

# SPARKLERS FOUNDATION AND CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

## ADMISSIONS POLICY



Updated August 2023

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY INTRODUCTION**

Sparklers Centre of Excellence is an inclusive centre which caters for all children, both neurotypical mainstream and children with special needs, as well as adults enrolled on Higher Education courses or Work Experience Programmes. The Centre is an independent setting owned by Mrs Harriet Awuah Agbenowu and may be supported by a board of Directors. The responsibility for the school's Admissions Policy and actual admissions rests with the admissions lead, who exercises this responsibility in partnership with the CEO and her staff.

Sparklers is a setting providing day school services for young people aged 2 – 25 years, who have either moderate or severe learning difficulties with Autism and Related conditions. It also provides Professional Training, Continual Professional Development and Accredited Higher Education courses.

Sparklers also provides adult work experience opportunities for interns, volunteers, trainee staff and for individuals with additional needs and disability.

The centre is divided into Early years, Primary, Secondary, College, Vocational Centre, and Higher Education provision areas. Sparklers also offers respite provision during the school holidays for some students with additional needs. The centre's prospectus and curriculum overview give full details of the programmes of study offered for each age group of students.

## **THE REFERRAL AND ADMISSION PROCESS**

The processing of enquiries and applications is co-ordinated by the Admissions Officer, with support from the CEO.

### **Stage 1 Initial Enquiry**

Most referrals begin with a telephone call, text, or email from a family or from a professional involved in placing a child. They are usually anxious to know what the school has to offer and to describe the child's background and needs. We are happy to give and receive information or advice in this way, to send the school's prospectus and other written information and to arrange a visit to the school. Before a visit is arranged families or local authorities are requested to send a copy of the most recent Assessment documentations and reports, and a diagnosis if one is in place.

This is then followed by a home visit to seek more understanding of the child's condition and its impact on the child and family. This enables the school to make detailed assessments of the child's needs.

### **Stage 2 Visit to the School**

A follow up visit is then organised for parents, families, and other interested parties. This is conducted by the admission team lead or other senior staff member, who will answer any questions

that arise and will explain in more detail the organisation and curriculum of the school. This initial visit may be organised with or without the child or young person. The visit has most value if it takes place during term time when it is possible to see the school at work and to meet the learners. All the learners referred to Sparklers have a wide-ranging of learning difficulties of a moderate or severe degree. In the case of each referral there are referrals and/or reports from professionals indicating need. It is now necessary to determine the total package of support, courses and services required by the prospective learner. To this end records are sought regarding the child's past record and development. Staff from Sparklers may visit or telephone the learner's present school to confer with the staff there.

### **Stage 3 Familiarisation**

If, following the initial enquiry and visits, it is thought that the child could be appropriately placed at Sparklers, a period of three weeks familiarisation may be arranged. Before this, we would wish to have the agreement of the local authority or other agencies and to have received relevant information relating to the child's educational, social, and emotional needs from the family, guarantors, and the present or previous school. A member of Sparklers staff may visit the school and occasionally the family home to observe the learner and to discuss the referral. Preparation for the visit is augmented with good communication between the current placement with photographs and timetables sent out by the dedicated Transition Team at Sparklers to ensure a smooth transition. To enable the school to be aware of the child's specific needs the family are asked to complete a detailed questionnaire and return it prior to the assessment.

Following the familiarisation, the observations of teachers, therapists and care staff are collated in order to support the decision that Sparklers can meet their child's needs. A summary of observations is then made. It is only in exceptional circumstances that learners will not be admitted following a period of familiarisation. In exceptional circumstances learners may be admitted without a familiarisation period- however this must not be an emergency placement.

### **Stage 4 Admission**

Once an admission date has been agreed, some preparatory work is needed to minimise anxiety or confusion on the part of the new learner and the family as before these resources will be prepared by the Transition Team in collaboration with the admission team and teacher. Learners can be invited to initially spend shorter days at Sparklers, then three full days a week prior to full admission to get to support full transition as the new learner gets to know the staff and other learners.

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN OFFER**

The Curriculum

The school prospectus and curriculum overviews give details of the curriculum Sparklers can offer. The school not only offers a wide curriculum but one which offers flexibility and can be personalised to meet the needs of the learner with learning disabilities, associated with the Autistic Spectrum and related conditions. This means using practical methods and individual programmes of study within small, well-staffed groups with additional support from specialist staff.

## Specific Provision

### Therapies

- o Speech and Language
- o Arts Therapy (Drama, Music and Art)
- o Occupational Health Therapy

- Difficulties and delayed development

Most, although not all learners admitted with wide-ranging learning difficulties also experience speech, language, and motor skills difficulties, these vary from child to child and call for individual assessment and treatment.

To meet this demanding need all education staff are provided with training on your child's therapeutic needs to equip the work with the learners throughout the age range and in an integrated approach throughout the waking day. This is done in small group sessions and alongside teachers and other staff in many areas of the curriculum. There is also support during the evening from a Speech and Language Therapist to ensure consistency of provision. In order to support the learner to develop his/her use of verbal language Makaton signing and symbols are used throughout the school.

- Delayed or impaired motor development

Some learners seeking admission suffer from motor disabilities e.g. hemiplegia. While Sparklers cannot cater for severe cases of physical disabilities, it can and does offer physiotherapy and occupational therapy integrated provision for physical/motor disabilities. The division of the school into small groups, and the supervision of the groups by trained care staff means that the children with physical limitations can be observed and encouraged, as far as possible, to overcome their difficulties.

- Sensory impairment

Sparklers can offer help for those experiencing mild impairment in sight and/or hearing.

- Emotional/behavioural difficulties

Several learners with learning difficulties experience emotional problems and exhibit challenging behaviour. We offer Arts therapy to learners who need it and assess each one for suitability Staff at Sparklers are experienced in the management of aggressive and challenging behaviours and use of a

wide range of approaches to modify behaviour and to minimise emotional disturbance. All staff are trained in Positive Behaviour Support Approaches.

- Delayed Social Development

The difficulties in this area may take many forms but the school is well provided to aid the development of practical and interpersonal social skills leading to greater independence.

### **Community Care and Support**

One of the strengths of Sparklers is that it offers all its facilities in the context of a day and respite provision with a strong sense of community.

Many of the associated needs experienced by those with learning disabilities (e.g. flexibility of thought, transition, behavioural problems, delayed development of practical and interpersonal social skills), demand not only well-trained, experienced teachers, teaching assistants and support workers, but a 'family' into which the learners are welcomed and within which they can feel valued.

From its foundation this aspect of Sparklers has been emphasised and is now a tradition which is strengthened by the strong Christian ethos of the school. Hence Sparklers can offer much for learners in need of the development of their identity and self-worth.

### **AGE RANGE**

Early Years – 2 to 4 years

Primary School/ Key stage 2 – 5 to 11 years

Secondary School/ Key Stages 3 & 4 - 12 to 16

College/ Key Stage 5– 16 to 19

Higher Education – 19 and Above

Work Experience – 14 years and Above

Key Stages 4 and 5 integrate courses which are designed to aid the development of those practical and interpersonal skills which enable the learners to achieve greater independence.

To provide flexibility and individual and personalised development Sparklers, is divided into small class groups ranging from 4 to 12 children in group depending on need.

### **Our Christian Foundation**

Founded in 2015, Sparklers has a rich tradition of providing a personalised provision based on Christian values. In a Christ-like spirit, our welcome extends to all those who can benefit from our school and our expertise.

Our aim is to recognise and celebrate the gifts to be found in each learner, and to enable them to grow and develop skills, knowledge and understanding to the full extent of their potential.

### ADMISSION

The offer of a place is dependent upon the following:

1. The careful determination of the needs of the learner
2. A successful familiarisation period
3. The availability of a place in the appropriate teaching and residential groups
4. The agreement of the family and child
5. The positive support of professionals involved in the case
6. The agreement of the families to support the school by attending reviews and other meetings and by working well with the staff
7. The agreement to pay the school's fees

### THE CHILD PROTECTION LIAISON OFFICER

The Child Protection Liaison Officers for Sparklers are **Mr John Sakyi** and **Mrs Eunice Benson**