

**Big Bear Bespoke Education Ltd**

**The Learning & Well-Being Centre / Arun Court School**

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**15 day Placement Trial – How it works**

- The trial is **NOT** a placement offer and is **NOT** a period of transition. The purpose of the 15 day trial is to fully assess the student's needs and to see how they fit with our existing systems and the way the setting is run.
- An offer of a placement **may or may not** be made at the end of the 15 days. A report will be submitted with results of assessments and general comments from the team.
- Parents are encouraged to support us by dropping off as swiftly as possible, especially by the second week. Students will have been allocated a key worker from the Therapy Team who will meet them at the door.
- We do not employ teaching assistants. We have an academic team who are all qualified teachers and a therapy team who are qualified therapists or practitioners, many of whom are younger members of staff in the process of training for further qualification such as junior clinical psychologists. All our staff are contracted and salaried. They have to follow very high standards regarding professional conduct and are performance managed.
- The therapy team under the supervision of a senior clinical psychologist who works at least one day a week at the setting, and we also have an occupational therapy team which visits two days a week. Our current therapy team are all qualified teachers of mindfulness and meditation. We have specialists in junior psychology, play therapy, therapeutic art, massage therapists, a counsellor, CBT practitioner and qualified coaches. Your child will be allocated one of these professionals as their key worker. They will be monitoring anxiety levels, teaching the student techniques to improve their mental health, thus assisting them in being able to access the academic work.
- We will happily support parents initially if they feel they need to wait in the foyer, or be available at a local café however attachment anxiety is a two-way process and it is very important that we encourage students to be with us at the centre for enough of the day for us to assess their levels of anxiety – we do not expect any student to be able to immediately settle, and it is important that over the 15 days we get to see the 'real' picture of their anxiety, not just how they react when they are fully supported by those they know and love.
- We are NOT a specialist ASD setting. We are a mental health setting. Parents, support workers, or other settings involved with the student need to fully understand that we will have children in our setting who have chronic OCD, depression, post-trauma anxiety, anxiety induced Tourette's, those who have just left secure mental health hospital units and those who are on medication trials. Some of these children may also have ASD or PDA but this is a

'side diagnosis', they are with us due to **severe mental health and anxiety needs**. Please **DO NOT come past the foyer or go upstairs** as you will be challenged by staff. The anxiety levels of some of our students mean that they just can't cope with lots of adults not known to them suddenly appearing and as a result they may not be able to engage, or worse may even self-harm, due to your presence. We pre-prepare and pre-warn our students when we have designated visitors; so if they've not been warned, you are not expected.

- By the time a trial has been agreed we have already taken **emergency contact numbers** for parents. We do not anticipate that students attending a trial will be given contact numbers for social workers, teachers, key workers, helpers or assistants from their current setting. We will call those with parental responsibility if we feel that a student needs to be collected early, we will not call other professionals.
- Students should not be told that they will be able to ring other individuals or that they can 'just go home if they need to' as this is not something that the students at our setting are told – **we need to assess if they can cope in our setting, not their current one**.
- During the trial period we do not allow teaching assistants or support workers from previous or current settings to attend student sessions. We may feel this would be beneficial after the trial, once a placement has been offered, but again the point of the trial is to see if the student can form a bond with our therapy team.
- If the trial is successful we will then discuss the views of the previous setting as to transition arrangements and also take possession of relevant paperwork, however the transition arrangement will be directly informed by the trial report.
- As part of the trial period we also seek to engage with parents and to gauge if they fully understand the way we work as a setting, and what their level of future engagement is going to be. We are **more likely** to offer a placement if we feel that parents are willing to engage in the support available directly to them, and to work with us positively in ensuring that students are appropriately challenged when the professionals feel they can cope with it; resilience and perseverance are key skills we aim to teach. This is something that can feel very challenging for parents who are understandably anxious about their child, but we need to know you will work with us, especially as the children we deal with are usually used to being able to exercise a very high level of control over their families due to their anxiety.
- During the trial period we aim to give the students as **realistic an experience** as possible – if we feel that the risk assessment allows, we will invite students on trips and social activities that may be occurring as part of the standard programme.