



SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT

Admission Policy

Policy Reviewed: November 2026

Reviewed by: Grace Speakman

Checked by: [Rachel Pilling](#)

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Policy Statement

Safe Start School is a specialist independent school for young people aged 11–19 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We provide a safe, structured, nurturing and aspirational environment that supports pupils to re-engage with education and achieve educational and personal outcomes. This policy covers admissions to the school, including post-16 provision.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Manage admissions fairly, consistently and transparently.
- Assess whether each pupil's needs and EHCP provision can be met within the school's expertise, staffing, facilities and registered arrangements.

- Work with local authorities, families, young people and professionals to plan suitable placements and successful transitions.

Admission criteria

- Referrals are accepted through local authorities for young people within the school's registered age range of 11–19.
- Pupils must have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- The pupil's needs must be compatible with the school's SEMH provision, taking account of reasonable adjustments and any additional support that can be agreed.
- A place must be available and the school must agree that it can deliver the required provision safely and effectively.

Parents and carers may enquire about the school, but direct applications and self-referrals are not accepted. Placement and funding must be agreed with the commissioning local authority before admission.

Capacity

The school's maximum capacity is 38 pupils across the whole school, including post-16. Admissions must remain within the capacity and age range approved by the Department for Education. Any change requiring prior DfE approval must be approved before it is implemented.

Equality and inclusion

The school must not unlawfully discriminate in its admissions arrangements or decisions. Each referral is considered individually. A diagnosis, disability, previous exclusion or history of poor attendance does not, by itself, determine suitability. Reasonable adjustments, including appropriate auxiliary aids and services, are considered when assessing access and provision.

Where a placement cannot be offered, the school records clear, evidence-based reasons explaining the unmet needs, relevant limitations and support or adjustments considered. Decisions must not be based on general assumptions about a particular diagnosis or group.

Referral and placement decisions

1. The local authority sends consultation documents securely, including the current EHCP, professional advice and relevant education, attendance, safeguarding and risk information.
2. The admissions lead reviews the information with relevant school staff and seeks clarification where information is incomplete. The review considers learning, processing, communication, understanding, regulation, health and care needs, and all provision specified in the EHCP.
3. Where appropriate, the school arranges a visit or meeting and seeks the views of the young person and their parents or carers. Communication and access arrangements are adapted to enable participation.
4. The school considers the support required, reasonable adjustments, staffing, curriculum, peer group and any safeguarding or safety risks, including whether identified risks can be managed.

5. The school responds to the local authority within the applicable consultation timescale, confirming whether it can offer a place and identifying any additional provision, resources or funding required. If declining, it gives specific reasons.
6. Admission proceeds only after the school and local authority have confirmed the placement, funding, provision, start date and transition arrangements in writing.

Enrolment and transition

Before the pupil starts, the school gathers essential contact, emergency, medical, safeguarding and previous education information, including relevant social care involvement. Necessary records are requested securely from the previous setting. Staff agree initial support, risk management and communication arrangements with the family, young person and involved professionals.

Baseline assessments, including BKSb or Century where suitable, inform teaching and support. Assessments are adapted to the pupil's needs and may continue after admission; they are not used as an academic selection test.

Any phased start is individually planned, time limited and regularly reviewed. For pupils of compulsory school age, any temporary part-time timetable must follow the Attendance Policy and applicable guidance, with a clear plan towards full-time education.

Provision and support

Provision is personalised to the pupil's assessed needs, EHCP outcomes and agreed placement. It may include:

- Small classes, differentiated teaching, individual learning programmes and appropriate accredited qualifications.
- Consistent adult support, trauma-informed practice, emotion coaching and restorative approaches.
- Individual behaviour support, de-escalation strategies, regulation spaces and risk management plans.
- Carefully planned transitions and liaison with families, local authorities and relevant external professionals.

Any specialist or therapeutic provision required by the EHCP must be identified and arrangements agreed before the school confirms it can meet need. The school does not imply that all therapies are routinely available on site.

Post 16 admissions and progression

Post-16 placements are considered individually against the young person's EHCP, aspirations and preparation for adulthood outcomes. Progression from Year 11 is planned through transition discussions and the EHCP review process; it is not automatic.

Before admission or continuation, the school and local authority agree the intended programme, attendance hours, support, funding and review arrangements. The programme may include Functional Skills English and maths, independence, community participation, careers guidance and preparation for employment, further education or training. Young people's views and decision-making rights are respected, with appropriate support and family involvement.

A registered age range of 11–19 does not create an automatic entitlement to a new placement or continuation at age 19. Before agreeing provision at that age, the school checks the statutory definition of a pupil, the nature and timing of the course, and its registered arrangements, seeking written DfE clarification where needed. Any continuation of secondary education begun before age 18 must be checked against the applicable legal conditions. Required approval must be obtained in advance.

Registration and records

Pupils are entered in the statutory admission register on their starting day, before or at the beginning of the first session. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, including applicable backup, retention and local authority notification requirements. Any learner who does not meet the statutory definition of a pupil must be recorded appropriately and must not be incorrectly included in statutory pupil registers.

Referral and admission information is handled securely under the school's data protection arrangements. Decisions and supporting reasons are recorded. Concerns about the school's handling of an admission may be raised through the Complaints Policy; local authority placement decisions should be raised with the authority.

Admissions contact and review

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This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier following changes in legislation, guidance, registration or provision. It should be read with the SEND, Equality and Accessibility, Safeguarding, Attendance, Data Protection and Complaints policies.