



THE ORCHARD SCHOOL

Admissions Policy

Draft: March 2026

Ratified: May 2026

Review: May 2027

Chair of Governors:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written over a faint horizontal line.

Headteacher:

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The Orchard School Admissions Policy

Ethos of The Orchard School

At The Orchard School, Everyone Matters, Everyone Cares. Our ethos is rooted in the belief that every child has the potential to grow, thrive, and succeed when provided with the right environment, relationships, and support. The Orchard Way guides everything we do, ensuring that our approach is therapeutic, inclusive, and centred on understanding behaviour as communication. We are committed to nurturing the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of our pupils, recognising their unique challenges while celebrating their individuality. Through strong relationships and a culture of care, we create a school where every pupil feels safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Principles of Our Ethos:

1. **Respect for the Individual:** Every pupil deserves respect, dignity, and the opportunity to be heard.
2. **Relationships at the Heart of Learning:** Positive, trusting relationships form the foundation of our work.
3. **Equity and Inclusion:** We ensure all pupils have access to the support they need to succeed.
4. **Therapeutic and Nurturing Approaches:** We integrate therapeutic strategies to promote resilience.
5. **High Expectations with Compassion:** Balancing aspirations with understanding and personalisation.
6. **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Families, carers, and agencies work together to support pupils.
7. **A Safe and Predictable Environment:** Structure and boundaries foster trust and confidence.
8. **Restorative Practices:** Addressing conflicts through understanding, accountability, and growth.

Mission Statement

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1. Introduction

The Orchard School is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive learning environment for students with special educational needs. This policy outlines the criteria and procedures for student admissions, ensuring compliance with the latest guidance from Kent County Council (KCC), the Kent Education Learning and Skills Information (KELSI), The Children and Families Act 2014, and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Placements are made by the Local Authority (Kent County Council) through the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process.

2. Principles of Admission

The Orchard School will work in partnership with the Local Authority to ensure that:

- Pupils admitted have needs that align with the school's SEMH designation
- The school is able to meet the child's needs as set out in their EHCP
- Admissions support the safety, wellbeing and progress of all pupils
- Decisions reflect both individual need and the needs of the existing cohort

Where a pupil's EHCP names The Orchard School, the school will admit the pupil unless one of the statutory exceptions applies.

3. Consultation Process

Under statutory requirements, Kent County Council will consult with the school before naming it in a pupil's EHCP.

As part of this process, the school will consider:

- The pupil's identified needs (Section B of the EHCP)
- The provision required to meet those needs (Section F)
- The compatibility of the placement with:
 - the efficient education of other pupils
 - the efficient use of resources
- The safety and wellbeing of the pupil and others
- The current cohort profile, including complexity of need
- The school's capacity, staffing and available provision

The school will respond to consultations within statutory timescales.

4. Admissions Criteria

The Orchard School admits pupils whose primary need is SEMH and whose EHCP names the school.

In considering whether placement is appropriate, the following factors will be taken into account:

- Whether the school's therapeutic and relational model is suitable for the pupil
- Whether the school can deliver the provision specified in the EHCP
- Whether the placement is compatible with the needs of the existing cohort
- Whether admitting the pupil would impact on the safety and learning of others

5. Capacity and Cohort Considerations

The Orchard School operates within agreed capacity limits and staffing structures designed to meet the needs of pupils with SEMH.

When considering admissions, the school will take into account:

- Current pupil numbers in relation to commissioned places
- Class sizes and staffing ratios
- The balance and complexity of need within each cohort
- The cumulative impact of multiple high-need placements

Where appropriate, the school may advise that a placement would:

- compromise the safe or effective education of other pupils
- place unsustainable pressure on staffing or provision
- reduce the school's ability to meet the needs of existing pupils

6. In-Year and Emergency Placements

The school may be consulted on in-year or emergency placements.

These will be considered in line with the same principles outlined above, with particular attention to:

- risk
- transition planning
- immediate capacity to meet need

7. Appeals and Dispute Resolution

Where a parent or carer has concerns about a placement decision, these should be raised in the first instance with **Kent County Council (KCC)**, who are responsible for decisions relating to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Parents and carers have the right to seek further advice, request mediation, and, where appropriate, appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

Further information about the process, including how to raise concerns, access mediation and register an appeal, can be found via:

- Kent County Council (KELSI): <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs>
- UK Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability>

Independent advice and support is available from:

- Kent SENDIASS

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs/send-information-advice-and-support>

The school will work constructively with families and the Local Authority to resolve concerns wherever possible.

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with the latest statutory requirements and guidance from KCC and KELSI. Any amendments will be made in consultation with the school's governing body and will be communicated to all stakeholders.

9. Contact Information

For further details or clarification regarding this policy, please contact:

- **The Orchard School Admissions Office:** consultations@orchard.kent.sch.uk
- **Kent County Council School Admissions:** [KCC School Places](#)

- **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Teams in Kent:**
 - **East Kent SEN Team:** sen.east@kent.gov.uk | 03000 421160
 - **North Kent SEN Team:** sen.north@kent.gov.uk | 03000 410204
 - **South Kent SEN Team:** sen.south@kent.gov.uk | 03000 421160
 - **West Kent SEN Team:** sen.west@kent.gov.uk | 03000 410209

10. References

- School Admissions Code: [KELSI Guidance](#)
- KCC Admissions Criteria: [KCC Website](#)
- KELSI Admissions Guidance: [KELSI Admissions](#)