ADMISSIONS POLICY

Version:	1.9
Reviewer:	Julia James, Kelly Phillips
Reviewing body:	Quality, Standards & Safeguarding Committee
Approval body:	Boards of Trustees
Date this version approved:	Friday 13th February 2026
Due for review:	Spring 2027

Admissions Policy

INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust (OHC&AT) is a family of providers, comprising Orchard Hill College (OHC) and Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT), which works for mutual benefit. The OHC&AT family operates across London and the South East, across two separate DfE Regional Directorates (RD) – South East and London. We engage with quality improvement work regionally and nationally to benefit our pupils and students. We believe that together we can offer the very best for our pupils and students and our local communities.

OHC&AT places the development and achievement of its pupils and students at the heart of its vision and strategic direction. Improving opportunities and outcomes for our pupils and students in our local communities is at the core of all that we do. All young people deserve to leave education confident that they have developed the skills they need to achieve their ambitions, with meaningful education, work and life experiences to draw on.

OHC&AT is committed to equality of opportunity and to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion. We have a 'can do' approach to meeting the needs of all pupils and students. Expertise across OHC&AT is widely distributed and this enables us to be proactive when considering admissions for a wide range of children, young people and adults.

OHC&AT PROVISION

Academies – SEND and Outreach

Our expertise covers a broad range of needs and abilities including, but not exclusively, pupils and students with identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). OHC&AT benefits from the sharing of best practice across different settings and places great emphasis on its working partnerships within local communities, including Local Authorities and employers. This means that we are able to be responsive to the needs of pupils and students in both mainstream, through our outreach programmes, and SEND provisions, including Alternative Provision, to deliver quality and high standards in both contexts.

OHC&AT is committed to meeting the needs of pupils and students who have a broad spectrum of additional learning needs, some of which will be complex and severe. Some needs will relate to specific learning difficulties, neurodivergent conditions including autism, mental health needs, physical and medical needs or those relating to emotional wellbeing and complex communicative behaviours.

All pupils and students will typically have a 'primary need'; many will have a range of additional coexisting special needs that can act as a barrier to their learning and development. Our expertise provides pupils and students with the support and experiences to enable them to succeed in following their life and career ambitions.

Orchard Hill College

For young people and adults with a range of mild, moderate, severe, profound and/or complex special needs, as well as those who have not been in education, employment or training (NEET) for some time, the College offers a range of differentiated programmes: Foundation Skills for Life, Skills for Work and Living, a Workstart package comprising Into Work Experience, Into Work Enterprise and Return to Work programmes, Adult Work and Community programmes, supported internships, traineeships and apprenticeships. Each programme is tailored to the individual's need and has a focus towards the four Preparing for Adulthood pathways: employment, independent living, good health, and friends, family and community.

ADMISSIONS

Any placement within an OHC&AT provision will be as a result of careful consideration of that young person's needs, how effectively those needs can be met in that provision and whether they can be met without detriment to other pupils and students already at the provision. It is essential that each setting carefully manages its pupil/student intake to ensure that they are placed within a context that will most effectively support them to reach their full potential.

Decisions regarding the placement of children and young people involve a number of stakeholders, such as the view of the child or young person, parent/carer preference, commissioners and the views of experts within the Academy or College. For pupils/students wishing to access SEND specialist placements, the Local Authority is responsible for commissioning the place. Most OHC&AT provisions require applicants to have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (see separate Admissions Procedures). For those requiring this, however, it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to make an emergency placement. Examples of exceptional cases when it may be necessary to make an emergency placement include:

- *the child or young person's medical circumstances have changed suddenly, causing a rapid and serious deterioration in their health or development, including safeguarding concerns;*
- *where a child or young person arriving unexpectedly in the LA exhibits such significant learning or other difficulties as would normally warrant an EHCP.*

In addition, settings that have a Nursery may offer Assessment Places where a child is likely to require specialist provision. These will be agreed with the LA and multi-disciplinary teams prior to placement.

In deciding whether a child or young person currently being supported in a mainstream or other setting requires admission to a specialist OHC&AT provision, the key question is whether there is convincing evidence that the individual's profile of needs have not sufficiently responded to purposeful action taken by that setting, along with the help of external support and advice. Typically, the child or young person's needs will have been supported through a high level of additional resources and will be persistent or

recurring, complex and long term. Assessments are thorough and it is likely that the child or young person will be observed as part of the overall assessment process. In those settings where admission into Specialist Nursery Provision is agreed, thorough assessments will be made from the first day of admission to contribute to the development of and make any recommendations for inclusion in the child's Education Health and Care plan within the first 6 months of admission and in line with statutory requirements.

Post-16 places are also subject to availability of funding and funding eligibility criteria as laid out in the Department for Education's funding regulations – further details can be accessed via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision

When a referral is received from the placing Local Authority, the OHC&AT provision will consider the request and respond in writing within the statutory timeframe. Where placement is agreed, clear and planned transition arrangements are put in place to manage the move. These will be tailored for individual pupils and students.

If a decision is taken not to offer a place, clear reasons will be given for that recommendation. The reasons will be expressed in terms of the needs of the child or young person, and/or whether a place is available at the provision within the appropriate context (e.g. year group or college centre) and/or the efficient education of other young people already in situ, so that it is clear why the recommendation is made that they do not meet the published admissions criteria.

APPEALS (The First-Tier Tribunal–Special Educational Needs and Disability)

If a parent or guardian of a child in respect of whom an EHCP is maintained by a Local Authority appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability), either against the naming of an OHC&AT provision in the child's EHCP or asking the Tribunal to name an OHC&AT provision, OHC&AT agrees to be bound by the decision of the Tribunal on any such appeal. Where OHC&AT, the Secretary of State or the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) has determined that an OHC&AT provision should be named in a child's EHCP, that provision must admit the child.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
SEND Policy and Information Report
Admissions Procedures for Orchard Hill College and OHCAT Academies