ACORN
Assessment Centre

Admissions Policy

Acorn is an Assessment and Intervention Centre in Barnet that caters for pre-school children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). There are 2 sites; one at Queenswell Infant School in Whetstone and one based at Colindale Primary School. Acorn is line managed via Oakleigh School.

The Acorn Queenswell site has one morning and one afternoon group each with a maximum of 8 children and a high ratio of staff.

At Acorn Colindale site there are 4 groups; 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon with a high ratio of staff

Children who come to Acorn have the opportunity to attend five days a week for 3 hour sessions (either in the morning or the afternoon), making up 15 hours of nursery entitlement. Due to high demand for places at Acorn, we encourage parents/carers that children attend all 5 sessions. We will take into account individual family circumstances however; the expectation is that attend for a minimum of 3 sessions a week.

Referral to the Early Years SEND Admissions Panel.

The Panel allocates places in Acorn and Livingstone ASC nursery.

Children are usually already known to services when a referral is made. Referrals can come from Preschool Teacher, BEAM, SENCo's, Specialist Team and Parents/Carers.

Applications will only be considered for children for the year they would start nursery.

A panel made up of an Assistant Head Teacher in charge of Acorn, Assistant Headteacher in charge of Pre-school Teaching Team, Manager of Livingstone Nursery and representatives from BEAM meet once a year to identify children who may need a place and to allocate these places.

Criteria

When a referral is received by the Panel, the child will either be offered a place or placed on the waiting list if they meet the following criteria:

1. Child must live within London Borough of Barnet. Parents may be asked to provide evidence of child's residency in Barnet e.g. address on child benefit award.

2. Entrance needs to be 2 terms prior to starting reception year, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as Safeguarding issues. The Placement will end when the assessment is complete or the child is starting Reception. Acorn children will start Reception from the September of the academic year in which the child turns 5. Children will not be considered for a place in Acorn if they are reception aged but entry to school has been officially deferred.

3. Their early learning and play skills are significantly delayed because of

   - A complex medical or physical condition
   - A diagnosed syndrome or condition
   - Visual or hearing impairment with additional learning difficulties
   - Communication and interaction difficulties, including Autism Spectrum Conditions
   - Severe Global Developmental Delay

4. Priority will be given to children with complex degenerative medical conditions.

5. Nursery 2 children will be given priority and the assessment will be processed as quickly as possible. They will also have priority over younger children on the waiting list.

6. Children who already have a placement in another nursery provision will have lower priority, unless that placement has broken down or is unable to meet their needs with the additional resources available within Barnet.

7. Panel will only consider applications for children who, will be due to be in their first year or second year of nursery.

8. Placement for Acorn will, where possible, be at the setting closest to the child's home.

Facilities

Acorn offers:

- Access to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum which is differentiated to meet children's individual needs.
- Detailed assessments that are regularly reviewed to assess progress
- Small class groups of 8 and a high ration of staff
- High level of expertise amongst the staff in understanding the needs of children with SEND

- Family Support Worker who supports the parents and families in incorporating effective strategies into the home

- Regular meetings for parents to discuss progress

- Workshops for parents to support understanding of the needs of their child

- We have trained staff to support children with medication, gastrostomy feeds, oxygen etc. Where children may require specific medical care, Acorn will liaise with relevant health professionals and ensure that training needed by staff is organised.

- We have an allocated nurse who supports with writing individual Health Care Plans, however they are not based at either Acorn site

- Music Therapy and/or Drama and Movement Therapy

- Specialist equipment and resources, e.g. a hydrotherapy and/or swimming pool, sensory room, soft play area and outdoor play areas

- Augmentative communication systems, such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), objects of reference, Makaton signing, On-Body Signing, communication books and High Technology AACs if deemed appropriate

- Specialist teaching methodologies such as SCERTS, TEACCH and Attention Autism for children with Autism Spectrum Conditions.

- Joint placements with mainstream pre-school settings as appropriate

- Multi-disciplinary intervention and assessment through the following:

    - Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy support provided at the discretion of the North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT).

    - Educational Psychologist assessment and support through the Educational, Health and Care Plan process.

    - Liaison with the consultant community paediatricians, school nursing service, dieticians, wheelchair services

    - Close working practice with specialist teachers for children with Multi-Sensory Impairment, Visual and Hearing Impairment

Additional Information

Funding

When a child takes up an Acorn/Livingstone place, this will count as their full FEE2/FEE3 entitlement. Unless, the child is eligible for 30 hours funding, then your child will be entitled to attend Acorn for a maximum of 15 hours and another nursery setting for the other 15 hours.

If the child is not eligible for 30 hours free funding and parents fund additional hours at another setting, that setting will not be able to request High Needs Funding.

Transport

There is no entitlement to transport when a child is given a place in Acorn/Livingstone. Parents are expected to transport their child and where possible, the place offered will be on the site closest to the family home.

Intervention from other teams

When a child takes up a place in Acorn/Livingstone, they are not entitled to intervention from BEAM or the Pre-school Teaching Team.

Allocation of setting

The panel reserves the right to allocate a place for a child in the most appropriate setting taking into account location and spaces available. Parent's wishes will be considered but it may not always be possible to match parental wishes to place offered.

COVID -19 Addendum

- Due to Covid – 19 it may be necessary to use an online platform to deliver workshops to parents, annual reviews and multi-disciplinary meetings