

Freedom of Information – Response – 26604

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request the following information relating to your SEND service and the processes used when arranging placements for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

1. Policies relating to placement in new or pre-registration special schools.

Please provide any internal policy, protocol, guidance, or operating procedure that covers placement decision-making involving new or pre-registration special schools.

This includes any documents that specify when the Council will or will not: consult with a new special school prior to Ofsted registration, accept a placement “in principle” before Ofsted registration, issue or prioritise consultations during the pre-registration period.

Suffolk County Council (SCC) does not currently hold any internal policy, protocol or procedure that is specific to decision-making for new or pre-registration schools.

Placement decisions, including those relating to development provision are made in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Regulations 2014 and SEND Code of Practice.

Where a school is in the process of pre-registration, decisions are informed on a case-by-case basis using available information about the proposed provision, current contracting arrangements for other schools in the same group, professional advice, and the statutory duties to secure suitable provision.

2. Policies relating to acceptance or refusal of “in-principle” placements.

Please provide any policy, protocol, or internal guidance used by the SEND service that covers the acceptance, refusal, or handling of “in-principle” placements offered by special schools.

This includes any restrictions on accepting such placements prior to Ofsted registration
SCC does not hold a separate policy that sets out criteria for accepting or declining “in-principle” placements.

Any consideration of an in-principal placement is undertaken within the statutory framework for EHC needs assessment and review. Decisions are informed by the child or young person’s identified needs, professional advice and the suitability of appropriate provision.

No additional restrictions or parameters exist outside of these statutory requirements.

3. Policies governing consultation categorisation and prioritisation Please provide the policy or protocol that guides SEND officers on how consultations with special schools are categorised or prioritised, including when a consultation should be marked:

urgent,

standard,

parental preference,

or requiring delay pending additional information.

SCC does not hold a standalone document that categorises or prioritises consultations with special schools as “urgent”, “standard” or “parental preference”, or similar.

All consultations are issued in line with the requirements of the SEND Regulations 2014. Any prioritisation is handled operationally to ensure statutory timescales are met and that all relevant advice is properly considered.

Decision making remains centred on the statutory duty to name suitable provision based on the needs of the child or young person.

4. Policies on placement in new, uninspected, or NRN special schools Please provide any guidance or criteria relating to the use, restriction, or prioritisation of placements in:

new special schools,

schools awaiting Ofsted inspection (NRN or equivalent),

schools rated Requires Improvement,

or any policies restricting placement to Good or Outstanding schools.

SCC does not hold a specific policy that governs placement in new, uninspected or not yet registered special schools. SCC does not place children into schools that are not yet registered.

There are no policies that restrict placements into schools by their Ofsted rating and any decision to stop placements in a school is made on a case-by-case basis.

5. Specialist placement operating protocols Please provide the most recent version of the SEND service's:

“Specialist Placements Operating Protocol”,

“SEND Placement Commissioning Policy”,

or any equivalent internal document used to guide SEND officers in making placement decisions or commissioning specialist provision.

If the document exists under another title, please provide the current applicable version.

SCC does not hold a document titled “*specialist placement operating protocol*” or SEND Placement commission policy”

Placement commissioning and decision-making are undertaken in accordance with the children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of practice and internal operational procedures. These procedures are not consolidated into a single name document.

In addition, the Local Authority needs to follow the overarching linked [procurement-rules](#) . As well as undertake the contract management of these provisions ensuring they meet a minimum standard.