

# Early Help Offer



## What is Early Help?

Early Help means providing appropriate support to students and families at the earliest opportunity and working together to find effective solutions before problems escalate.

At Wider Ambition, our students can be particularly vulnerable as a result of their additional needs. We understand that there isn't always a quick and easy solution to emerging issues; however, we recognise the importance of identifying and responding to problems in a prompt and helpful way.

Parents of our students will often have had a difficult journey through their child's diagnosis and the EHCP process. We recognise that students and families will need staff at Wider Ambition to invest in building trusting relationships and in demonstrating that we prioritise students' needs.

Local Authorities provide an Early Help service for families who are facing certain challenges, for example in relation to parenting or family circumstances. Families can self-refer to their Local Authority's Early Help service and referrals can also be made by friends or professionals who have a concern. Referrals in relation to safeguarding matters can sometimes lead to a Local Authority's Early Help service offering assistance.

The Early Help offer provided by Wider Ambition is separate from the Local Authority's Early Help service. Our offer is intended to help families informally at the earliest opportunity, usually prior to any external agencies becoming involved. If we feel unable to help with a situation or if we consider that help from external agencies is necessary, we will signpost families to further support, discuss with them how external agencies might be able to help and assist with any requested referrals.

## How can Wider Ambition help?

### Implementing the right educational provision for each student

We recognise that one of the most important ways in which Wider Ambition can help is by ensuring that students consistently receive the educational provision they need.

- ✓ We work closely with students and families to implement the provision as set out in each student's EHCP, with ongoing conversations, half-termly parents' evenings and well-planned formal reviews to ensure this provision remains best-suited to each student's needs.
- ✓ We actively seek feedback from students and families and we respond positively to suggestions, criticism and requests for change.
- ✓ We recognise parents as being experts in their child's needs and we recognise students as having their own expert viewpoint.
- ✓ We make it easy for parents to contact our staff, in person, by phone or by email. We respond quickly to requests for a conversation, we return calls reliably and we understand that a swift reply to an email can help to manage students' anxiety.

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- ✓ We help to arrange conversations between parents and therapists as appropriate, so that parents can access timely advice.
- ✓ We understand that needs and circumstances change and we make it easy for parents and students to tell us about any emerging difficulties.
- ✓ We provide our staff with high quality training in relation to students' individual needs and we manage workloads and wellbeing so that staff are able to give their best.
- ✓ We run parent workshops to keep parents up-to-date with our curriculum content and current themes, so that parents are equipped to help with any home-learning.
- ✓ We allow and encourage students to use the strategies which they individually find most helpful for reducing their anxiety, so that they can become ready to learn.
- ✓ We are ambitious for our students. We support families in recognising ability and aiming high.
- ✓ When our admissions process leads to us deciding that we are not the right setting for a student, we will help parents to take the next steps towards finding the right setting.

## Keeping our settings accessible to students and families

We aim to ensure that Wider Ambition settings are accessible for all of our students, regardless of their level of need or disability.

- ✓ We plan carefully to ensure that our provision is as adaptable as possible to the needs of each student.
- ✓ We maintain a home-from-home environment with the intention of reducing school-related anxiety.
- ✓ We provide a low-sensory environment and encourage students to use our sensory areas, quiet spaces and sensory aids whenever they need to.
- ✓ We work collaboratively with students and families to find solutions to any attendance difficulties, with a focus on identifying and addressing any unmet needs.
- ✓ Our ethos includes valuing each student as an individual and nurturing them to achieve their full potential.

## Supporting family life

We recognise that some of our students have difficulty accessing and enjoying day-to-day activities such as shopping, travel, leisure activities and socialising, and that these difficulties can put extra pressure on families. We aim to provide our students and families with opportunities for relaxation, new experiences and mutual support.

- ✓ We organise and support family social events in the local community, such as visits to local leisure facilities.
- ✓ We invite families to participate in carefully planned social events at Wider Ambition settings.
- ✓ We provide families with opportunities to connect with each other.

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- ✓ We include enrichment opportunities such as cooking and outdoor learning within our curriculum, helping to make new experiences more accessible.
- ✓ We run parent workshops to help families understand and meet students' needs at home and to provide parents with opportunities for sharing useful information and strategies.
- ✓ We understand that students may mask their difficulties at school and that this can lead to unhappiness at home. We listen to parents when they tell us this is happening, and we make aim to provide accessible ways for students to communicate with us.
- ✓ We avoid expecting parents to make additional demands on students at home. For example, there is no pressure for students to wear Wider Ambition branded clothing.
- ✓ We recognise that transitions can be difficult, including the transition into school each morning. We provide a 30-minute transition window at the start and end of the day as standard. We offer students tea and toast (or suitable alternatives) each morning, to help families have a more relaxed start to the day.

### **Where else can families access help?**

We recognise that Wider Ambition won't always be able to provide the help which families need. We maintain information about other sources of advice and support, and we will share this information with families on request, to help them access the right help.