Marchbank Free School Admissions 2026-2027

The annual admission round in September each year is co-ordinated by Darlington Borough Council's Admissions Department.

The school works in partnership with local authorities and parents / carers to assess the suitability of pupils for a place at the school.

Once a referral has been received from a LA, the paperwork is assessed by the senior leadership team. A designated member of staff will arrange to observe the student in either their current school and/or in the home setting. Parents/carers will then be invited in for an admissions interview. Following this meeting and assessment, in most cases, the senior leadership team will be able to make a final decision.

If Marchbank Free School is able to meet the child's special educational needs, a formal offer of a place and a start date will be sent to the LA and parent/carer. When the LA confirms that the offer of a place is going to be taken up, the school will send contracts to the LA. The pre-placement process typically consist of:

A member of the senior leadership team meeting with parents / carers to obtain up to date information, including but not exclusive to the following areas:

- Previous placement attendance
- Behaviour
- Academic ability
- Religious and cultural needs
- Parents' aspirations for the future / what they want the school to do • Current multi-agency involvement
- Family organisation.

In most cases, pupils are encouraged to attend the first part of the admissions interview and, where applicable, having the chance to talk about themselves and their schooling. The pupil would then be accompanied by a member of the staff team and join a class, tour the school or play in the playground, thus enabling the school to begin to assess how they respond to their environment and peers. Whilst this is a recommended format, it may be adjusted according to individuals.

A member of the senior leadership team will meet with the child's mainstream school to gather information, including;

- Whether the child is looked after and, if so, the name of the contact person and key personnel in the placing authority;
- Statement of Educational Needs/Record of Need;
- Current care, health, educational plans or relevant personal needs, if available;

- Details of any matter which makes the child particularly vulnerable or a danger to others;
- Attendance;
- Details of any fixed term exclusions;
- Lead person details if Early Help is in place;
- End of Key Stage Teacher Assessments

Marchbank Free School must agree to being named in a student's final Education, Health and Care Plan, except where they feel the following conditions may apply:

- The school cannot meet the child's SEN
- The placement would be an inefficient use of resources,
- The placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child will be educated
- The school must also be satisfied that the parents / carers of the child are supportive of the placement.

The school will send out an admissions pack which will include information about the school for both parents and student. All children undergo annual reviews as laid down by the SEN Code of Practice. Although parents can indicate to their local authority the school of preference to be named in a child's EHCP, the authority may not agree with the placement identified. In such circumstances parents have the right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEN & Disability).

Marchbank Free School is unable to offer places to families who wish to independently fund the placement. All decisions relating to the proposed placement of any individual are confidential. There will be open and regular communication with relatives, carers and advocates, which acknowledge and respect the needs of each user. The school will liaise with the local authority to ensure they are kept up to date. Transition plans will be made with the LA, the current school placement and the parent/carer. Transitions are often difficult for children who have SEMH. It will be essential to consider mechanisms/strategies that may make the process easier for the child.

More information can be found on the Darlington Borough Council's Admissions Department website Parents or carers seeking a place in our school outside of the September admissions round should contact the school direct on the number shown below. We are extremely keen to talk with any parents or carers who may be considering seeking a place for your child at our school.

If after visiting our website you require any further information or wish to arrange an appointment to visit the school please contact: -

SEND Admissions Officer: Rachel Leadbetter rleadbetter@educationvillage.org.uk

Marchbank Free School
Mowden Hall
Barnes Road
Darlington
DL3 9BL
Telephone: 01325 254670