POLICY – Admissions

Education Universal

Home Tree School

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Policy Approver	Jo Dunn, Compliance, Regulation and Quality Director
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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.

Tonia Lewis
Divisional Education
Lead

Karen Carrington
Head teacher

Terminology

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

Term	Definition
'Establishment' or '	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 Authorit	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.
	All staff working at the location, including employed staff, students on placement, contractors, agency staff, volunteers and proprietors.

Staff

1. Local School/College Profile

Cambian Home Tree School is an independent specialist provision that provides relevant, positive and high-quality education experiences and support for your child. We cater for children and young people aged 11 to 19 with ongoing social, emotional and mental health difficulties with associated complex needs. Most of the learners that come to us have had negative experiences in prior educational settings and as a result this impacts on both academic achievement and social confidence. Our specially trained staff provide a warm, nurturing and caring school environment that allows children and young people to feel safe and valued as individuals.

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 **Home Tree 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 Home Tree 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 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**.
- Ages from 12-18

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.
- **Karen Carrington DSL contact** and safeguarding mailbox/route

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/Principal 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

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.

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. Site.

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.

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.

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 Protectio
- Records Management
- Complaints

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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-inspectionframework

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/uksi/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-advicefor-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-0to-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-ineducation--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

Appendix B

Legislation, guidance and regulatory framework underpinning Admissions in Wales.

Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024

- **Means:** Our sites in Wales meet these standards; leadership, welfare, information and complaints requirements shape how we run and evidence admissions in our schools.
- **Requires:** Clear admissions info, compliant communications/records, proprietor oversight.
- **Our stance:** Policy/evidence map to the applicable standards.
- **Implementation example:** Standards mapping sheet shows evidence for each admissions step.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2024/27/made

Estyn — Inspection guidance

- **Means:** Estyn inspects our sites in Wales and will sample admissions evidence for fairness, inclusion and compliance.
- **Requires:** Evidenced criteria, transparent decisions, equality monitoring and timely communication.
- **Our stance:** We present admissions data, decisions and QA to Estyn on request.
- **Implementation example:** Termly SLT report shows volumes, timelines, outcomes and disproportionality.
- **Links:** https://estyn.gov.wales/sector/independent-schools/

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 (Schools & FE)

- **Means:** Our sites follow the ALN Code at admission for Schools & FE—assessing needs and planning support (IDP where required) before confirming an offer.
- **Requires:** Person-centred assessment, documentation and clear rationale.

- **Our stance:** Admissions decisions reference ALN evidence and, where applicable, IDP arrangements.
- **Implementation example:** Case file contains ALN info and any agreed support/conditions.
- **Links:** https://www.gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-code

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

- **Means:** Our sites act within the ALN legal framework, and where relevant we signpost rights of challenge to the Education Tribunal for Wales.
- **Requires:** Lawful decision-making with clear reasons and routes of redress.
- **Our stance:** Decline/deferral letters explain reasons and next steps.
- **Implementation example:** Template letters include ALN/appeal signposting where applicable.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents

Keeping Learners Safe (Welsh Government)

- **Means:** Our sites' admissions steps are embedded in Welsh safeguarding expectations with DSP oversight for complex cases.
- **Requires:** Proportionate checks, lawful information-sharing and secure records.
- **Our stance:** DSP reviews complex admissions and notes risks/mitigations.
- **Implementation example:** DSP note and, if needed, referral evidence in the admissions pack.
- **Links:** https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe

Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 (Schools)

- **Means:** Our schools in Wales keep a compliant Admissions Register and follow Wales rules for entries/deletions.
- **Requires:** Accurate register; available for inspection.
- **Our stance:** Central register with audited changes and retention controls.
- **Implementation example:** Register extract and deletion rationale available on request.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/1954/contents

Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)

- **Means:** Our sites handle admissions data lawfully and securely with clear privacy information and timely rights responses.
- **Requires:** Lawful basis, privacy notices, secure handling, retention and SARs.
- **Our stance:** Admissions is privacy-by-design with defined retention and SAR SLAs.

- **Implementation example:** Admissions privacy notice and SAR log are maintained and available.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents

Appendix C

Legislation, guidance and regulatory framework underpinning Admissions in Scotland.

Independent school inspections — HMIE

- **Means: HM Inspectors inspect our sites in Scotland** and will sample admissions evidence for fairness, inclusion and secure record-keeping using HGIOS4 QIs.
- **Requires:** Clear criteria, consistent decisions and evidence of information provided to applicants.
- **Our stance:** Admissions decisions and communications are evidenced and available for inspection.
- **Implementation example:** Sampling pack shows the route from enquiry to decision and any support/conditions.
- **Links:**https://educationinspectorate.gov.scot/inspection-guidance/school-andelc/independent-school-inspections/

How good is our school? (HGIOS4)

- **Means: Our sites use HGIOS4 for self-evaluation**, including how admissions influence inclusion, learner experience and outcomes.
- **Requires:** Analysis of access, transparency and improvement actions linked to admissions.
- **Our stance:** Admissions metrics and equality analysis feed our self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- **Implementation example:** Termly self-evaluation includes admissions trends and actions to improve access.
- **Links:** https://educationinspectorate.gov.scot/inspection-frameworks/hgios4/

GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child)

- **Means: Our sites align admissions and transition planning** with SHANARRI wellbeing and multi-agency coordination where needed.
- **Requires:** Evidence that barriers/supports were considered before confirming an offer/decline.
- **Our stance:** We document needs, reasonable adjustments and transition planning at admission.
- **Implementation example:** Child's Plan (where applicable) and support notes are filed with the admissions pack.
- **Links:** https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023)

- **Means: Our sites embed Scottish child protection expectations** in admissions screening, information-sharing and safe onboarding.
- **Requires:** Proportionate risk consideration and referral where concerns emerge during admissions.
- **Our stance:** DSL/DSP oversight is built into complex admissions with secure records.
- **Implementation example:** Risk note and inter-agency discussion record (if required) are retained.
- **Links:** https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protectionscotland-2021-updated-2023/documents/

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

- **Means: Our sites apply the ASL duties** at admission—identifying needs and planning coordinated support where required.
- **Requires:** Consideration of needs and supports before confirming a place or conditions.
- **Our stance:** We evidence how needs and supports were weighed in the admissions decision.
- **Implementation example:** Admissions file references ASL considerations and planned supports.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/contents

Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)

- **Means: Our sites handle admissions data lawfully and securely** across Scotland with clear privacy information and timely rights responses.
- **Requires:** Lawful basis, privacy notices, secure handling, retention and SARs.
- **Our stance:** Admissions is privacy-by-design with defined retention and SAR SLAs.
- **Implementation example:** Admissions privacy notice and retention entry (RoPA) are maintained.
- **Links:** https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents