WHITE HOUSE SCHOOL

Admissions Policy

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CAVENDISH EDUCATION

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1. Context

The White House School is an independent specialist school for children and young people with additional and complex needs. We are part of Cavendish Education and are committed to transforming lives through highly personalised education, therapeutic support and ambitious teaching.

Our vision is **"Making Learning Possible Again."** We create a school where pupils feel safe, belong, achieve and thrive. Through removing barriers to learning, rebuilding confidence and fostering positive relationships, we empower every pupil to realise their potential and prepare for successful and fulfilling lives beyond school.

Our mission is to provide a nurturing, ambitious and mindful education that supports both academic progress and personal growth. Guided by our whole-school ethos of **Healthy Minds, Happy Hearts**, we create the conditions for every pupil to become **Ready to Learn and Prepared for Life**.

Everything we do is underpinned by our core values:

- **Ambition** – developing curiosity, courage and aspiration.
- **Resilience** – developing confidence, character and perseverance.
- **Community** – demonstrating kindness, integrity and respect.

We believe that pupils thrive when they feel safe, understood and valued. Our culture is built upon strong relationships, high expectations and a commitment to seeing the strengths and potential in every child. We are deeply nurturing without lowering expectations and remain unashamedly ambitious for every pupil.

Our practice is informed by the National Autistic Society's **SPELL Framework**, which promotes:

- Structure and predictability;
- Positive approaches and expectations;
- Empathy and understanding;
- Low arousal environments;
- Strong links between school, home and professionals.

Alongside this, we adopt a trauma-informed, relational and therapeutic approach across all aspects of school life. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and believe that pupils do well when they can. Our role is to understand the barriers they face and provide the support, strategies and relationships that enable them to succeed.

At The White House School:

- Every interaction is viewed as an intervention.
- Every adult is an emotionally available adult.
- Relationships come first.
- Emotional readiness is the foundation for learning.

We support pupils to develop emotional regulation, communication, independence and social understanding through consistent relational practice, personalised support and integrated therapeutic approaches. Emotional regulation is explicitly taught through co-regulation, sensory support, movement opportunities and personalised regulation strategies. Pupils are encouraged to understand themselves, develop resilience and build the skills needed to navigate life successfully.

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise the additional vulnerabilities that many pupils with special educational needs may experience and maintain a culture of vigilance, care and advocacy. We place the child at the centre of decision-making, listen to pupil voice in all its forms and work closely with families and external agencies to promote safety, wellbeing and positive outcomes.

Through ambitious and adapted teaching, meaningful relationships, therapeutic support and a culture of belonging, we help pupils feel safe, build confidence, achieve success and thrive both in school and beyond.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Explain how to apply for a place at the school
- Set out the school's arrangements for allocating places to the pupils who apply
- Explain how to appeal against a decision not to offer your child a place
- Meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards by making the school's policy on admissions available to parents

3. Legislation and Guidance

As an Independent School we are required to have a written policy on admissions. This policy meets that requirement and complies with the following legislation:

- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2011
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

4. How to Apply

Applications for placements usually come via a local authority's SEND department. It is, however, possible to apply directly if parents intend to fund a school

placement via their own means. The school is not block funded by a public body and so the resource base required via placement fees reflects the entire cost of delivering a specialist education. Parents should consider the financial implications of self-funding a placement.

Application via a local authority's SEND department:

1. **Touring the school –** Parents and carers are advised to book a tour of the school. This will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of the provision on offer as well as an opportunity to meet either the headteacher or a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. Parents are advised not to bring the potential new pupil with them at this stage in order to allow for candid and direct dialogue. Subsequent tours with the child can be arranged following this.

2. **Consultation Request –** Following a tour, if parents or carers feel that the education offer at TWHS is appropriate for their child, they should request that their SEND Case Officer sends consultation documents to the school via the admissions email: admissions@thewhitehouseschool.org. These usually consist of the child's Education, Health and Care Plan, the latest Annual Review paperwork and other supporting evidence. A Case Officer has a legal duty to consult with a school that is the parental preference.

3. **Initial Response –** The school admissions administrator will receive and process the consultation documents. An initial response will then be provided to the SEND Case Officer indicating whether the school considers it likely that we have the resources and expertise required to support this potential new student. This is not usually sent to parents as well, but a request can be made for this.

4. **Assessment –** The potential new pupil will be observed in their current setting for half a day and a questionnaire and discussion will be undertaken with their current teachers. The pupil will then be invited in for a half day assessment session in school. The assessment process includes observations of the child in a 1:1 session and questionnaires and discussion with the parents. Assessment arrangements may be amended at the direction of the headteacher, if it is deemed that reasonable adjustments are required to support a pupil to access the assessments.

5. **Assessment Response –** The headteacher will oversee the remainder of the admissions process and will determine if the school feels able to meet the needs of the potential new pupil. The headteacher will use the information gathered from the consultation documents, the assessments, observations of the pupil and any discussions with the pupil and family to write an

assessment response. As part of the response, a suitable pathway will have been indicated, either our Curiosity Pathway (for children with Autism and/or Social, Emotional or Mental Health needs) or Discovery Pathway (for children with Autism and/or more complex communication and/or sensory needs). This report will be sent to the parents of the potential new pupil as well as the local authority's SEND Service. This will constitute either an offer of a placement or a determination that the school does not feel able to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.

Application directly from a parent:

1. **Touring the school –** Parents and carers are advised to book a tour of the school. This will be an opportunity to gain an understanding of the provision on offer as well as an opportunity to meet either the headteacher or a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. Parents are advised not to bring the potential new pupil with them at this stage in order to allow for candid and direct dialogue. Subsequent tours with the child can be arranged following this.

2. **Consultation Request –** Following a tour, if parents feel that the education offer at TWHS is appropriate for their child, they should send their child's Education, Health and Care Plan, a covering letter expressing a request for an initial consideration of a placement along with any other supporting evidence to the school's admissions team via the admissions email: admissions@thewhitehouseschool.org. If the child does not have an EHCP, a school admissions application form must be completed instead. This can be requested from the admissions team.

3. **Initial Response –** The school admissions administrator will receive and process the request. An initial response will then be provided to parent indicating whether the school considers it likely that we have the resources and expertise required to support this potential new pupil.

The process will then follow steps 4 and 5 as above.

The school will endeavour at all times to reply to Local Authority placement consultations within 14 days of receipt during term time. The 14 days begin from the receipt of a full application in the school's required format. The school will endeavour to respond to parent applications within the same time frame. If a face-to-face assessment is assessed as being reasonably appropriate the school will offer this at the next available opportunity. The school can facilitate one face-to-face or home visit assessment each week during term time.

5. Allocation of Places

Admission Numbers
The school does not provide a specific number of spaces or allocations per academic year. The school releases spaces according to availability within the school. This availability is not a strict measure of possible spaces within a class but is a subjective measure based on the needs of the cohort and the communication and learning approaches of on-roll pupils. As such the release of spaces is dependent on the judgement of school leadership as to the capacity of the school to meet the needs of more pupils with the resourcing the school has, and the current allocation of resourcing based on need of the pupils on-roll.

Oversubscription Criteria
In the event that the school receives more applications than the number of places it has available, places will be given to those children who meet any of the criteria set out below, in order, until all places are filled. Highest priority will be given to looked after children and all previously looked after children who apply for a place at the school. The following criteria will then be applied:

1. Pupils who currently attend a school or service operated by the parent group or where the school has a formal resource sharing agreement with. This can colloquially be referred to as a 'feeder school or service'.

2. Pupils with siblings at the school. Siblings include step siblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children living permanently at the same address. Priority will not be given to children with siblings who are former pupils of the school.

All offers are subject to a 3-week guaranteed period following offer. Beyond that the admissions team will liaise with SEND Case Officers (or parents if self-funding) to keep them advised of availability on an ongoing basis. It is not possible to 'hold open' a space beyond this as this could potentially frustrate another pupil's access to education if the school were to do so. The admissions team will communicate routinely and proactively to avoid disappointment for admissions requests. After the 3-week period has elapsed, admission offers will be confirmed based on the earliest formal acceptance of an offer from a Case Officer (or parent if self-funding).

Tie break
In the case of 2 or more applications that cannot be separated by the oversubscription criteria outlined above, the school will use random allocation as a tie breaker to confirm which placement can be agreed. This process will be independently verified. This could happen in the event that one space remained,

and two case officers provided written confirmation they would like to accept an offer at exactly the same time.

Children Below Compulsory School Age
Where children below the school's entry age are offered a place at the school, they will be entitled to attend the school full-time in once they have turned 6 years of age.

Waiting List
We will maintain a clear, fair and objective waiting list for children who have been offered a place, yet current capacity denotes there is not a space available in their allocated class. Where places become available, they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria outlined above.

6. In-Year Admissions

Consultations or applications for places can be made at any time. If there are spaces available in the year group and curriculum class that is assessed as being appropriate, your child will be offered a place to start immediately. If there are no spaces available at the time of your application, your child's name will be added to a waiting list for the relevant year group. We will not normally conduct assessments unless there is a space that has been assessed as, with reasonable belief, would be appropriate for the potential new pupil. This arrangement may be waived by the headteacher in consultation with the potential new pupil's parents or carers.

7. Admissions Criteria

The school admissions process is a two-stage process with oversight from the organisation's Directors as well as the school's headteacher. The process is supported by an admissions administrator. The school has the expertise and resources to meet the following needs (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Presentation of ASC need, including delayed receptive and expressive processing, sensory processing needs, restricted and/or repetitive patterns of behaviour, limited social imagination and inflexibility of thought
- Social, emotional and mental health needs, which present as sensory withdrawal or communication shutdown relating to being overwhelmed by communication or sensory or social inputs
- Communication and interaction needs

The school does not have the resources and facilities to be able to meet the following presentations of need (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Physical expressions of need targeting peers or adults
- Emotional dysregulation presenting as targeted negative communication towards peers
- Dysregulation leading to destruction of property or self-harming and/or self-endangering acts or actions

The school considers any presentation of need that has not been identified from more than 3 years prior to application as being historic. This need will inform the school's overall picture of need, but it will not be used directly in the consideration of the school's ability to meet the needs of the potential new pupil.

8. Appeals Procedure

If your child's application for a place at the school is unsuccessful, you will be informed why it was unsuccessful and be given information about the process for hearing appeals. If you wish to appeal, you must request an appeal form from reception@thewhitehouseschool.org marked as **Confidential – Appeals Application FAO Directors** and returned to the same address. Alternatively, the form can be printed and sent to:

The School Board
The White House School
170 Magna Road
Wimborne
BH213AP

9. Complaints

The school has a published complaints process. The admissions process is not subject to the conditions and processes within the complaints process. The school complaints process complies with the Independent School standards with the complaints process available for parents and carers of pupils, as defined by the Education and Skills Act 2008 and the Education Act 1996. The school always welcomes all feedback on the performance of our committed staff team. Feedback about staff performance relating to admissions can be provided through the admissions appeals process.

10. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed and approved by Directors annually in consultation with the school board.

11. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Attendance Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- SEND & Inclusion Policy

Approval & Policy Review

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by:

Policy Approver(s)	Sarah Moorcroft – Executive Headteacher
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Revision History

Version	Change	Author	Date of Change
1	Updated policy for new academic year	Elle Vinall	July 2025
2	Updated format to match Cavendish Policies.	Elle Vinall	September 2026