



Admissions Policy & Guidance 2026-2027

Lighthouse School, Harrogate

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1. Aims

This policy and guidance aims to ensure that parents, carers and young people:

- understand the Lighthouse School, Harrogate Admissions Policy,
- know the key legislation and statutory guidance that applies,
- have all the information they need to make informed decisions about the appropriate setting to meet the students' needs.

2. Policy

Lighthouse School, Harrogate is a Specialist Free School for students aged 11–19 with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and either a formal diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), or who are on the pathway for assessment for an autism diagnosis. Please note, an EHC plan is a legal requirement for students to attend special schools except in very exceptional cases where there is a change in the student's circumstances or for the purposes of an assessment placement. In both scenarios, this must be agreed by the Local Authority (LA), the Principal and the parent/student (SEND Code of Practice January 2015, paragraphs 1.29 – 1.30).

Lighthouse School, Harrogate is designed for students who are able to access a KS3, KS4 or KS5 level curriculum at or around their corresponding age-related expectations. This reflects the school's curriculum model, which is built around group teaching and designed to support students to achieve formal qualifications and positive destinations.

Following consultation with Lighthouse School, Harrogate, the student's LA must fulfil its statutory obligations before naming Lighthouse School, Harrogate in section I of their EHC Plan.

The Lighthouse School, Harrogate SEN Information Report and the Admissions Guidance set out in section 4 explain the profile of the school and the needs of our students; for whom Lighthouse School, Harrogate is best able to provide. It includes details about the school and the curriculum offer.

In addition to a diagnosis of autism, or being on a pathway for assessment for an autism diagnosis, students may have additional needs related to:

- Language and Communication,
- Sensory impairments,
- Social, emotional and personal care needs.

Parents, carers and professionals are encouraged to contact the school to gain further information about the provision we offer. Prospective Parents' events and professional open days are scheduled throughout the year; details of the next available event can be obtained by contacting the school and are updated regularly on the school website. We ask that you contact the school before visiting. Due to the needs of our students, we limit the number of visitors in school to support a calm learning environment and reduce anxiety.

Please contact us via email: admin@lighthouseschoolharrogate.co.uk

You can also register your interest by completing our online form on the school website.

3. Legislation & statutory guidance

3.1 Students with an EHC plan

- SEND Code of Practice (COP) January 2015 paragraphs 9.78 – 9.87: Requests for a particular school, college or other institution.
- Children & Families Act 2014 (CFA) section 38(2)(b)(ii): request the LA names a particular school within the EHC plan.
- CFA section 39(2)(a): the LA must consult the governing/trustee body, proprietor or principal of the school.
- COP 9.173 – 9.176: Reviews where a child or young person attends a school or other institution.
- COP 9.177: Reviews where a child or young person does not attend a school or other institution.
- COP 9.179: Transfer between phases of education.
- COP 9.196: Timescale to finalise the EHC plan following an annual review.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Regulations 2014, Reg 18(1)(b): Phase transfer duty to finalise by 15th February.

3.2 Students not in receipt of an EHC plan

- COP 1.29 – 1.30: Exceptional circumstances in which students can be placed in special schools without an EHC plan.
- COP 6.44 – 6.55: SEN Support in schools (assess, plan, do, review).
- COP 9.11 – 9.19: Considering whether an EHC needs assessment is necessary.
- CFA Section 36(1) & section 36(8): request EHC needs assessment, LA must make a decision within 6 weeks of request.
- COP 9.39 – 9.44: Timescales for EHC needs assessment & preparation of an EHC plan.

4. Admissions guidance

4.1 Students with an EHC plan

If you are considering a change of placement, you should always discuss this with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) at your current school and/or your SEN Casework Officer (CO) in the first instance. Any decision to change placement should be considered carefully alongside expert advice with the views of the student at the centre of these discussions.

If following careful consideration, you still wish to request a change of placement, you need to ask the school, or CO to convene an annual review of the EHC plan. This will ensure that the plan accurately reflects the students' needs prior to being shared with potential new schools. The school will need time to prepare information prior to the review meeting, and you should receive this information two weeks prior to the meeting. Ideally, you should know which school you are requesting before the meeting so this can be included in the annual review report that the school will submit to your LA. However, your school preference can be updated at a later date if necessary.

Once your LA receives the annual review report, they will have four weeks from the date of the review meeting to notify you of the action they intend to take based on the information within the report. The LA will then consult the school of your choice, and the school will have 15 calendar days to respond to the consultation. However the school responds to the consultation, it is ultimately the LA's decision whether the school of your choice is named in section I of the EHC plan. The LA must then issue a final EHC plan 8 weeks after they notify you of their decision following the annual review meeting (COP paragraphs 9.176 & 9.196).

Phase transfer (Year 6 to 7)

When considering a secondary school for a child with an EHCP, parents and carers are advised to begin visiting potential schools during the summer term of Year 5. This allows time to make an informed preference early in the autumn term of Year 6.

In accordance with the SEND Regulations 2014 [Regulation 18(1)(b)], the Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to name the child's secondary placement in Section I of the EHCP by 15th February in the calendar year of transfer.

To facilitate this, the child's primary school — or the named Case Officer if the child is Electively Home Educated (EHE) — must convene an annual review during the Autumn Term of Year 6. This review enables the LA to consider the recommendations, consult with the preferred school, make a placement decision, and issue a final amended EHCP naming the secondary setting by the statutory deadline.

North Yorkshire Council endeavours to consider all phase transfer requests, including those from other local authorities, in a fair and equitable manner. Parents and carers should liaise with their SEN Casework Officer for information on North Yorkshire's placement panel timing. No placement decisions will be issued before the relevant panel has met.

What kind of students do we admit?

Lighthouse School, Harrogate is a specialist provision for autistic students aged 11–19 who are able to access a KS3, KS4 or KS5 level curriculum at or around their corresponding age-related expectations. Students will have either a formal diagnosis of autism or be on the pathway for assessment for an autism diagnosis.

The school's curriculum is delivered via group teaching, with a class lead and supporting teaching assistants, depending on the needs of the group. Students will have the opportunity to pursue a range of qualifications. It is therefore essential that students can engage effectively in a group teaching environment and demonstrate the potential to achieve formal qualifications. Year 7 students' academic levels are expected to be at or around age-related expectations.

4.2 Students not in receipt of an EHC plan

If you are considering a specialist placement and your child does not have an EHC plan, you need to discuss this with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) at your current school in the first instance. Specialist placements are only allocated to students in receipt of an EHC plan except in very exceptional cases where an LA may decide that the student requires an assessment placement or there is a significant change in the student's circumstances (COP paragraphs 1.29–1.30).

Anyone can make an application for an EHC needs assessment; however you should always discuss the application with the SENDCO before doing so as they will be able to advise you as to how your child's needs are being met and whether

they believe an application for an EHC needs assessment would be successful. If your child is EHE, then you will need to discuss this with the CO for your LA.

SEN Support

Where a child is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the student's needs and the provision that supports the student to make good progress and secure good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach, it is also referred to as the assess, plan, do, review cycle. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of the student.

There is detailed guidance regarding SEN Support in schools and the graduated approach within COP paragraphs 6.44–6.55.

Requesting an EHC needs assessment

The LA will only agree to complete an EHC needs assessment if there is evidence that the school has taken relevant and purposeful action (the graduated approach / assess, plan, do, review cycle) to identify, assess and meet the student's special educational needs and they have not made expected progress.

The LA must notify you whether or not they will complete an EHC needs assessment within 6 weeks of your request. The flowchart in Appendix 1 sets out the statutory timescales that apply to the EHC needs assessment process and your right to request that a particular school is named in section I of the EHC plan should this be the outcome of the assessment.

4.3 Lighthouse School, Harrogate Consultation Process

When Lighthouse School, Harrogate receives a consultation from a Local Authority under Section 39 of the Children and Families Act 2014, the school will:

- Review the student's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and any accompanying documents (e.g. Annual Review paperwork, reports from professionals).
- Consider whether the student's needs can be met effectively in the context of Lighthouse School, Harrogate's cohort, curriculum, staffing model and available resources.
- Consider whether the student is able to access a KS3, KS4 or KS5 level curriculum at or around their corresponding age-related expectations, consistent with the school's approved Statement of Provision.
- Determine whether placement would be compatible with the efficient education of other students and the efficient use of resources.
- Consult with internal staff (e.g. SENDCO, class teams, therapists) and, if needed, request additional information from the Local Authority and current named school; this could include arranging a meeting, observation and a visit to the setting.
- Respond to the Local Authority within the statutory 15 calendar days, providing either:
 - o Confirmation that the school can meet need and that the placement is suitable.
 - o A formal response explaining why the school cannot meet the needs of the student, with reference to Section 39(4) of the Children and Families Act 2014.

If the school deems that Lighthouse School, Harrogate could not meet need, the school's reasons will be documented and shared with the Local Authority. The final decision on placement rests with the Local Authority, who must issue a Final EHCP with the named school.

5. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principal of Lighthouse School, Harrogate. At every review, it will be approved by the full Trustee body.

Appendix 1: Flowchart outlining the consultation process:

