



Making the difference

School Placements Policy



School Placements

A Policy for Vranch House School & Centre

Distribution: All educational and clinical staff

Background

1. It is possible, indeed likely, that educational and clinical staff will become involved in the process that leads to a school placement. This might be at the instigation of the Local Authority inviting staff to contribute to an assessment, review or to an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP). It might happen because parents ask for support in representing a case for or against a particular placement. Staff might well have developed a deep understanding of the child and of the family background particularly for children who have had a long clinical relationship with therapists or for children who have spent some time at Vranch House School. It must be recognised that the contribution made by Vranch House staff is only part of a wider portfolio of advice made up from other contributors such as paediatric consultants, specialist medical practitioners, social workers and educational psychologists.

Responsibilities

2. **Clinical and Educational Staff** Any child receiving clinical services from Vranch House or educational services from the School could become the subject of the placement process. In any and all cases, clinical and educational staff have the absolute right to express an informed professional opinion about the child's and/or family's needs. The process of determining these needs is professional and objective and the statement reflecting them made by the therapist or teacher will not be influenced by any external factor, particularly by any consideration of what school might meet those needs. Although wider advice about the child and family might be made, care should be taken to not transgress on opinion better expressed by subject experts. It is perfectly proper when assessing a child for a possible placement at Vranch House School to state whether or not Vranch House School is capable of meeting the identified needs.

3. **The Local Education Authority** It is the legal responsibility of the Local Authority to collate the advice of subject experts on the educational and clinical needs of a pupil with SEN *and then decide on which school will meet those needs*. If there is a family dimension to the decision, the LA will work closely with Social Services to provide a comprehensive educational package which should meet the needs of both the pupil and his or her family. Similarly, the LA will work closely with the NHS to ensure that the pupil's clinical needs are met in the chosen educational setting.

4. **Appeals** It will happen from time to time that parents are not happy with the placement made by the LA and will seek an alternative placement possibly by taking the case to a Tribunal. The parents have the legal right to challenge the LA in this way. In such cases, it is possible that clinical and/or educational staff will be invited to support such an appeal. Staff are put in a difficult position when such a request is made but *may not, in any circumstance, agree to support an appeal except by providing a statement of the child's needs*. It is impossible for any member of staff to have an intimate knowledge of what the school under appeal is capable of providing. Making any statement in support of an appeal also puts Vranch House, as a school, into a conflict of interest and would move our expertise out of its established area of competence and into that of the LA. If a statement is provided at the request of the family it must be approved by the relevant Head of Department and must be simultaneously copied to the LA. Such a statement must be



objective and the member of staff making it should do so in the knowledge that it might have to be defended in a Tribunal if it is challenged. It should be headed with a phrase to the effect of "this assessment is provided at the request of Mr and Mrs...." and no reference should be made to appeals or school placements.

Summary

5. Clinical and Educational staff at V ranch House will be invited from time to time to contribute to the process of gathering information to assist the LA in determining a school placement. Such statements must be confined to a professional judgement of the child's needs. *No advice can be given that prejudices the LA process of school selection or which challenges a placement decision that has already been made and thus no support can be given to families making an appeal other than by providing a statement of the child's needs.* Assessments for placements at V ranch House School may contain a statement to the effect that V ranch House School can or cannot meet the identified needs of the child under assessment.

Support

6. Staff who find following this policy difficult must consult with the Head of Therapy (for clinical staff) or the Head of Education (for educational staff). In every case, this policy is promulgated by the Chief Executive with the authority of the Trustees. Any family contesting this policy should be invited to raise objections directly to the Chief Executive.

K Moss
Chief Executive

July 2021

