



The St Marylebone CE Bridge School

A Special Free School for pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Herries Street, London W10 4LE

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Committee:	Governing Body
Author:	Claire Brooks
Last reviewed:	July 2025
Review cycle:	Annual
Required to publish on website?	Yes
Statutory:	Yes

Admissions are overseen by the relevant local authority SEND team in the learner's home borough, which holds financial responsibility for maintaining the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). All consultations for placements must be submitted by the local authority SEND team to ensure proper procedural compliance. The school cannot accept consultations directly from parents or other parties, as this would bypass the established statutory process.

1. Context

The St Marylebone CE Bridge School (SMBS) is a special free school dedicated to supporting learners whose primary barrier to learning and social development is a language disorder. Learners referred to SMBS typically have severe language difficulties and require integrated speech and language therapy support, which cannot be met in local mainstream schools, specialist units, or other special schools. SMBS provides the intensive, specialist support these learners need, within a nurturing, inclusive environment that values the unique abilities of every child.

The school caters for learners whose non-verbal skills and achievements are generally better developed than skills and achievements that rely on language or interaction skills.

2. Specific Needs Catered For

Learners referred to SMS typically have severe language difficulties as their primary need, which significantly impacts their access to learning and development of life and social skills. Our specialist support includes integrated speech and language therapy, provided within a nurturing environment that reflects the School's Church of England ethos of compassion, respect and inclusion.

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

- Primary barrier: Developmental Language Disorder (DLD).
- Cognitive abilities: Non-verbal skills generally within normal limits.
- Ability to engage: Function independently in small classes (up to 14 learners) without consistent 1:1 support.
- Attainment: Working within National Curriculum expectations rather than Early Learning Goals or p-levels.

2.2 Associated Difficulties

We cater to additional needs often associated with DLD, including:

- Literacy difficulties.
- Fine and gross motor challenges (e.g., developmental coordination disorder).
- Auditory processing challenges.
- Impaired life and social skills.

3. Key Features of Provision

Learners at SMBS receive:

1. A curriculum adapted to support significant and persistent language disorders.
2. Opportunities to develop confidence and independence in a structured, supportive environment.
3. Specialist staff trained in neuro-affirming and trauma-aware practices.

4. Suitability Criteria

SMBS is a specialist school designed to follow an adapted secondary school model, enabling learners to move between lessons and interact with a variety of subject-specialist adults. Pupils should be able to function independently within a small class (up to 14 pupils) without the need for consistent 1:1 support and manage a large number of transitions throughout the

school, which include different adults and rooms for most lessons. The secondary school model at SMBS may not be suitable for learners who struggle with frequent transitions between lessons and interaction with a range of adults.

The school **is** not appropriate for learners whose primary needs include:

- **Severe intellectual disabilities**, as these needs may require a curriculum significantly different from that offered at SMBS.
- **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties or behavioural difficulties** that pose a significant risk to others, as these may impact the safety and well-being of our vulnerable cohort.
- **Sensory processing difficulties** require specialist environments, as SMBS is not equipped to provide sensory-specific adaptations or therapeutic interventions beyond its core offer.

5. Gender Balance

To foster a balanced and inclusive learning environment, SMBS aims to achieve an equal gender representation within cohorts, promoting meaningful peer interaction and friendships.

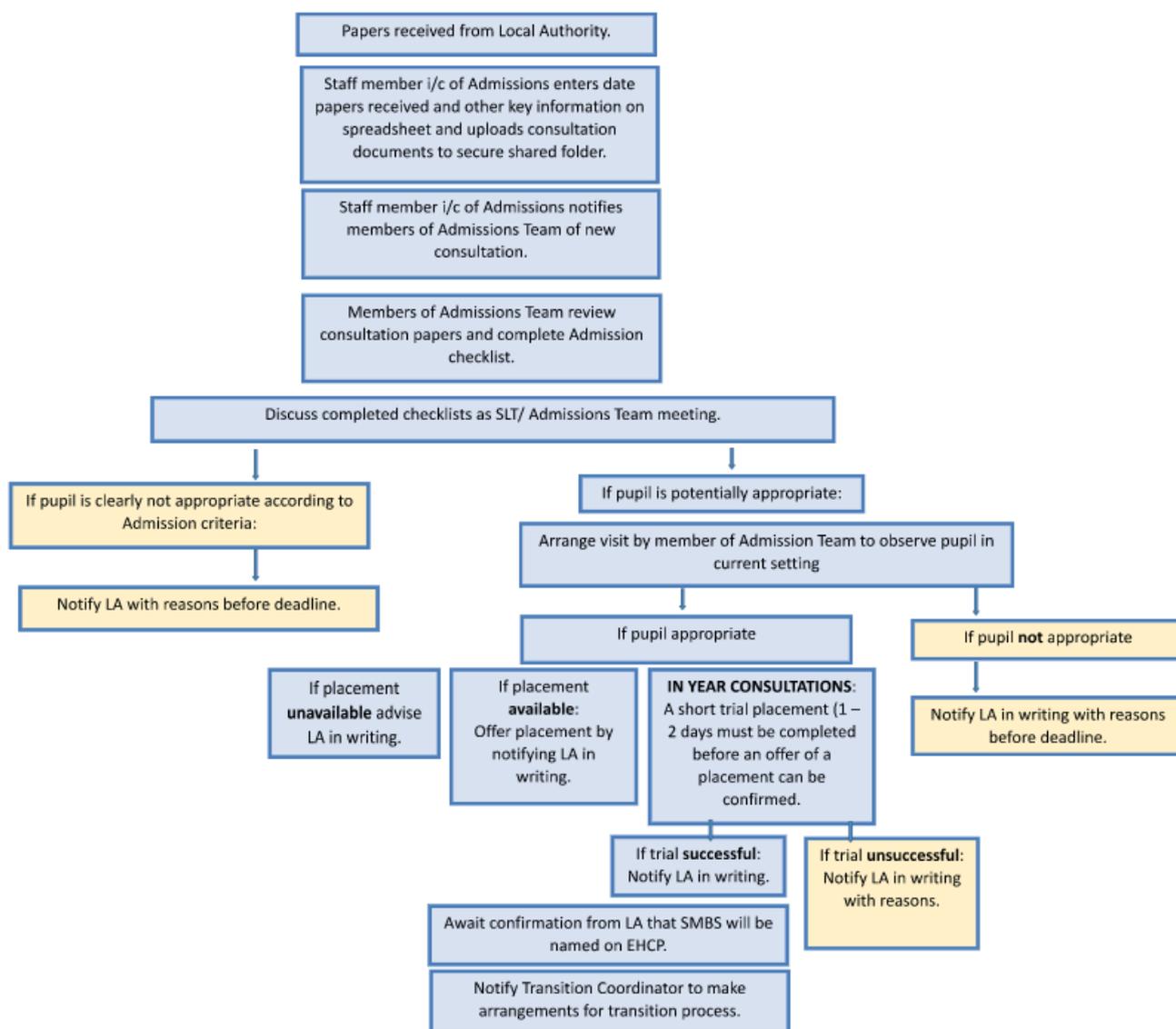
5.1 Consultations and Decision-Making Process

Consultations are reviewed and considered by the Admissions Team in the order they are received. The Admissions Team, which includes the Deputy Head of School, Lead Speech and Language Therapist (SALT), and SENCO, evaluates each application to determine whether the school can meet the learner's needs.

Decisions are communicated to the referring local authority (LA). If the decision is a no, the school cannot directly communicate with families due to capacity limitations. Families should contact their designated LA key worker for further information or clarification.

For details of the assessment process, including checklists and criteria used following a place being requested by the local authority, see the Appendices.

Appendix 1



The Admissions Team at SMBS is comprised of a multidisciplinary team including Deputy Head of School, Lead SALT, and SENDCo. Additional staff members, such as the Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead and Occupational Therapist, are consulted as needed to ensure a comprehensive assessment of each applicant's needs.

Appendix 2

Date Papers Received from LA: _____

Child's Name: _____ M/F

D.O.B.: _____ Age: _____ Year

Level: _____

School Attending: _____ Borough: _____

Parents visited SMBS?

Evidence from Reports provided

Area	Key points
Communication & Interaction	
Cognition & Learning	
Social Emotional & Mental Health	
Sensory & Physical	
Section F	
School	
Parents	
Other	

Appropriateness of placement

- Evidence that SLCN/language is the primary need? Y/N
- Evidence that non-verbal skills are within normal limits: Y/N
- Working at NC Levels Y/N
- Able to work independently in a small class without 1:1 support: Y/N
- Any concerns regarding other educational needs (i.e. behaviour, ASD, HI, etc): Y/N

Decision:

Not enough info provided

Can meet needs but no place

Visit

Cannot meet needs

- unsuitable for the child’s age, ability and aptitude or special educational needs
- incompatible with the efficient education of others
- incompatible with the efficient use of resources

Is there a placement available Y/N

Appendix 3

SMBS may be the right place for a learner if:

- The learner has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- The learner has a significant and persisting language disorder across language domains and is aged 11-16.
- Language disorder is the primary barrier to accessing the learning environment and developing life and social skills.
- The language disorder is not associated with intellectual disability.
- The learner requires a curriculum that is individually designed and adapted to their needs.
- The learner needs intensive and integrated speech and language therapy support.
- The learner has the ability to participate in small groups without requiring consistent 1:1 support.
- The learner's language abilities enable them to:
 - Communicate using simple sentences for a range of functions (e.g., request, comment, share ideas, ask questions).
 - Understand simple "wh" questions (e.g., who, where).
 - Follow at least 2 key-word instructions in various contexts.
- The learner can manage frequent transitions across the school day, including moving between classrooms and interacting with different adults.

Additional Considerations:

- The learner may have co-occurring difficulties (e.g., literacy, fine and gross motor skills, impaired life and social skills, attention, and auditory processing), but the primary need is language disorder.
- SMBS prioritises learners with an established diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or language disorders associated with other conditions (e.g., hearing impairment, epileptic syndrome).