

POLICY – Admissions

Education Universal

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Approval Date	Feb 2026
Policy Approver	Jo Dunn, Compliance, Regulation and Quality Director
Next Review Date	Feb 2029
Version No.	001
Policy Level	Education
Staff groups affected	All Education

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the service's established governance and quality assurance systems. Responsibility for ensuring that the policy remains compliant with legislation and regulatory frameworks sits with the Proprietor Representative and Regional Lead.

A formal review of this policy will be undertaken no later than three years from the date of approval, or sooner if changes in legislation, regulatory guidance, or operational requirements necessitate it.

The Head of Policy will support this process by identifying relevant changes in legislation, regulation, national standards and emerging best practice. The Head of Policy will also incorporate learning from inspections, audits and practice developments into future revisions whilst overseeing all proposed amendments to the universal content to ensure accuracy, consistency and compliance.

Alison Lewis

Interim Head Teacher

Andrew Sutherland and Rob McConomy

(Proprietor Representative/Regional Lead)

Terminology

Our aim is to use consistent terminology throughout this policy and all supporting documentation as follows:

Term	Definition
'Establishment' or 'Site'	A generic term referring to the school/college owned by CareTech.
Learner	Any child or young person under the age of 18, or young adult over 18 who receives education.
Service Head	The senior person with overall responsibility for the school/college.
Tutor/Teacher	Members of staff who have teaching responsibility for learners at the school/college.
Parent/Carer	Parent or person with parental responsibility.
Regulatory Authority	The independent regulatory body responsible for inspecting and regulating services (e.g., Ofsted, Estyn, Education Scotland).
Social Worker	The worker allocated to the individual learner; if none is allocated, the Duty Social Worker or Team Manager is responsible.
Placing Authority	The local authority/agency responsible for placing the learner or commissioning the service.
Local Authority	The local authority for the establishment's location.
Staff	All staff working at the location, including employed staff, students on placement, contractors, agency staff, volunteers and proprietors.



1. Local School/College Profile

Cambian Oakwood School is an independent specialist day school providing education for children and young people aged 5–16 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The school operates within the Cambian Group. Oakwood School serves a small, highly specialised cohort of learners who typically present with complex SEMH needs, often alongside attachment difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, a history of trauma, and challenging behaviour. Many pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education, including placement breakdowns and negative prior experiences of schooling. Most learners are placed through Local Authorities, and the majority have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The school's ethos is shaped by Cambian's core values of Engage, Empower, Aspire, Achieve and Excel, with a clear moral purpose to help every learner reach their personal best, however that may be defined for them. Oakwood's vision is to raise confidence and self-esteem through inspiring, personalised learning experiences, enabling pupils to develop resilience, independence and ambition, and to make a positive contribution to their communities

Cambian Oakwood School provides a specialist, child-centred learning environment for pupils who have previously struggled to access education. Through high expectations, compassionate practice and a commitment to inclusion, the school supports learners to rebuild their confidence, re-engage with learning and progress academically, socially and emotionally at a pace that is right for them.

2. Purpose

Admissions is the front door to our provision. We want it to be fair, transparent and kind—whilst robust enough to protect learners and staff, and to sustain high-quality programmes. This policy explains how we consider applications and referrals for places at our sites.

This policy applies to Cambian Oakwood School and sets out our approach to admissions, referrals and offers for all programmes. It provides a universal framework and outlines expectations for:

- **Staff**
- **Senior leaders**
- **Learners**
- **Visitors and contractors (where relevant)**

This policy enables **Cambian Oakwood School** to:

- Meet statutory duties
- Uphold safeguarding responsibilities
- Comply with data-protection requirements
- Maintain high-quality provision



3. Scope

Our admissions approach is consistent across the organisation. The same principles apply whether the enquiry comes from a commissioner, a parent/carer, or a learner themselves.

- This policy applies across all sites, services and education functions.
- It sets universal standards that every site follows.
- Each site implements these standards in line with the national requirements summarised in Appendices A–C (to be added later).

4. Local Adaptation Requirement

Some sections are marked **[Adapt Locally]**. These are completed by each site to reflect local operational procedures or national equivalents (e.g., safeguarding framework, inspection remit, curriculum/quality framework, data-protection contacts).

All local additions are:

- **Accurate**
- **Up to date**
- **Consistent** with national legislation and regulator guidance
- **Fully aligned** with this universal policy

Where no local adaptation is required, the universal content applies fully.

5. Legal and Regulatory Context

We work within the statutory duties, safeguarding requirements and inspection arrangements of the nation in which each site operates. The universal standards in this policy are applied in line with the correct national frameworks set out in **Appendices A–C**.

6. Definitions & Terminology

A shared vocabulary keeps decisions consistent and defensible.

- **Admissions:** the process of receiving, assessing and deciding upon applications/referrals for places.
- **Referral:** a request for placement from a commissioning local authority, agency or provider.
- **Offer:** a conditional or unconditional place confirmed in writing, with any pre-admission requirements.
- **Over and under 18s:** this policy applies to learners under 18 and 18+; where steps differ, we say so explicitly.
- **Reasonable adjustments:** proportionate changes to remove or reduce barriers so a learner can access education.



- **Parent/carer:** for under-18s; for 18+, we engage directly with the learner and involve others with consent.

7. Admissions Principles

We aim for admissions that are thoughtful and steady—never rushed; always fair.

- **Fair, transparent, inclusive:** Open criteria; consistent decisions; no unlawful discrimination.
- **Right learner, right programme:** Match programme requirements with needs and site capacity to support well.
- **Safeguarding first:** Safety and welfare shape every step.
- **Needs-led and proportionate:** Identify barriers early; plan reasonable adjustments where feasible.
- **Timely communication:** Keep learners (and where appropriate parents/carers/commissioners) informed at each stage.
- **Evidence-based decisions:** Records show the rationale, evidence reviewed, and any conditions.
- **Data minimisation:** Collect only what we need to decide fairly and safely.

8. Eligibility & Entry Routes

We welcome enquiries and referrals through defined routes and we make it easy to understand what we offer.

- We consider direct applications, commissioned referrals, managed moves/transition and re-admission following a break in education
- We admit across defined **age ranges and phases** and for specified **programmes/qualifications**.

Cambian Oakwood School provides specialist education for pupils aged 5 to 16 years, covering the primary and secondary phases.

The school delivers a staged, needs-led curriculum comprising the following programmes:

- **Primary Programme (Key Stages 1–2):** A broad and balanced curriculum with an emphasis on early literacy, numeracy, communication skills, and the development of social, emotional and behavioural regulation.
- **Lower Secondary Programme (Key Stage 3):** An adapted curriculum that builds on core academic skills while incorporating structured social skills development, emotional regulation, and engagement in a wider range of subject areas.
- **Upper Secondary Programme (Key Stage 4):** A personalised learning pathway which includes accredited courses (e.g. GCSEs, functional skills, or equivalent qualifications), alongside vocational learning opportunities and preparation for adulthood, including employability and independence skills.
- **SEMH Therapeutic Programme (All Phases):** Integrated support focusing on social, emotional and mental health needs, including targeted interventions,



therapeutic input, and behaviour support strategies embedded across the curriculum.

All programmes are tailored to individual education, health and care plan (EHCP) outcomes and are designed to support pupils in re-engaging with learning, developing resilience, and achieving positive post-16 destinations.

9. Information We Request at Application/Referral

We only ask for information we need to make a safe, fair decision.

- Personal details and contact preferences
- Prior education and attainment; current programme or provider
- Relevant support needs, reports or plans
- Safeguarding/welfare considerations (shared lawfully and proportionately)
- Health and access needs relevant to participation and safety
- Commissioning/financial details where a third party funds the place

10. Assessing Suitability and Support

Our goal is the best possible learner-programme match, with realistic support that sets everyone up for success.

- The education team considers fit with the programme, site capacity, and support pathways.
- We explore reasonable adjustments; where they are feasible and proportionate, we plan them.
- For 18+, we seek learner consent to liaise with third parties unless there is a legal/safeguarding reason to share.
- Where a multi-agency team is involved, we coordinate to reduce duplication and delay.

11. Interviews, Visits and Tasters

We use interviews and visits to help the learner decide—and to help us keep the promise we make when we offer a place.

- Interviews may be in person or online and focus on goals, readiness, and support needs.
- Visits/tasters are offered where this helps decision-making.
- If a learner cannot attend in person, we offer reasonable alternatives.

12. Risk and Safeguarding Considerations

We won't compromise on safety. Risk work is proportionate and pragmatic.

- We complete pre-admission risk considerations to keep the learner and others safe.
- Where risks are identified, we plan mitigations; if risks cannot be managed proportionately, we record why an offer cannot be made.



- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Stephen Bloore, Deputy Head Teacher
- **Deputy Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSP Deputies):** Gary Nolan, Deputy DSL and Angela Vickers, Deputy DSL
- **Safeguarding Contact Route:** All safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL in person or via email:
Stephen.bloore@cambianguroup.com

Where neither is immediately available, concerns should be reported via the main school office **01743850840** and recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding reporting system.

Refer to the 'Risk Assessment and Risk Management Care' Policy and the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection' Policy for full pathways.

13. Decision-Making & Offers

Decisions should be timely, clearly reasoned, and explained in writing.

- Decisions are made by the Headteacher or a named senior leader with delegated authority.
- Outcomes: Offer, Offer with conditions, Defer, or Decline.
- We confirm outcomes in writing, with reasons for any Decline/Defer.
- Where conditions apply, we list what must be in place (e.g., commissioning confirmation; agreed support).

14. Oversubscription & Prioritisation

If demand exceeds capacity, we apply clear criteria and keep the process steady.

- Suitability for the programme and availability of specialist support
- The site's ability to meet needs safely and well
- Continuity of learning for current/returning learners where applicable
- Where applications exceed available places, priority will be given to pupils whose needs most closely align with the school's SEMH specialism and therapeutic model
- Referrals demonstrating a clear match to existing provision, staffing expertise, and available groupings will be prioritised to maintain safe and effective learning environments.
- The school will consider cohort balance, including age, need profile, and group dynamics, to ensure the safety and progress of all pupils.

15. Conditions of Admission

We set clear expectations from day one.

- Acceptance of the site's Code of Conduct and Attendance/Engagement expectations
- Agreement to lawful information sharing necessary for education and safety
- Completion of induction and baseline assessments where relevant
- For commissioned places, funding confirmation



16. Reasonable Adjustments & Support Planning

We aim to remove barriers and keep the learner at the centre.

- We consider, and where reasonable, implement adjustments.
- We agree a support plan with the learner (and parents/carers, where appropriate) and review it at planned intervals.
- If we cannot reasonably meet needs or manage risk, we explain why and signpost alternatives.

17. Fees and Funding

Clarity on money protects everyone's expectations.

- Where fees apply, we publish them transparently and confirm what they include.
- Commissioned places follow the commissioning agreement.
- **Commissioning Contact: Raj Majid raj.majid@cambiangroup.com**
- **All fee enquiries, including placement costs, inclusions, and any additional charges, should be directed to the contact above.**
- **A placement is not confirmed until written funding agreement has been received from the commissioning authority and formally accepted by the school.**

18. Induction & Transition

A thoughtful start reduces anxiety and prevents early withdrawals.

- Induction covers programme overview, support, digital access, attendance/engagement, conduct, safeguarding, and how to get help.
- Transition planning is proportionate and, where appropriate, multi-agency.
- For under-18s, we involve parents/carers; for 18+, we involve others with the learner's consent.

19. Withdrawal, Deferral or Non-Start (Universal)

We manage changes in a way that respects the learner and protects curriculum delivery.

- A learner (or commissioner) may request deferral/withdrawal; we record the reason and agree any re-entry conditions.
- We may withdraw an offer if conditions are unmet or material information was withheld.
- We signpost alternatives where possible.

20. Appeals & Complaints



A fair review process improves trust and decision quality.

- **Admissions appeal:** a learner (or parent/carer where appropriate) may request a review of an admissions decision.
- **Process:** submit grounds in writing; a senior leader not involved in the original decision will review.
- **Outcome:** we confirm the outcome in writing with reasons.
- Complaints follow our Complaints Policy.
- Appeals Submission Route: Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Regional Education Lead:
Rob McConomy rob.mcconomy@cambiangroup.com
- Review Timescale:
- Appeals will be acknowledged within 2 working days.
- A review will be completed by a senior leader not involved in the original decision and a written outcome provided within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal (where practicable).

21. Data Protection & Records

Our records need to tell the story clearly if sampled at inspection.

- We collect, use and retain data lawfully, fairly and securely.
- Each admissions file contains: application/referral, evidence reviewed, interview notes, risk considerations, decision rationale, offer letter, and any conditions.
- We follow organisational retention schedules.

Refer to our 'Records Management' Policy and our 'Data Protection' Policy for further information.

Russell Edge is our company Data Protection Officer.

22. Roles & Responsibilities

Everyone has a part to play; accountability is clear.

- **Headteacher/Principal:** owns the policy locally and is accountable for fair, safe, compliant admissions.
- **Senior leader (admissions):** oversees process, chairs complex discussions, ensures timely decisions and quality record-keeping.
- **Education team:** assess suitability, advise on reasonable adjustments, shape support plans.
- **DSL/DSP:** advises on safeguarding and risk; records any safeguarding considerations.
- **Administration:** manages communications, data integrity and filing.



23. Monitoring, Quality Assurance & Reporting

We review admissions data to spot gaps, tackle disproportionality and improve access.

- We monitor application volumes, decisions, timelines, reasons for declines/deferrals, and equality trends.
- We review data termly and agree improvement actions.
- We sample admissions files for completeness and quality.

24. Training & Communication

Competent people make better, faster, safer decisions.

- Staff involved in admissions receive training in fair decision-making, inclusive practice, safeguarding and data protection.
- We keep our website/prospectus current so routes, timelines and criteria are easy to understand.

[Oakwood-Prospectus-Dec-25-v2.pdf](#)

25. Linked Policies

This policy coordinates with the following:

- Positive Behaviour Support
- Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- SEND/ALN/ASN Policy
- Inclusion
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Data Protection
- Records Management
- Complaints

Equality Impact Statement

This policy has been developed to promote equality, safeguard individual's rights, and ensure fair and inclusive practice across all services. The potential impact of the policy on children, young people, young adults, families, and staff with protected characteristics has been considered in line with the Equality Act 2010.

No negative impacts have been identified. Staff must apply this policy with sensitivity to individual need and make reasonable adjustments to ensure equitable access, safety, wellbeing, and participation for every individual. Any emerging risks of differential impact should be reported and addressed through ongoing review and quality assurance.



Appendix A

Legislation, guidance and regulatory framework underpinning Admissions in England.

Education inspection framework (EIF) — Ofsted

- **Means:** Ofsted inspects our schools and FE sites under the EIF; inspectors sample our admissions policy, case files and communications to judge fairness, inclusion and compliance.
- **Requires:** Admissions are fair, documented and compliant (safeguarding, equality, SEND, records) with evidence ready for triangulation.
- **Our stance:** We show a transparent end-to-end process (criteria, decisions, oversubscription, appeals).
- **Implementation example:** Admissions file set (application, risk notes, adjustments, decision rationale, offer/decline letter) is available for sampling.
Links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

- **Means: Our sites must meet ISS;** parts on welfare, information, complaints and leadership directly shape how we run and evidence admissions in our schools.
- **Requires:** Written procedures, accurate pre-admission information, compliant letters and proprietor oversight.
- **Our stance:** Admissions documentation maps to ISS Parts 3/6/7/8.
- **Implementation example:** ISS cross-map links each admissions step to the relevant Part and evidence.
- **Links:** <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283>

Equality Act 2010: Advice for Schools (DfE)

- **Means: Our sites apply Equality Act duties** in admissions; decisions must show non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments. (Guidance framed for schools but can apply in FE).
- **Requires:** Equality and adjustments reasoning in the decision record.
- **Our stance:** Every decision record includes an equality/adjustments check.
- **Implementation example:** Equality checklist signed by the Headteacher/Principal is filed with the decision.
- **Links:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

SEND Code of Practice (0–25) (Schools & FE)

- **Means:** Our sites consider SEND needs and reasonable adjustments before confirming an offer for learners 0–25 (Schools & FE).
- **Requires:** Graduated response evidence and a clear rationale where needs can/can't be met.
- **Our stance:** Assessment, planned support and any conditional offer requirements are documented.



- **Implementation example:** Case file holds SEN plan/EHC extracts and decision rationale.
- **Links:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

- **Means:** Our sites' admissions steps sit inside our safeguarding culture; DSL oversight is built into complex cases.
- **Requires:** Proportionate checks, lawful information-sharing and secure records.
- **Our stance:** DSL/DSP signs off safeguarding considerations in complex admissions.
- **Implementation example:** DSL risk note and any multi-agency contact are stored in the admissions pack.
- **Links:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Schools)

- **Means: Our schools keep a compliant Admissions Register** and follow the rules for entries, deletions and returns.
- **Requires:** Maintain an accurate register and make it available for inspection.
- **Our stance:** Central register with auditable changes and retention controls.
- **Implementation example:** Register extract and deletion rationale available on request. **Links:** <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2006/1751/contents/made>

Data protection (UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018)

- **Means:** Our sites process admissions data lawfully and securely, with clear privacy information and timely responses to rights requests.
- **Requires:** Lawful basis, privacy notices, retention schedule, SAR handling and security.
- **Our stance:** Admissions is privacy-by-design with defined retention and SAR SLAs.
- **Implementation example:** Admissions privacy notice + RoPA/DPIA (where needed) filed centrally.
- **Links:** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools>