



## Admissions and Appeals

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**Discovery Special Academy** is part of Tees Valley Education Multi Academy Trust (TVED MAT) and is a Special Free School. When the purpose built academy is complete, it will have a maximum capacity of 84 children aged 4yrs through to 11yrs (Reception to Year 6). The academy opened in temporary accommodation in September 2018 and is located in the borough of Middlesbrough. TVED Trust Board, therefore, has agreed that all pupil admissions to the academy will follow the Middlesbrough Local Authority (LA) SEND admission protocol, including referrals from other LA's who have commissioned places.

All children enrolled at Discovery Special Academy will have a EHCP. For a pupil to be admitted to Discovery Special Academy, the academy must be named by the pupil's 'home' Local Authority (LA) in Section I of the their final EHCP. Some exceptions apply to this general rule (see section below on assessment places).

The EHCP must identify a pupil's main presenting needs as learning difficulties; moderate or severe, alongside any other communication difficulties, physical, sensory and medical needs (refer to the SEN Information report on how the Academy meets individual pupil need).

Consideration will need to be given to available places within the key stage and the needs and dynamics of any class group that may be impacted by the admission.

Before a child starts at Discovery Special Academy, we would aim to complete the following procedures:-

- Receive written information outlining the child's special educational needs, safeguarding concerns and other relevant history.
- Liaise with the family and relevant professionals involved, to gain expert advice on the child's needs.
- Visit the child in their current setting (providing this is possible).
- Attend any case reviews or meetings at the child's current educational setting where decisions on future placements will be discussed.
- Discuss our range of provision with parents/carers so they can make an informed decision on placement.
- Secure all relevant resources in writing prior to admission (this is usually a banding descriptor and funding amount identified by agreement between the School and LA).
- Secure a home visit by the school nurse and/or SEND Inclusion Officer to identify any medical needs or additional requirements so a detailed care plan is in place on the first day of enrolment.
- Provide several opportunities for the child to visit school (with support if necessary) to aid transition into Discovery Special Academy.
- Parents will have received a Discovery Special Academy welcome pack and signed and returned the terms and conditions of accepting a place at the school, which includes supporting all school policies.

We place a significant amount time and resources in ensuring our children have the best possible start at Discovery Special Academy, and that parents/carers are reassured their child's needs will be fully supported from the outset.

TVED MAT works collaboratively with Middlesbrough LA and follows the SEND admissions protocols as specified by Middlesbrough LA. All applications for placement at the Discovery Special Academy must be made in writing to both Discovery Special Academy and to Middlesbrough LA. Applications will be formally considered at twice yearly placement panel meetings and decisions will be recorded. Panel meetings are held at key points within the academic year, to ensure admissions deadlines are met in line with the Code of Practice and key transition phases, this also allows parents sufficient time to appeal to the First Tier Tribunal (SENDIST), if necessary. Panel meetings are chaired by a Senior Officer of Middlesbrough LA with special school and special unit representatives in attendance. Admissions will only be arranged by prior agreement between the Head Teacher of Discovery Special Academy and the LA, and will, as standard procedure, involve a comprehensive set of pupil information (reports dated within 12 months), including a current EHCP.

A series of pupil observations, ideally in the child's current educational setting, will be undertaken by staff from the Discovery Special Academy as part of this process. The Head Teacher reserves the right to decline placement if the school is not considered the most appropriate placement in meeting the child's special educational needs and will state the reason(s) for declining. However, the final decision on the school to be named in an EHCP rests with the Local Authority. Whilst disputes between Schools and LAs on SEND admissions are rare, there is a right to refer cases to be considered by the Secretary of State for Education if an agreement cannot be reached.

Whilst the majority of pupils that are considered at LA placement panel will require a September start date, TVED acknowledges that for some children, they may need to be placed mid-year. TVED will consider such admission requests from LA's subject to a place being available in the required year group.

Parents wishing to apply for a place at Discovery Special Academy should, in the first instance, contact the SEND Team of their 'home' Local Authority, as applications cannot be considered without the support of the pupil's 'home' LA. For parents who are unsure of which LA they reside in, a Local Authority Council Tax bill will indicate which Authority you reside within. The LA must be in agreement to name the school in the child's EHCP (subject to the availability of places). All referrals should then be sent to Middlesbrough LA 0-25 SEND Team.

## **REQUEST FOR PLACES ON ASSESSMENT**

Very rarely, and only in exceptional circumstances where a LA makes a formal written request, would Discovery Special Academy consider providing an assessment place whilst a child is undergoing EHC assessment. In these circumstances, supporting documentation from a range of professionals would be required to allow the trust board and CEO / Head Teacher to make an informed decision. The school will only go over the agreed capacity if directly instructed to do so by the Secretary of State for Education. In very rare and exceptional circumstances, LAs may ask special schools to place children without an EHCP for a limited period of time in order to assess their needs. Such placements are only made following direct approval of the Head Teacher and should not last for more than 20 weeks. The ESFA does not fund additional

places that have not been accounted for in the autumn commissioning round, therefore if LAs have already taken up their total allocation of commissioned places to capacity, they must agree to fund assessment placements in their entirety, i.e High Needs Funding elements 1, 2 & 3 (as outlined in the ESFA HNF Guidance tool [www.GOV.UK](http://www.GOV.UK)).

## **LOCATION**

Discovery Special Academy is located in the borough of Middlesbrough, and on the boundary of Redcar & Cleveland.

While the new purpose built Discovery Special Academy is awaiting construction, the school will be based in temporary accommodation (until the 2021-22 academic year) on land located at:

Brambles Primary Academy  
Kedward Avenue  
Middlesbrough  
TS3 9DB

## **SEND POLICY**

Please refer to the TVED SEND policy (<http://www.discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk/>)

## **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

Parents/carers and pupils have a right of appeal to the First Tier Tribunal – SENDIST (Special Needs and Disability Tribunal) against certain decisions made by the LA. For example, a decision of a LA not initiating a full EHC assessment; or, not to make an EHCP following assessment and, about the content in certain parts of an EHCP, including the school or other setting named in the EHCP (Section I) or the type of school or setting and provision a child will need (Section F). Further details can be found in the TVED SEND Policy and at <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability>

## **TRANSPORT**

Parents/carers are reminded that LA pupil transport may not automatically be granted and Discovery staff are unable to influence decisions regarding pupil eligibility for LA transport. This will be an important factor if you are considering asking your LA to place your child at Discovery and you may have difficulty getting them to school. The statutory guidance for Home to School transport can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>.

Most Local Authorities also publish their own Local Transport Policy, you can check this on your Local Authority website by searching home to school transport. Middlesbrough LA and

Redcar & Cleveland LA require a Transport referral and risk assessment form to be completed for each new transport request (this includes transition from one setting to another).

### **ATTENDANCE**

Unless there are exceptional reasons for non-attendance, all children are expected to attend Discovery Special Academy each day and on time. Please refer to the TVED Attendance Policy (<http://www.discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk/>).

### **OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER**

Children's needs can change significantly throughout their learning journey. It is important to note that if there is a significant change in a child's needs, the school may ask for an early review of the EHCP, this is sometimes known as an Interim Review. The school will always invite the parent/carer, an officer from the LA and other professionals involved with the child. We will always give at least 3 weeks' notice of the meeting being held. There may be several outcomes following an interim review; it may result in a request for the LA to review the allocated funding band (this could be higher or lower) or there may be a need to consider the suitability of the placement. The school will always provide detailed evidence in report format to demonstrate what is being asked for and why. Discovery Special Academy will always consult with parents and the child's respective LA if this is deemed necessary, and sufficient notice will be given to the LA (1 full term) before a variation to a banding descriptor is made.

### **CONTACTS AND ARRANGING VISITS TO DISCOVERY SPECIAL ACADEMY**

We are extremely proud of the provision our academy offers and welcome the opportunity to show this to visitors. For further information on our school, arranging a visit, and the process for obtaining a place please contact the Head Teacher, Jennifer Duncan on 01642 248333. We also update the academy website regularly with news items and a photo gallery.

[www.discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk](http://www.discoveryspecialacademy.org.uk)

Next review date: August 2020