Placement Criteria and Educational Approach for School Sponsorship

Overview

This document outlines the placement criteria and educational approach adopted by Darjeeling Children's Trust. Our primary objective is to ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to access education in a way that is appropriate, fair, and rooted in their local context. All placements are guided by community engagement, safeguarding principles, and a strong commitment to educational inclusion.

1. Priority of Locality

The foremost consideration in our placement process is the locality of the child. We believe that children benefit from remaining within their own communities wherever possible. Attending a local school helps to:

- Maintain family and community ties
- Reduce travel-related barriers and risks
- Encourage long-term attendance and retention

For this reason, the local school within the child's village or immediate area is always considered first and is our preferred placement option.

2. Assessment of Financial Need (Below Poverty Line)

The second key criterion is ensuring that support is directed to children who are genuinely below the poverty line. This assessment is carried out through a multi-stage community-led process:

1. Recommendation letter from the community head & from the appropriate teacher.
   The community head provides an initial recommendation based on their knowledge of the family's circumstances, income, and living conditions.
2. Verification Interview with the community head
   A follow-up interview is conducted with the community head to confirm the child's eligibility. This interview helps ensure transparency, consistency, and accountability in the selection process.
3. The prospective student will produce proof of residence in the area, a brief letter of introduction & recent school report.

Only children who meet the criteria of financial need through this process are considered for placement and support.

3. Academic Ability and School Placement

We recognise that children have different academic abilities and educational backgrounds, and our approach is inclusive and flexible.

- In cases where admission to a particular school requires an entrance examination, and a child is not academically able to meet the entry requirements, the child will not be excluded from support.
- Instead, the child will be placed in a nearby private school that does not require entrance exams and is appropriate to their learning level.

This ensures that:

- Every supported child has access to education
- Academic ability does not become a barrier to inclusion
- Children are placed in environments where they are most likely to succeed.

4. English as the primary medium of Instruction

We ensure that all sponsored children are placed in schools where English is the primary medium of instruction.

- This approach strengthens their language skills, and opens up wider opportunities for future learning and employment.
- By supporting their education in English medium environments, we aim to equip each child with the tools they need to thrive academically and confidently engage in an increasingly global world.

Our Commitment

Through this placement criteria and approach, we are committed to:

- Prioritising the child's best interests
- Working in partnership with local communities
- Ensuring fairness, transparency, and dignity in selection
- Supporting education that is accessible, appropriate, and sustainable.

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