

Parent Information Guide

In response to parental enquiries and requests for information regarding children and young people moving on from Horizons Academy Bexley, please find below frequently asked questions which we hope will explain the next steps in your child's education.

Q. Why has my child been referred to Horizons Academy?

Horizons Academy Bexley is commissioned by the London Borough of Bexley to provide short term education to children and young people permanently excluded from mainstream school. Our aim is to provide quality education, intervention and support to prepare our students for transfer to a new mainstream school.

Q. My child has settled well at Horizons, why can't they stay there?

Whilst we provide full time curriculum to our students, we are unable to offer permanent places or accept parental requests through the casual admission process. Horizons Academy is not a mainstream school or specialist school provision and therefore unable to accept permanent students to our roll. Horizons Academy is a short stay alternative provision which means we are unable to provide long term support to children permanently excluded from school.

Q. My child has done really well on placement, what happens if they go to a new school and it all goes wrong?

All students returning to mainstream school receive reintegration support in the new school setting. This ensures all positive strategies and interventions established at Horizons Academy follow the child to maximise reintegration success. Reintegration support is provided for 12 weeks and students begin to build relationships with reintegration officers during their placement at Horizons Academy. This ensures before the placement begins the student has already built a positive relationship with the member of staff who will be helping them transfer.

Q. Who decides which school my child transfers to?

All children permanently excluded from school are referred to the local authority Fair Access Panel. This panel includes Head Teachers from all primary and secondary schools across the London Borough of Bexley. The panel discuss which school can best meet the needs of the student presented.

Members of Horizons Academy attend the panel and present the students strengths, difficulties and learning needs. The school that can best meet the needs

of the student offers a place and contacts the parent directly to arrange a meeting.

Q. What happens if the Fair Access Panel does not offer a place?

Occasionally Head Teachers may feel their school cannot accommodate a new student within the year group. Where no offer is made at Panel, the local authority will direct a school to take the student. Direction is a legal process which can take up to 12 weeks to complete. In this event the student will remain at Horizons Academy until the legal process has completed.

Q. What if I don't like the school that is offered?

Parents have the legal right to apply and appeal through the local authority casual admission process for a school of their choice. Often popular schools are oversubscribed and in this event schools can decline a parental application. In this event parents can appeal the decision and will need to prove to an appeals panel why a place at that particular school would meet the needs of their child above any other school in the borough.

The Fair Access Panel can legally offer school places above the over subscription number. This means our students are often offered school places that parents applying directly through casual admission would otherwise be declined.

Under Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 local authorities are under a duty to identify children not receiving an education. If parents refuse the school place offered through FAP and have not successfully secured a school place through the casual admission process, they will be referred to the local authority Children Missing Education Panel.

The Education Act 1996 states parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive an education. The local authority must offer a school place, but are not obliged to offer the specific school preferred by a parent. In the event a child is referred to the Children Missing Education Panel, a legal process called a School Attendance Order may begin. This process will legally compel parents to accept the place offered through FAP or to provide a suitable alternative.

Q. Why can't I request a specific school?

Parents have the legal right to apply to the school of their choice directly at any time. The local authority can inform parents of schools with available places within the year group and will assist parents with in year casual admission applications. Where a school declines an application, a parent can appeal the decision as part of the legal process. Parents can express a preference of a particular school through the Fair Access process but this is not guaranteed and there is no appeal opportunity. If a specific school is desired, parents should submit an in year casual

admission application as soon as their child transfers to Horizons Academy to allow time for the admission process to complete.

Q. When will my child's place finish at Horizons Academy?

Students remain at Horizons Academy until a school place is offered through the Fair Access Panel. This can be at any stage usually for a maximum of 14 weeks.

When a school place is offered through FAP a letter will be sent to parents advising them of the date their child's place at Horizons Academy will end. This is usually at the same time the place at the new school begins. Where a parent has refused the school place allocated through FAP and has not secured an alternative school place, the date will usually be the end of the current term. In these instances a referral will be made by Horizons Academy to the local authority who will contact the parent directly to discuss the legal process as mentioned above.

Q Where can I go to find out more information?

You can contact the following departments at the London Borough of Bexley on 0208 303 7777;

- **In Year Primary and Secondary Admission-** *to apply and appeal for a casual admission place to a specific school,*
- **Inclusion Team** – *to discuss FAP placements, elective home education and receive exclusion advice and support,*
- **SEN Team-** *to enquire about applications for Education Health Care Plans or to request support for children with specific difficulties such as ASD and ADHD.*

There are also national agencies that can provide impartial advice to parents;

- Child Law Centre: childlawadvice.org.uk
- Coram Children's Legal Centre: www.coram.org.uk
- Department for Education: www.gov.uk/government

For further information please contact:

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Horizons Academy Bexley

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