

Policy and Procedure on Admissions

Cambian Dilston College

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1. Introduction

Cambian Dilston College offers specialist education and care for young people primarily aged 16 to 25 with a broad range of complex needs including learning disabilities, autism spectrum conditions, Down's syndrome, developmental disorders, communication difficulties, behaviours that challenge, and complex medical needs. We offer day placements and residential placements across 38-week and 52-week pathways. Applications are welcomed from all local authorities and, where appropriate, from overseas applicants.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out clear, fair, and transparent arrangements for admissions to Cambian Dilston College. It applies to all enquiries, referrals and applications for day and residential provision and should be read alongside the College's Safeguarding Policy, Complaints Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and Privacy Notice.

3. Definitions

Applicant: A prospective learner for whom an enquiry, referral or application has been made.

EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan issued by the Local Authority.

Entry Panel: The College multi-disciplinary panel that screens referrals, oversees assessments and recommends offers.

38-week learner: A learner who attends during term time with education and, where applicable, term-time residential care.

52-week learner: A learner whose placement includes year-round residential care and education as appropriate.

Day learner: A learner whose placement is education, term time only.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

Admissions decisions and processes are guided by the relevant requirements for schools and colleges in England, and must also take into account CQC expectations. They should be informed by our registration conditions and aligned with our stated purpose:

- Children and Families Act 2014 (Part 3) – including duties relating to EHC needs assessments and plans (ss.36–43).
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (statutory guidance).
- Equality Act 2010 – duties not to discriminate and to make reasonable adjustments.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) – statutory safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges.
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 – lawful, fair and transparent processing of personal data.

5. Equality, Diversity and Accessibility

The College welcomes applications from all prospective learners and will not discriminate on the basis of a protected characteristic. We will make reasonable adjustments during visits, assessments and communications, and will provide information in accessible formats on request.

6. Data Protection and Information Sharing

We collect and process information to assess suitability for placement, to plan support, and to seek funding. We will share information with relevant professionals and Local Authorities where it is lawful and necessary. If an application does not proceed, assessment records are retained and disposed of in line with our retention schedule. Please see the College Privacy Notice for further details on the lawful bases we rely on, individual rights, and how to contact the DPO.

7. Admissions Criteria

- Age 16–25 (exceptionally outside this range where in the young person’s best interests and compatible with funding requirements).
- An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or, where in process, evidence that an assessment is under way.
- Needs within the College’s specialist expertise, resources and environmental safety (including therapy where applicable).
- Placement compatible with the safety and welfare of the applicant and others, with risks manageable through proportionate controls.
- Availability of a suitable peer group, accommodation (for residential), and staffing ratios.
- Funding agreement in place with the commissioning Local Authority (or other commissioner).
- We must maintain a higher proportion of residential students aged 18 and over to ensure we are not classified as a ‘mainly or wholly’ children’s provider, which would place us outside the scope of our registration conditions

8. Needs We Cannot Safely or Effectively Meet (examples)

- Needs requiring clinical or environmental controls that the College does not have and cannot reasonably secure in time.
- Risks that remain unmanageable following reasonable adjustments and enhanced staffing, such that the safety of the learner or others cannot be assured.
- Where the curriculum and peer group cannot be appropriately matched to the learner’s assessed needs and outcomes.

9. Transparency and Timeframes

We aim to acknowledge enquiries within 3 working days, advise on next steps within 10 working days of receiving key documents, and provide an outcome within 10 working days of an assessment, subject to completeness of information and complexity. Timeframes may vary during peak periods; we will communicate any delays.

10. Admissions Process – Day Placements

1. Initial enquiry and optional visit for the young person and parents/carers (reasonable adjustments available).
2. Application received (or referral via Local Authority) with the latest EHCP, professional reports and current placement information.
3. Entry Panel screening to confirm eligibility, identify additional information required, and consider any immediate safeguarding matters.
4. Pre-entry information gathering from relevant stakeholders (e.g., school, social care, health).
5. Assessment at College typically 2 days for day placements, including observation across education, therapy and residential contexts as relevant.

6. Multi-disciplinary review of assessment findings by the Entry Panel; decision to offer or decline, with rationale recorded.
7. Offer issued subject to funding; where declined, signposting to alternative provision (e.g., via Local Authority and Natspec).
8. Transitions Team summarises information and drafts an initial transition plan.

11. Admissions Process – 38-Week and 52-Week Residential Placements

1. Initial enquiry and optional visit for the young person and parents/carers (reasonable adjustments available).
2. Application received (or referral via Local Authority) with the latest EHCP, professional reports and current placement information.
3. Entry Panel screening to confirm eligibility, identify additional information required, and consider any immediate safeguarding matters.
4. Pre-entry information gathering from relevant stakeholders (e.g., school, social care, health).
5. Assessment typically includes visits to the applicant's home/current setting, followed by College visits; an overnight assessment may be offered if appropriate. Health/clinical input as required.
6. Compatibility assessment where young person can share an accommodation.
7. Multi-disciplinary review of assessment findings by the Entry Panel; decision to offer or decline, with rationale recorded.
8. Offer issued subject to funding; where declined, signposting to alternative provision (e.g., via Local Authority and Natspec).
9. Panel decision and conditional offer subject to funding and capacity.
10. On funding agreement, the Local Authority contract confirms the funded support, outcomes, and review points.
11. Transitions Team summarises information and drafts an initial transition plan.

12. Accommodation Compatibility and Ongoing Review

Cambian Dilston College is committed to ensuring that all residential accommodation allocations promote the safety, wellbeing and positive experience of every learner. As part of the admissions and transition process, an initial compatibility review will be completed to determine the most suitable residential environment for the young person. This includes consideration of peer group compatibility, behavioural and sensory needs, communication styles, night-time support requirements, and environmental risk factors.

Once a young person moves into residential accommodation, the College will continue to monitor compatibility and suitability through ongoing observation, staff feedback, review of support plans, and discussions with the learner where appropriate. If concerns arise, or if it becomes evident that an alternative residential location would better meet the young person's needs or safeguard their welfare, the College will initiate a review of accommodation arrangements.

Any proposed change of accommodation will be discussed collaboratively with the commissioning Local Authority, Social Worker, parents/carers, and other relevant professionals. Decisions will always be

guided by the young person's best interests, safety, and ability to achieve outcomes stated in their EHCP. Where changes are agreed, the College will ensure a planned transition that minimises disruption and supports continuity of care.

13. Assessment – What We Consider

- Engagement, participation and enjoyment in sessions
- Communication, interaction and relationships
- Behaviour and any behaviours of concern; known triggers and effective strategies
- Functional skills including literacy and numeracy
- Sensory and physical needs; therapy and equipment requirements
- Health needs and medication management
- Staffing ratio, environmental adaptations and specialist resources
- Compatibility with peer group and curriculum; pathways to independence and adulthood outcomes

14. Decision Principles

An assessment does not guarantee a place. Decisions balance the applicant's best interests, the College's ability to deliver the outcomes in the EHCP, and the safety and welfare of all. We will set out reasons for our decision.

15. Funding and Contracting

Where a place is offered, the commissioning Local Authority (or other commissioner) will confirm funding in writing. The contract will set out the programme, support levels and review arrangements. Any subsequent changes to staffing ratios or support needs will be consulted on with the commissioner.

16. Transition, Induction and Start Dates

For 38-week learners, start dates are typically in September following a summer transition visit. For 52-week learners, start dates are agreed on a case-by-case basis, with bespoke transition plans proportionate to need. On admission, learners receive an induction and baseline assessment; support plans and risk assessments are finalised.

17. Appeals and Complaints

Applicants, parents or carers may request a review of an admissions decision within 15 working days of notification, stating grounds. Reviews are considered by a senior manager not involved in the original decision. This does not affect statutory rights under the Children and Families Act 2014 to request or

appeal EHCP content via the Local Authority and the SEND Tribunal. Complaints about process may be made via the College Complaints Policy.

18. Safeguarding

Safeguarding is paramount. Any immediate safeguarding concerns identified during admissions will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for action in line with statutory guidance and College policy.

19. Roles and Responsibilities

Transitions Team: Coordinates enquiries, visits and assessments; compiles assessment summaries.

Entry Panel: Screens referrals, considers assessments and makes recommendations on offers.

Commissioning Manager/Commercial Team: Liaises with Local Authorities and manages contractual documentation

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Advises on safeguarding considerations at each stage.

Principal/Deputy Principal: Approves the policy, oversees its implementation and resource planning.

20. Service Standards (Typical Timeframes)

- Acknowledge enquiry within 3 working days.
- Advise next steps within 10 working days of receiving core documents.
- Assessment scheduled within 6 weeks where appropriate and capacity allows.
- Decision communicated within 10 working days of assessment.
- Written offer/decline letter issued within 5 working days of decision.

21. Withdrawal or Deferral of Offers

We may withdraw or defer an offer if material information comes to light that affects safety, suitability or funding; if capacity changes (e.g., due to health and safety considerations); or at the request of the applicant/commissioner.

22. Records and Retention

Admissions records are retained in line with the College's retention schedule and data protection obligations. Applicants may exercise their information rights as set out in the Privacy Notice.

23. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if there are significant legislative or organisational changes. Implementation is monitored through Entry Panel minutes, audit of timeframes, and feedback from applicants and commissioners.

24. Appendix A: Placement Process Overview (Text Flow)

- Enquiry → Information request → Optional visit
- Entry Panel screen → Assessment planning → Assessment at College / in setting
- Multi-disciplinary review → Decision → Offer (subject to funding) or decline with signposting
- Funding agreement → Transition planning → Start and induction

25. Appendix B: Key Statutory References (summary)

- Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3 (including ss.36–43).
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (DfE/DoHSC).
- Equality Act 2010 (duties re: discrimination and reasonable adjustments).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current version).
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018; ICO guidance on children's data and education information.

26. Appendix C: Placement Flowchart

