Admissions Policy

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Related Documents:	ICT Acceptable Use Agreement The School Admissions Code September 2021

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1. Purpose

This policy formalises that RBAir seeks to clarify its 'target group' of learners, to ensure that all learners admitted will benefit from placement and allow/enable other learners to progress academically and personally.

2. Scope

The RBAir Admissions Panel consists of the Assistant Head (Provision Lead), the SENDCo, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Lead Mentor and our Admissions Officers, who are jointly responsible for ensuring that all potential commissioning agents, parents / carers of prospective learners and the learners themselves understand the requirements for admission and continued attendance.

3. Policy statement, provision and safeguards

RBAir is a specialist setting offering a hybrid of online and face-to-face support for learners who are either not attending school (mainstream or other) or finding continued attendance at school damaging to their mental health.

RBAir provides for learners studying at KS3 and KS4. RBAir may admit learners who are chronologically outside those key stages, but whose needs are best met by studying at either of these levels (e.g. a year 12 learner who has missed a significant amount of their secondary education and needs to gain accreditation at GCSE level). However, all learners must be a minimum age of 11 (in Y7) and a maximum age of 18 on admission (RBAir also runs a Post-16 Programme).

Admission may be sought by a commissioning agent, most frequently a school or a local authority.

Our expectations are that any learner referred to RBAir will:

- want to attend RBAir;
- have a commitment to learning;
- acknowledge the needs and rights of other members of the community and their own responsibilities in ensuring those rights are met.

Additionally, all learners must complete the mandatory six-week course on Online Safety, as referenced in RBET's Online Safety Policy (see section 'Educating learners about online safety'). If a learner does not complete the course or is unwilling to complete the course, the placement with RBAir will be terminated.

RBAir seeks to offer an environment, both in-centre and online, within which learners can study successfully, and develop self-efficacy, a provision in which they feel physically and emotionally safe at all times. All learners working with other young people must be able to contribute positively to the working environment, or, at the very least, not actively damage the learning or personal development of their peers.

4. The SEN Code of Practice

Under the SEN Code of Practice, if a local authority consults with RBAir regarding a learner with an EHCP, RBAir is not presently required to offer them a place, especially if:

- it would be unsuitable for the learner's age, ability, aptitude or needs;
- the learner's attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

5. Admissions criteria

Due to the highly individual nature of the provision at RBAir it is not considered appropriate to have blanket admissions criteria - each learner should be viewed as an individual and assessed for suitability as such. It is extremely important that the admissions process should be open-minded, fair and non-judgmental.

However, there are particular 'red flags' when reading a learner's paperwork that would mean that a place would usually be declined, e.g. on the basis of the second criteria above - that their attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.

These red flags include:

- Persistent, or extreme, physically aggressive behaviour.
- Persistent bullying of peers (where previous intervention has failed to prevent this).
- Persistent and regular tendency to abscond (as we are not a secure site).
- Safeguarding issues which indicate that the learner is not able to work safely from the home.

It is important that RBAir does not unfairly discriminate against learners and therefore the above criteria are put in place purely because of the vulnerable nature of our learners. Our learners, who have often experienced trauma, abuse or bullying in the past, would be further traumatised by exposure to the above and therefore the education of these learners would be incompatible with the efficient nature of our other learners.

An important caveat to the above criteria is where a learner has demonstrated aggressive behaviour in the past only when highly stressed, for example, when in an unsuitable mainstream environment and when placed in an untenable situation for them. Many of our learners have found themselves in situations prior to joining RBAir where aggressive behaviour has felt like the only way they were able to communicate their extreme distress and this should not be seen as grounds for unsuitability.

There are also occasions when a learner referral is deemed to be inappropriate and we may advise that the learners' needs could be better met elsewhere. This includes where the learner's primary need is not a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need - for example a learner with moderate learning difficulties but no SEMH needs.

6. Admissions process

Referrals at RBAir are received and processed according to the following initial procedure. The average time that this process takes is up to 6 weeks.

- Referral is received from a school, RB Centre, or the local authority SEN team accompanied by all relevant documentation.

- Referral is screened by means of an initial review of paperwork for obvious examples of unsuitability as described above - unsuitable referrals are declined at this point.

- All referrals are discussed at a regular Admissions Panel meetings.

- Referral is assessed by SENDCo, Designated Safeguarding Lead and Lead Mentor for suitability and potential for RBAir to meet needs.

- Referral and feedback discussed at Admissions Panel level to make final decision.

- If a referral is regarded as unsuitable, the Admissions Officer will feedback to the commissioner with an explanation.

- If the Admissions Panel considers RBAir can meet needs, Subject Leads are contacted for staff availability to gauge a potential start date.

- Admissions Officers visit the home to carry out an Initial Assessment.

The Initial Assessment is a detailed questionnaire covering areas such as mental and physical health, home life and behaviour. It is carried out with the young person's parent(s)/carer(s). The Admissions Officers will meet the young person and ask them whether they know about RBAir's provision and whether they wish to engage with it.

If the young person indicates that they do not wish to engage with RBAir, we will not proceed any further. If the young person is unable to meet the Admissions Officers in person, another attempt will be made but further refusal may result in RBAir ending the process: this would signal that the young person is not yet ready to engage with our provision.

- The Initial Assessment is shared with the members of the Admissions Panel for Panel to consider.
- If an agreement is made to proceed, costings are completed and submitted. Staffing explored. Finance create PO.
- Once costings have been agreed, an Admissions Officer visits the home to carry out a laptop induction and completion of any outstanding paperwork. A timetable request is made, learner details are added to Arbor.
- Starting date is confirmed to all parties once PO has been received.

7. Unsuccessful referrals

If a referral made to Red Balloon of the Air is unsuccessful, an explanation will be communicated by RBAir to the commissioner. If RBAir visited the home to carry out an Initial Assessment, one of our Admissions Officers will also explain the decision to the parent(s)/carer(s).

RBAir hopes that no parent/carer/young person or commissioner have cause to complain about our admissions process; our decisions are carefully considered and communicated. However, if there are concerns, we advise that these are raised with the Admissions Officer in the first instance. If the complainant feels that there has been discrimination, of any form, RBAir's Complaint Policy and Procedure should be followed.

8. Laptop induction

After an offer is made and accepted, an Admissions Officer visits the learner's home to carry out a laptop induction with them. The parent/carer is asked to be present so that all information can simultaneously be conveyed to them.

Learners are loaned a RBAir laptop. Every RBAir device is configured to ensure that all users are safe. Smoothwall is installed on all RBAir devices to ensure robust monitoring and filtering is in place to block inappropriate content and detect potential threats.

Smoothwall's monitoring and filtering system is explained to both learners and parents/carers as part of the laptop induction, explaining that every keystroke is monitored and that alerts are sent to the Safeguarding Team where inappropriate language or behaviour is detected. The alert is automatically logged in our safeguarding software CPOMS. Smoothwall is also highlighted within the learner's Welcome Letter, and a link to the content of the course is included in the parent/carer's Welcome Letter.

All learners and parents/carers are expected to sign an ICT Acceptable Use Agreement, which covers acceptable use in more detail. A placement cannot begin without a signed agreement in place.

9. Transition arrangements and initial trial period

Once a learner starts attending RBAir, there is a minimum 6-week 'settling in' period where there is the opportunity to assess more thoroughly whether we are able to meet their needs. Some learners' needs have not been accurately assessed or documented - and some learners present very different needs in the RBAir environment in comparison to their previous environment. All learners will receive individualised sessions for the first 6 weeks to enable closer assessment of needs and the building of initial relationships with staff.

The Link Mentor coordinates input into a 'Settling-In Review' during the first six weeks, with all relevant staff members contributing their thoughts, experiences and useful/unproductive strategies they have found for that learner.

Having considered every relevant staff member's contribution and experience with the learner, RBAir will evaluate whether our provision is suitable to enable the learner to progress. This may mean adaptations to the timetable or the application of specific strategies. The Link Mentor and SENDCo may recommend a range of strategies to enable the learner to access the provision. There may be an extension to the six-week review period to evaluate the efficacy of these strategies upon the learner's ability to engage with RBAir provision.

At the end of the review period, the Link Mentor, SENDCo and Assistant Head (Provision Lead) decide whether it is possible to meet the learner's needs at RBAir and/or whether their needs are compatible with the needs of other learners. Terminating a learner's placement at this stage is undoubtedly very difficult for the learner, but the careful initial admissions process means that this is very rare - although it is used where necessary. As noted in the 'Policy statement, provision and safeguards' section above, learners are expected to complete the mandatory six-week course on Online Safety during this initial trial period. If a learner does not complete the course or is unwilling to complete the course, the placement with RBAir will be terminated.

10. Records management

The Head of Centre is responsible for the safekeeping of this policy. This policy will be available for all staff on the website or staff drive.

11. Legislation and Guidance that inform this document

The School Admissions Code September 2021