



## Admissions Policy

### 1. Learner profile

Oaks Rise welcomes academically able learners aged from 9 to 16 who need the small, nurturing neuro-affirming environment, and educational approach associated with our specialism in neurodivergence and anxiety. We enroll learners aged 9 to 16 years.

Our learners have been unable to thrive at a mainstream school and have often missed periods of schooling. They typically require a personalised approach to learning and an entirely different, neuro-affirming physical, sensory, social, and emotional approach to a mainstream environment.

Our curriculum is designed to meet the needs of neurodivergent learners for whom one or more of the following statements may apply:

- They have experienced repeated triggering and traumatising experiences when trying to access traditional mainstream settings, resulting in periods of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).
- They may not be attending a school at all or attending on a part-time timetable.
- They may have had some learning at home or in learning centres, through 1:1 tuition.
- They may present with some demand avoidance, due to heightened anxiety.

We aim to provide and maintain a calm and predictable environment within Oaks Rise, enabling anxious learners to feel safe and secure. As a result, we are unable to accept learners who express their anxieties physically.

### 2. Admissions criteria

Potential learners may be offered a place at Oaks Rise if they meet all the following criteria:

- They identify as autistic and may be formally diagnosed.
- Have the academic ability to follow an age-appropriate curriculum in the format offered at Oaks Rise, whilst recognising that many learners will have gaps in their learning and as such may not currently be working at age-related expectations.

- Are considered to be someone who would benefit from attending Oaks Rise and for whose profile of needs the learning, physical, sensory, social and emotional environment are appropriate.
- Are currently able, or will soon be ready, to work in a small group environment and be able to engage, to a degree, in self directed learning.
- Are unlikely to display behaviour at Oaks Rise which would have a detrimental impact on other learners or themselves. This includes children who may attempt to flee when overwhelmed.<sup>1</sup> Where a child or young person (CYP) has previously, or is currently, displaying challenging behaviour, the Admissions Team will consider the following: the extent to which this behaviour is likely to be due to unmet needs; the extent to which the Admissions Team is satisfied that similar behaviour would not occur during a placement at the setting; and the risks associated with the possibility of such behaviour arising at the setting, giving weight to the needs of existing learners.
- Are someone whose attendance would not cause unreasonable detriment to existing

### **3. Personnel involved in the Admissions Assessment Process**

The Admissions Assessment Process is the route through which all applications for places at Oaks Rise are carefully and fairly considered.

The Admissions Team is comprised of one Oaks Rise Director and our Senior Learning Facilitator.

The Admissions Team has responsibility for gathering all relevant information, liaising with the family and, where appropriate, the Local Authority or schools.

### **4. Admissions Assessment Process**

The Admissions Assessment Process commences on receipt of a completed Admissions Expression of Interest form which can be found on the Contact Us page of our website.

Applications are welcome at any time throughout the year.

The Admissions Assessment Process ordinarily follows a staged approach as set out below. A degree of flexibility is maintained in recognition of the individual needs and circumstances of each CYP. Any significant deviation from the standard approach will be carefully considered by the Admissions Team in advance to ensure the process remains fair.

For learners who are currently below nine years of age (i.e., the minimum age of admission) parents / carers may submit an Admissions Expression of Interest form and visit Oaks Rise at any time before their young person's ninth birthday (i.e., Stages One and Two, below). However, we can only accept an Application form (Stage 3) a maximum of two months before the learner's ninth birthday.

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<sup>1</sup> Oaks Rise is based in an open site and as such is suitable for pupils who can manage that environment.

## **Step 1: Admissions Expression of Interest Form & informal conversation**

On receipt of a completed Admissions Expression of Interest form, we will arrange an informal chat on the phone with an Oaks Rise Director. If a parent / carer prefers not to speak via phone we will arrange an alternative means of communication.

## **Step 2: Parent/carer meeting with Education Coordinator**

If there is mutual agreement between the parent / carer and Oaks Rise that our setting may be able to offer the learner the environment they need, we will set up an on-line meeting between the parents / carers and our Education Coordinator. This is an opportunity to learn more about Oaks Rise and specifically, our teaching approach and curriculum. At this stage we would prefer that potential learners are not directly involved in the process because it can be detrimental to show what Oaks Rise has to offer and then decline to provide a place. Learners are encouraged to become directly involved with the Admissions Assessment Process from Step 4 onwards.

## **Step 3: Application Form and supporting documents**

Following the on-line meeting, if parents / carers wish to continue with the Admissions Assessment Process, we ask them to complete an Oaks Rise Application Form.

At this stage we will also ask parents / carers to provide us with copies of all relevant paperwork about the child or young person. This is likely to include, but is not limited to:

- Diagnosis reports
- EHCPs including all annexes
- Professional reports such as speech and language, occupational therapy, educational and / or clinical psychologist, psychiatric reports, paediatric clinician report etc.
- School reports and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
- Any other relevant paperwork that may be helpful to the Admissions Team.

We may also at this stage request the contact details for a referee from a previous or current educational setting. We may request clarification and further information from parents / carers and professionals, as necessary.

If the paperwork indicates that a placement at Oaks Rise is unlikely to be suitable, the Admissions Team will contact parents / carers to explain the reasons.

## **Step 4: Provisional admissions decision and learner meeting**

Should the Admissions Team consider that Oaks Rise may be able to provide the needed environment for the learner, we will arrange for one of our Learning Facilitators to meet the child or young person and a parent / carer informally, preferably on-line, or at the CYP's home or at a mutually agreed off-site location, depending on needs and preferences.

## **Step 5: Formal Decision and offer letter**

Following the meeting between the CYP and Oaks Rise Learning Facilitator, if the Admissions Team considers that the learner will be a good fit with Oaks Rise, and the learner and parents / carers wish to proceed, a formal offer of a place at Oaks Rise will be issued, subject to the outcome of taster days. This is providing that no significant new information has come to light. A fee is £150 is requested at this stage to contribute towards the costs of the transition process.

## **Step 6: Home Visit**

As part of the transition process, if required, a home visit, or meeting in a neutral place such as a park, will be arranged with a Learning Facilitator. This is an opportunity for the learner to meet Oaks Rise staff, begin to form trusting relationships, and discuss their interests, goals, and worries about joining Oaks Rise. It is also an opportunity for the learner to learn more about Oaks Rise.

## **Step 7: Taster Sessions**

The learner will then be invited to attend at least two taster session at Oaks Rise. The nature and duration of these taster sessions will depend on the needs of the learner and Oaks Rise appreciates the need for maximum flexibility and time. Taster sessions may consist of the learner attending our setting for just a few minutes or an hour. Parents / carers are welcome to stay with their child / young person for as long as is needed. Taster sessions will help Oaks Rise identify in more detail the new learner's needs. Oaks Rise reserves the right to discontinue the admissions process at this point if we consider that we are not a suitable provision.

## **Step 8: Transition Plan and Formal Parent Agreement**

Following the taster sessions, should all parties wish to proceed with the process, a signed copy of the Oaks Rise Parent Agreement must be returned to Oaks Rise.

A detailed, bespoke transition plan will then be developed. The nature and speed of the transition will depend on the learner's needs. An overarching Transition Policy is available on request.

**OAKS RISE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO RELINQUISH THE OFFER OF A PLACE AT ANY POINT DURING THE ADMISSIONS AND TRANSITION PROCESS**

This policy will be reviewed and updated as required and no later than August 2025