

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

### **Background and rationale**

St Catherine's is a national charity which is approved by the Department for Education to run a non-maintained residential special school for the education of students between the ages of 7 and 19 years who have speech, language and communication needs. Some students also have associated conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger's Syndrome, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Our centre in the heart of Ventnor on the Isle of Wight provides specialist education; intensive speech, language and occupational therapy; excellent residential facilities; and comprehensive vocational training programmes. At St Catherine's we believe that all children and young people with speech, language and communication needs should – and can – fulfil their potential in life. Our approach supports effective learning; builds confidence and self-esteem; and reinforces the importance of providing wide-ranging personal development opportunities.

More details about St Catherine's provision can be found in our prospectus. This policy sets out the ways in which potential students are assessed for their suitability to attend St Catherine's.

We know that the choice parents/carers have to make about their child's future is not an easy one. We appreciate that it is important that parents find the right educational environment which will meet all of their child's particular needs to enable them to reach their full potential in life. We are only too pleased to help in any way we can to enable parents to come to a decision about whether they wish to pursue a place at St Catherine's School or Sixth Form Centre.

Children and young people at St Catherine's usually have a Statement of Special Educational Need/Education, Health and Care Plan which describes their primary need as being speech, language and communication needs. Some students may have other conditions. Applications may be received directly from parents or from local authorities.

### **The admission process**

This involves three stages.

#### Stage 1 – Review of documentation

Prior to visiting, we ask that parents (or their local authority, at parents' request) submit their son/daughter's documentation for review by our evaluation team. Documentation should comprise Statement of Special Educational Needs/Education, Health and Care Plan together with the most recent reports (Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and School Annual Review as appropriate).

#### Stage 2 – Informal visit

If the team thinks that St Catherine's may be a suitable placement, then a parental visit will be arranged. For placements in school, we ordinarily ask that the child does not attend this visit, while for placements in the sixth form we ask that the young person visits with his/her parents.

During the visit, we will discuss the child's needs to make a considered opinion as to whether St Catherine's might be an appropriate placement. We consider whether:

- the child falls within the school's approved range of special educational needs;
- staff feel that the school is able to meet the needs as described; and
- the young person is likely to benefit from attending St Catherine's.

If the responses are positive, then parents can proceed to the next stage.

### Stage 3 – Student interview

This assessment helps us all ascertain whether St Catherine's is right for each particular child and his/her family.

As part of this interview the young person will join their relevant class group and follow the usual timetable. Although no formal testing is carried out, observations will take place in all settings and assessments will be made.

The interview for St Catherine's School is a three-day residential assessment. The interview for the Sixth Form Centre is four days in length. Local children usually attend on a non-residential basis.

For safeguarding purposes it will be necessary to verify the identity of students on interview.

Following the interview, we will inform parents (and the local authority, as appropriate) of the outcome in writing.

### **Further conditions of admission**

Places are offered on a day, weekly boarding or termly boarding basis according to a student's circumstances.

All places are offered subject to confirmation of appropriate funding which, ordinarily, comes from a student's home local authority – although in certain circumstances, places may be funded privately.

All places are also offered on a first term's trial basis. If staff feel that St Catherine's is not able to adequately meet a student's needs as a result of the first term, then parents (and the local authority) will be informed as soon as possible.

The school works in partnership with parents and carers at all times. However, in circumstances which are deemed by the Principal and/or trustees to be exceptional, parents / carers may be required to enter into contractual arrangements prior to a student's placement being confirmed.

All placements will be reviewed annually as part of the Annual Review process.

In circumstances where – in the trustees' view – a placement becomes untenable, a placement may be terminated in line, as appropriate, with any relevant contracts in place.

## **SENDIS Tribunals**

Parents considering a formal tribunal hearing if their local authority does not agree to the placement may find it helpful to contact St Catherine's to discuss their particular circumstances.

## **Students from overseas**

Admissions are welcome from non-British students and, in these cases, the three stage process outlined above is followed. At the informal visit stage, we ask that parents bring their child's original passport for ID purposes. If a place is offered to a student from overseas (and they are not a British citizen or from the European Union or the European Economic Area), we will need assurance that the necessary visa and immigration clearances are in place prior to the placement commencing. We also ask that if parents are based abroad, they provide us with emergency contact details for a relative or friend who lives in the UK. The identity of such persons will need to be verified.

## **Procedures in the event of over-subscriptions for placements**

St Catherine's is registered by the Department for Education for both day student and boarding placements. Once a placement has been offered and funding has been secured, every effort is made to ensure each student's needs are met by their placement in the school or sixth form.

In the very unlikely event that places at St Catherine's are oversubscribed, places will be prioritised on the basis of each individual student's specific needs, circumstances, current placement arrangements, peer group and boarding status.

## **Contact details**

To arrange a visit, for more information or to discuss a child's needs, parents and local authorities should contact St Catherine's Admissions Manager on 01983 852 722 or email [general@stcatherines.org.uk](mailto:general@stcatherines.org.uk)

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