would require the employment of an additional teacher or the creation of an additional class in the future (primary requests only).
- Admitting the child or young person would prevent the council reserving a place at the school for a child likely to move into the catchment area of the school.
- Admitting the child or young person would mean that the capacity of the school would be exceeded in terms of child or young person numbers.

7.4 Where a placing request is made to a special school not managed by the Council it can be refused if the school is not a public school; the Council can meet the additional support needs of the child in a school other than the requested school and the Council has offered the child a place at that school; and it is not reasonable, considering both the suitability and cost (including necessary incidental expenses) to place the child in the school requested.

7.5 SORG will consider:-

- Single Child's Plan (Assessment of wellbeing and outcome of Child's Planning Meeting)
- Individual Education Programme
- Chronology
- Educational Psychology proforma (where appropriate)
- Relevant up-to-date multi-agency reports (from within last 6 months)
- Attendance information
- Any other relevant information provided to or requested by SORG.

7.6 SORG will consider the individual needs of the child or young person and the support strategies required to ensure an appropriate learning and care environment for the child or

young person, and determine the placing request based on the information submitted, and following the **Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines**.

7.7 SORG will inform parents/carers, or the young person having additional support needs, and schools of its decisions by letter following each meeting within the relevant statutory timescales.

## **8. Alternative Placement**

8.1 If SORG determines that a catchment child (resident within the boundaries of West Lothian) or young person does not require a place in Specialist Provision, or a special school not managed by the Council, the child or young person will be offered a place in a mainstream school according to the **Pre-School Admission, Primary School Admission and Secondary School Admission Policies and Procedures**.

## **9 Placing Requests – Right of Appeal**

9.1 If the Council refuses a placing request there is a right of appeal. Appeals are heard by either the West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee, or the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland. This committee and tribunal are independent of West Lothian Council. The letter informing parents/carers, or the young person having additional support needs, of refusal of their placing request will explain where an appeal should be made.

## **10 Application for Mainstream School Places**

10.1 Not all children and young people considered by SORG are placed in Specialist Provision. For this reason it is necessary to make alternative arrangements for those children who may not be placed in Specialist Provision. This is done by holding a place for every child or young person considered for Specialist Provision in a mainstream school until such time as the requirement for placement in Specialist Provision has been determined following consideration by SORG. This procedure is not an indication that the Council does not consider Specialist Provision appropriate for any given child or young person. It is intended to protect the position of all children and young people and ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged.

10.2 In particular circumstances, children and young people placed in Specialist Provision may also retain a place in a mainstream school where this is appropriate to meeting the needs of the individual child or young person.

10.3 At key transition stages (entry to Pre-School; Pre-School to P1; P7 to S1) the transition process for Specialist Provision will take place at the same time as the transition process for mainstream schools. For this reason, parents/ carers must apply for a place at a mainstream school until placement in Specialist Provision. Once parents/carers have accepted a placement in Specialist Provision, or in a special school not managed by the Council, the mainstream place granted may be withdrawn where appropriate.

10.4 If a child or young person is referred to SORG by the Chair of a Child's Planning Meeting at or close to times of transition, the Chair must advise parents/carers to apply for a place at a mainstream school until placement in Specialist Provision, is confirmed. Once parents/carers have accepted a placement in Specialist Provision, or in a special school not

managed by the Council, the mainstream place granted may be withdrawn where appropriate.

10.5 A parent/carer, or a young person having additional support needs, making a placing request for Specialist Provision should also apply for a place in a mainstream school. If the placing request for Specialist Provision, or in a special school not managed by the Council, is turned down, a delay in applying for a mainstream place may result in less choice of places being available. If a placement in Specialist Provision, or in a special school not managed by the Council, is granted, the mainstream place granted may be withdrawn where appropriate.

10.6 In all cases, the parent/carer should state on the mainstream application form that they are also going through the Specialist Provision admission process.

10.7 Further details of the application process for mainstream pre-school, primary and secondary schools can be found in the **Pre-School Admission, Primary School Admission and Secondary School Admission Policies and Procedures**.

## **11 Review of Placement**

11.1 Once a placement in Specialist Provision or a special school not managed by the Council, has been agreed for a child or young person, the needs of each child or young person are reviewed regularly and links with mainstream schools and services are planned in accordance with child or young person need.

## **12 Oversubscribed Provision**

12.1 Specialist Provisions in West Lothian may be oversubscribed. That means these Provisions receive more referrals than there are places available. In such circumstances the Senior Officer Review Group will prioritise placement according to the **Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines**.

## **13 Reserved Places**

13.1 The council may reserve places for children who will move into the catchment area of each Specialist Provision during the school year, if there are places available after all appropriate catchment children have been admitted (in line with the **Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines**). The number of places reserved will depend on the number of children at each provision, and estimated future demand for places from catchment children.

13.2 The Council can change the number of places reserved due to particular circumstances. For example, if an unusually large number of houses are planned or being built in the catchment area, additional places may be reserved.

## **14 Looked After Children**

14.1 In line with legislation, the Council has additional responsibilities for children who are 'looked after'. A child is 'looked after' if the child is cared for, either at home or away from home, as a result of the decision of a court or a children's hearing, or as a result of a



voluntary agreement between the parent and the Council's Social Work Department. The Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) will take account of these responsibilities in its decision making.

## **15. Proof of Address and Age.**

15.1 The Council may ask for proof of address or for a copy of a child or young person's birth certificate to be submitted.

## **16. Customer Satisfaction**

16.1 The Council welcomes and values the views of parents on the service received. If parents have any views on the service they should contact the Additional Support Needs team. Each school year, the Additional Support Needs team may also ask a few parents to fill in a short questionnaire on their service.

## **17. Useful Contacts and Further Information**

17.1 Details of all Specialist Provision in West Lothian are available on the Council's Website.

17.2 Handbooks which give useful information about Specialist Provision are available from each Provision. The Headteacher will supply a copy on request.

17.3 Further information on admission to Specialist Provision is available from:-

**West Lothian Council** [www.westlothian.gov.uk](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk)

**The Scottish Government** [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

**Enquire** [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)

**Common Ground Mediation** [www.commongroundmediation.co.uk](http://www.commongroundmediation.co.uk)

### **Additional Support Needs**

Telephone: 01506 282634 or 01506 281665  
E-mail: [alison.raeburn@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:alison.raeburn@westlothian.gov.uk) or  
[kathryn.jack@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.jack@westlothian.gov.uk)

### **Public Transport Team (School Transport)**

Telephone: 01506 282322  
E-mail: [publictransport@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:publictransport@westlothian.gov.uk)

### **Pupil Placement (Mainstream School Placements)**

Education Services  
West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
West Lothian  
EH54 6FF  
Telephone: 01506 280000  
E-mail: [pupil.placement@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:pupil.placement@westlothian.gov.uk)

### Placing in Specialist Provision – Policy Guidelines

**In considering admission to Specialist Provision, or a special school not managed by West Lothian Council, the Council takes into account the following:**

- the individual needs of the child or young person and the support strategies required to ensure an appropriate learning and care environment for the child or young person
- the design capacity of the school or class and the accommodation resources at the school or class
- the appropriate maximum class size as defined by legislation, in addition to which regard will be had to the Conditions of Service for Teaching Staff which form part of the Council's contract of employment with an individual teacher
- the need to maintain quality education provision within existing resources

#### **Presumption of Mainstream Education:-**

The Council is required to comply with the presumption that, unless exceptional circumstances exist, children and young people will be educated in a mainstream school. Before making a decision in relation to the educational provision appropriate for a child or young person, the Council will consider the views of the child or young person and the parent/carer. It will also take into account the specific educational requirements and any support needs of the child or young person. In particular, the Council will consider any or all of the following as appropriate:-

- assessed level of requirement for significant additional support to access the curriculum
- evidence of appropriate planning through levels 1-3 of the continuum of support as applied through the Child's Planning process
- assessed level of significant primary speech and/or language disorder requiring intensive speech and language therapy in conjunction with specialist teaching in a language enriched environment with a high adult to child ratio
- assessed level of social and communication needs with or without formal diagnosis
- assessed level of ability to access elements of the mainstream setting for at least part of the education experience
- assessed level of social, emotional and behavioural needs which will be a barrier to learning, and assessed level of additional vulnerabilities
- assessed level of severe additional support needs, and a complex profile including severe learning needs with autism spectrum disorder and/or social communication needs; severe physical and/or significant sensory loss or impairment; and/or challenging behaviour associated with learning and/or communication needs

- assessed level of very severe and complex additional support needs in combination with autism spectrum disorder and/or social communication needs; severe/significant physical/sensory loss or impairment; complex medical/nursing needs; and/or challenging behaviour associated with learning and/or communication needs
- assessed level of complex additional learning needs defined as general delay in learning across the curriculum, with children and young people likely to be working at the early stages of their development of literacy and numeracy skills, usually in combination with autism spectrum disorder and/or social communication needs; and/or significant difficulty in transferring their learning and skills across contexts; and/or a high level of social vulnerability; and/or some level of challenging behaviour associated with their learning needs
- views provided by the child or young person and parent/carer (in the Child's Planning process) and any relevant information submitted
- Where there are more children or young people assessed as having a level of need appropriate to the particular Specialist Provision, the child or young person assessed as having the highest level of need will be allocated the place.
- Those children and young people living within the catchment area of the Specialist Provision (covering the area enclosed by the boundary of West Lothian Council), will have priority over those children and young people living out with that catchment area

**The above are not in any priority order.** The assessed level of need will be the overriding consideration in most cases. It should be noted, however, that the Council has discretion to admit a child or young person to any school in special circumstances as determined by the Council.