Orchard Therapeutic

OUTREACH • BARN • FARM • POST 16

# Admissions Policy (Education): 2026-2027

The Services – Primary, Secondary & Post-16 Education

**Policy Note**

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| | *For the purposes of this policy, Orchard Therapeutic Farm (OTF), Orchard Therapeutic Outreach (OTO), Orchard Therapeutic Barn OTB) will together be referred to as* ***"the Services"*** | | | |
| | *This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, and contractors of the Services, as well as anyone representing Orchard Therapeutic Farm, Orchard Therapeutic Outreach, Orchard Therapeutic Barn in an official capacity.* | | | |
| | ***Date of changes and review*** | ***Changes made:*** | ***Approved by:*** | ***Date of next review:*** |
| | 15.08.2026 | *Reviewed- OTA removed. Policy review- head of operations added.* | *Emily Mayne- Head of Operations* | *End of academic year or if legislation or procedure is amended.* |

**Key Principles**

| | **Young Person's Voice** | **How this applies to Admission Policy** |
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| | My voice is respected, heard and advocated for, so I can influence the support I receive | The learner's views are captured at enquiry and Baseline Assessment and are considered alongside professional information. The decision record states how the learner's voice informed the outcome and transition plan. |

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| I receive clear information about the process, what will happen next, and why. | Admissions information is provided in accessible formats with indicative timelines. Criteria and possible outcomes are explained prior to assessment and confirmed in writing thereafter. |
| I have choice and control where possible. | Preferences (e.g., subjects, interests, sensory needs, preferred communication) are sought and reflected in the taster/transition plan and initial timetable where this is safe and reasonable. |
| I am welcomed into a safe, calm learning environment. | Induction includes a site tour, safeguarding and safety information, and introduction to a named contact/key staff. Reasonable adjustments are recorded and implemented from day one. |
| My individual needs are understood, not assumed. | A holistic Baseline Assessment (communication, sensory profile, regulation strategies, health and risk factors) informs the Individual Education and Support Plan (IESP) and class compatibility |
| I can communicate in ways that work for me. | Interpreting/translation and alternative communication supports are arranged where needed. Materials are adapted to reading/processing levels and preferred modes (visual, verbal, augmented). |
| I am treated fairly and without discrimination. | Equality duties are applied to admissions criteria and decisions. Reasonable adjustments are considered and recorded; decisions are based on need, safety and compatibility, not protected characteristics |

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| Decisions are timely and I am kept informed. | Target timescales are set for each stage. Referrers, parents/carers and the learner are updated at agreed checkpoints and informed promptly of decisions. |
| My privacy is respected. | Information is requested on a need-to-know basis and managed in line with data protection and safeguarding law. Consent and lawful bases for sharing are recorded. |
| I am supported to move in gradually and confidently. | A personalised transition plan sets visit frequency, duration and goals, with review points to adjust pace. Multi-agency input (e.g., EP, SALT, CAMHS) is coordinated where appropriate. |
| My feedback shapes the support I receive. | Feedback is gathered after taster visits and during induction; the IESP and class arrangements are updated in response, with changes communicated to stakeholders. |
| I can be accompanied and represented. | Parents/carers and advocates are invited to relevant stages of the process. Advocacy needs are identified early and supported throughout admissions |
| I learn in a space I feel proud of and that is well maintained. | Learning spaces used for visits and induction are prepared, safe and orderly. Environmental factors (sensory load, seating, quiet areas) are checked and adjusted prior to taster sessions. |
| Travel and routines are manageable for me. | Typical maximum travel times are shared at enquiry. Start/finish times, key routines and break points are |

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| | explained; adjustments are considered where necessary for wellbeing. |

## Policy Aims

### Policy Aims

The Admissions Policy aims to ensure that admissions decisions are lawful, fair and centred on the needs and voice of the young person. It sets out how enquiries are handled, how suitability is assessed and how transitions are planned so that placements are safe and successful.

- Apply statutory and regulatory duties, including the SEND Code of Practice, Equality Act 2010 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.
- Provide clear, consistent admissions criteria and transparent decisions with reasons and indicative timescales.
- Embed the young person's voice at every stage, ensuring information is accessible and advocacy is available where needed.
- Ensure suitability and safety through proportionate risk assessment and compatibility with peer groups and curriculum offer.
- Make and record reasonable adjustments from first contact through transition and induction.
- Coordinate with referrers and relevant professionals to support timely, well-informed decisions.
- Protect privacy and handle information lawfully, sharing only on a need-to-know basis.
- Monitor the quality and timeliness of the admissions pathway and use feedback to improve practice.

## Policy Statement

This Policy sets out the arrangements for admitting children and young people to The Services. It defines clear, lawful and fair processes for enquiry, assessment, decision-making, transition and induction so that placements are safe, appropriate and timely. The Services provides day education for children in the primary, secondary and post-16 phases. Placements are commissioned by referring schools and local authorities.

**Quality Standards and Legislation**

- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice.
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025).
- Local Authority commissioning and contract requirements.

**Definitions**

- 'The Services' – the education provision described in this Policy.
- 'Referrer' – the commissioning school or local authority (or advocate acting on their behalf).
- 'Parent(s)/Carer(s)' – those with parental responsibility and/or primary care for the learner.

**Admission criteria**

The Services is a primary, secondary and post-16 alternative provision for boys and girls from the age of 6 years.

The Services is a special alternative provision which caters for the needs of pupils who have communication and interaction difficulties and concurring social, emotional, and mental health difficulties, including associated behaviour deemed challenging. Many of the pupils attending the centre have additional special educational needs such as neurodivergent conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit and hyperactive disorders (ADHD) which may affect their speech and language development. All of The Services' children may have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and/or be supported by local authorities. Places for pupils are commissioned at the centre by schools and several local authorities, Including Oxfordshire, West Berkshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey and Slough.

The timeframe for the admissions process depends on a number of factors including:

- The quantity and nature of the referrals received
- The time of year and availability of placements.
- Sourcing specialist training and adult support to meet health and learning needs.

**Admissions procedure**

Many of the children who are referred to The Services have encountered negative experiences in education as a result of their diagnosis. This may include elevated levels of anxiety, reduced attendance, disengagement from learning and social isolation at schools. In many cases, over time, these factors combine to reach crisis point and can lead to school refusal. For these reasons, the centre strongly believes that referrals and admissions to the centre should be a partnership building process with parents/ carers, the local authority and schools and The Services designed to ensure that The Services can meet the needs of the prospective learner.

The Services' admissions procedure appreciates how challenging the transition to a new placement can be for a child and their family. It recognises that the needs of each child need to be planned sensitively and thoroughly. It is for this reason that all transition times will be unique to each individual child to ensure that they have the best start to a new centre to settle and build trusting relationships with staff and peers.

**The admissions procedure is as follows:**

1. Initial enquiry:

Referrals are accepted at any time and new admissions can take place throughout the year. The initial referral can be made by school, the local authority or an advocate acting on behalf of the parents/ carers behalf. The Services encourage families and/or Local Authority Education case workers to come and visit the Centre or participate in an initial conversation with the Head of centre/head of operations or Business manager. During these visits and conversations, The

Services request as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to whether a referral to Orchard would be appropriate.

2. Assessment period.

Once an official request has been made by the local authority, or the school, The Services will ask for relevant documentation and/or Education Health Care plans from the relevant local authority. The Services will then review the documents and information gathered from the initial enquiry to determine whether the admission criteria is met and a good 'fit' is likely. Please note, failure to disclose information that may affect the validity of the admissions process at any stage may lead to the process being terminated.

When it has been determined that the centre may be able to meet the child's needs and other criteria are met e.g. availability of places, an assessment visit will take place. This may include a home visit, a visit to see the child in their current setting or an invite for the child and family to come and spend time at the centre. This allows the centre to confirm its impressions on a child's needs and it offers the child an opportunity to experience centre life at The Services

Should the centre consider itself to be an unsuitable placement for the child for any reason as detailed in the above criteria the application will not be progressed to the next stage. The decision made at Orchard is final and cannot be overrode by the local authority or school.

If the centre feels that they can meet the needs of the child, the centre will negotiate with the referrer and the approximate start dates and core fee model. The referrer will submit all paperwork to the referring panel for them to decide and allocate a placement.

3. Offer agreed

Any placement offered will be subject to the full cost of the placement unless there has been prior agreement between the placing authority and the centre. Once the local authority / school/ referrer has agreed a placement and funding and contracts have been signed, the parents/carers will need to arrange transport with

the relevant council. The transition visits will not take place until the contracts have been signed.

The Services will request a completed and signed contract from the local authority, school, referrer and The Services will require parents/carers to complete enrolment forms, to enable The Services to create an account on The Services' Centre Management System, and provide consent for activities/trips/medication/etc.

4. Bespoke transition

Meanwhile, The Services will be working on a bespoke personalised integration plan for the child to ensure their start with The Services is as successful as possible. Please note, at this point that some children need a step-by-step plan to help them assimilate to centre life and The Services create this plan based on the child's needs. It is adjusted as time goes on because some children assimilate more quickly or more slowly than they originally thought.

**Indicators of Need**

- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and associated communication and interaction needs.
- ADHD and/or significant anxiety impacting engagement in mainstream settings.
- Language and communication needs leading to social isolation in school.
- Neurodevelopmental trauma and/or pre-birth trauma affecting processing needs.
- Learners typically working broadly within age-related expectations, with spiky profiles.

Learners may have additional medical or mental health conditions. The Services reserves the right to determine whether needs can be safely and effectively supported within existing resources.

**Not Normally Supported**

- Complex ASC profiles include extreme demand avoidance where needs cannot be safely met.

- Severe SEMH presentations (e.g. acute psychosis) require specialist clinical settings.
- Complex physical and sensory needs requiring specialist facilities not available at The Services.
- Global developmental delays have reached more than one Key Stage below age-related expectations.

**Refusal of placement**

The Services will only refuse a place on the following grounds and based on admission and assessment guidelines and that:

- The centre is full and therefore; there are no available places. This also applies to spaces with the appropriate Key Stage for each child.
- The child's needs do not meet the admissions criteria as specified by The Services. If the child's needs cannot be met, this will be specified in writing to the referrer as part of the consultation period.
- There is insufficient funding available to fund a place for the child's needs.
- The placement is unsuitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEN
- The placement is incompatible with the effective education of other young persons
- The placement would be incompatible with the effective use of resources.

**Please note:**

The decision made by the Services is final and cannot be overrode by the local authority, Parent(s) and Guardian(s).

**Induction on First Day**

On the learner's first day, staff provide a warm welcome, a site tour, key safety information (including fire procedures), and a pupil-friendly Welcome Pack. The learner meets their Key Staff and peers as appropriate. Any medications provided are managed in line with The Services' medication policy and parental consents.

**Initial Plan and Ongoing Review**

Within the first weeks of placement, an Individual Education and Support Plan (IESP) is compiled from the Baseline and existing EHCP targets. The IESP is reviewed daily in practice, formally at least termly, and contributes to the annual EHCP review. Adjustments are documented and authorised appropriately.

**Reviewing Placement and Exit Criteria**

- Annual review in line with statutory processes; early review if placement no longer meets needs.
- Exit may occur at key transition points, where mainstream/specialist provision is now suitable, or where attendance/engagement is no longer sustained.
- Placement may end where behaviour presents unacceptable risk to others or persistently compromises learning.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

The Services welcome all applicants irrespective of any learning needs and/or disabilities. However, its facilities (physical and otherwise) for children with significant learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities are currently limited.

The Services will do all that is reasonable to comply with the Equality Act 2010 so that The Services may accommodate the needs of disabled applicants for which, with reasonable adjustments, The Services can cater adequately. The Services will do all that is reasonable to ensure the application procedure (and any information about the centre) is accessible for disabled applicants and will make such reasonable adjustments as necessary. (See Accessibility Plan)

Parents must inform the centre when submitting a Registration Form of any special circumstances relating to their child which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and ability to fully participate in the education provided by The Services. Parents of disabled children may be invited to a preliminary meeting with the Line Manager of center to discuss ways in which any disadvantages could be lessened or eliminated from the admissions process and to ensure that the applicant can be adequately catered for should an offer of a place be made. The centre may request further information, such as a medical certificate or educational psychologist's report, and any associated correspondence from the student's current centre that The Services considers necessary to make a fair assessment.

If, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, the Services are unable to adequately cater for the needs of those children with disabilities, parents will be informed why an offer will not be made.

If an applicant's disability becomes apparent after admission, The Services will consult with parents about what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made to allow the young person to continue at the centre. If, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, The Services is unable to adequately cater for and meet the needs of the student, the Head of Center may request parents to withdraw their child.

**Reviewing policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually and any amended policy for the following September will be published on the Services' website before the end of the preceding September. The policy will remain on the website throughout the centre year. Any change to the policy will be proposed in draft in the proceeding July and circulated to commissioners and referring schools.

**Learner, Parent/Carer and Referrer Views**

The learner's views and aspirations are central to admissions decisions. Parental/carer preference is considered subject to suitability. Referrers and families must be supportive of placement and adhere to The Services' policies.

**Inter-Agency Collaboration**

The Services work alongside referrers and specialist services (e.g., educational psychology, CAMHS, SALT, OT, health and social care) to ensure plans are coherent and needs-led. Information sharing follows consent and safeguarding legislation.

**Equality, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination**

The Services upholds equality of opportunity and a zero-tolerance stance on discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Ethnic awareness and cultural competence inform planning, including dietary, religious and personal care considerations. Incidents are investigated and addressed in line with policy and the Equality Act 2010.

**Interpreter / Translation / Language Support**

Where English is not the first language of the learner or family, qualified interpreters are arranged for key exchanges. Services avoid reliance on family members except in emergencies. Language support needs are recorded in the IESP.

**Monitoring and Review**

The Line Manager monitors implementation. This Policy is reviewed at least annually or sooner in response to regulatory change.

**After Reading This Policy, Parents/carers and referrers Should Be Able To:**

- Describe the end-to-end admissions process at The Services.
- Identify the admissions criteria and grounds for refusal.
- Explain roles of Baseline Assessment, IESP, and inter-agency collaboration.
- Outline equality and interpreter arrangements in admissions and transition.

**Authorisation and Signature**

This Policy is the authorised version agreed by the CEO of The Services.

**Ludivine Parmentier**

**Chief Executive Officer**