

Path Hill Outdoors Admissions Policy

Status:	Updated Policy Date:	Scheduled Review:
Voluntary National Standard	September 2025	September 2026

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity for the Admissions process to Path Hill Outdoors and ensure it is fair and consistent. It is written with reference to the SEND Code of Practice, approved by the Director and reviewed annually.

Introduction

Path Hill Outdoors is an outdoor alternative provision for students aged 8 to 18 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We provide a bespoke 1 to 1 programme as well as a small group intervention. Students that are referred to us often fall in one of the below categories:

- The child is either at risk of exclusion or has been excluded, or is currently not at the right setting, and needs support to continue engaging in education.
- The child needs extra support during a time of transition e.g. mainstream to specialist setting, from school to employment, between care arrangements.
- The child is need of enrichment or respite. The child may already be attending another provision.

Many of the students attending Path Hill Outdoors have

- a diagnosis of a neurodivergent condition such as autistic spectrum condition (ASC) or attention deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD)
- had disrupted and inconsistent experiences of school and learning
- had significant challenges in their lives or have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Places for students are commissioned at the centre by schools and several local authorities, including Oxfordshire, Reading, West Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Wokingham, Bracknell and Hampshire.

Admissions criteria

Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND)	<p><i>Path Hill Outdoors can deliver therapeutic and educational outcomes for students with one or more of the following needs.</i></p> <p>The student has an EHCP which indicates that the child has a diagnosis or is awaiting a diagnosis of:</p>
---	--

	<p>a) ASC and associated communication and interaction difficulties</p> <p>b) Anxiety- There are indications that the child cannot or is unlikely to cope socially and emotionally in a mainstream setting and is distressed by the experience.</p> <p>c) ADHD</p> <p>d) Language and communication need that have led to social isolation</p> <p>e) Neurodevelopmental trauma and/ or mild pre – birth trauma compromising process needs.</p> <p>f) Children have abilities in the average or above average learning range but may display atypical learning styles and uneven (spiky) profiles of cognitive strengths and difficulties.</p> <p>g) Learners may present with additional medical conditions including mental health issues. However, Path Hill Outdoors reserves the right to decide whether these can be reasonable be managed safely and effectively within its existing resources.</p> <p>Please note: We are usually unable to support children with the following areas of need, but each referral is assessed on a case-by-case basis:</p> <p>h) Complex ASD including Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)</p> <p>i) Children with severe SEMH including Schizophrenia, Psychosis, Severe personality disorders.</p> <p>J) Children who have complex physical and sensory needs</p> <p>k) Children have global developmental delay.</p>
Additional indicators of PHO support	<p>a) The child is in need of additional/ alternative care e.g. Child we care for system, adopted, kinship care, special guardianship</p> <p>b) The child has experienced a recent trauma, such as a bereavement or peer-on-peer abuse</p> <p>c) There are family difficulties including limited family support, family breakdown, mental health in the family, moving of schools and home</p>
Child views and referrer/ parental/ carer preference	<p><i>The views of the child and parent/ carer preference are important admissions indicators in our admissions decisions. They are considered subject to the provision being appropriate to the age, ability, aptitude and special education needs of the child.</i></p> <p>a) Admission to PHO is consistent with the child’s views and aspirations as set out in the EHCP</p> <p>b) The view of the student are, as far as possible, expressed and evidenced and indicate a positive preference for a change to their current type of provision</p>

	c) Path Hill Outdoors must be satisfied that the referrer and parents/ carers are supportive of the placement at PHO, including being adherent to the policies and procedures that are in place.
Age	a) The admission request is for children in Key stages 2,3,4. Referral for children at the end of Key stage 1 will be considered on a case-by-case basis. b) Consideration is given to the stage of education and future transition points for this child.
Ability and aptitude	Consideration will be given to whether the placement is compatible with the efficient education for other children already attending Path Hill Outdoors, and the efficient use of resources including adult support. a) Students will have needs and ability profiles that are broadly compatible with an appropriate key stage peer group. b) The child's behaviour is not detrimental to the needs of other learners.
Travel time	a) The student lives within one hour travelling time to Path Hill Outdoors b) Required travel to and from PHO would not be detrimental to the student's wellbeing or readiness to learn / engage.

The timeframe for the admissions process depends on a number of factors including:

- The quantity and nature of the referrals received
- The availability of placements
- Sourcing specialist training and adult support to meet health and learning needs.

Admissions procedure

Referrals will be considered if they meet the admissions criteria and there is a space on the required programme.

Path Hill Outdoors works in triangulation with referrers, parent/carers and other relevant professionals involved in the child's life. This ensures effective communication with everyone involved to assess whether Path Hill Outdoors could meet a child's needs and, if offered a place, supports a smooth transition to starting a placement and an effective, bespoke educational programme is delivered.

Our admissions procedure appreciates how challenging the transition to a new placement can be for a child and their family. It recognises that the needs of each child need to be planned for sensitively and thoroughly. It is for this reason that all transitions are planned according to individual child's needs. This ensures that each student has the best start to settling in and building trusting relationships with their 1 to 1 instructor, other staff and peers.

The admissions procedure is as follows:

1. Initial enquiry: Referrals are accepted at any time and new admissions can take place throughout the year. The initial referral can be made by a school, the local authority, parents/carers through an EOTAS package or a member of the children social care team. Once a referral has been made, a 1 to 1 programme manager or small group programme manager will contact professionals and parents/carers to discuss the student. We request as much information as possible to assist with the decision as to whether PHO could potentially meet needs and to proceed to the next step.

2. Path Hill Outdoors site visit: We insist on families and/or referrers come and visit our site with the referred child. The reasons for the visit are as follows;

- a) For the 1 to 1 programme manager or small group programme manager to assess how the student(s) responds to our woodland environment and whether we could meet need.
- b) For the 1 to 1 programme manager or small group programme manager to get a sense of the child(ren)'s needs and interest and, if they were to attend PHO, decide which instructor(s) would work best 1 to 1 with the child(ren).
- c) For the child(ren) to see whether they would like to attend PHO.
- d) For families and professionals to see whether they think PHO is the right provision for the child.

3. Assessment period Once an official request has been made by the local authority, or the school, Path Hill Outdoors will ask for referral paperwork, relevant documentation and/or Education Health Care plans. We will then review the documents and information gathered from the initial enquiry to determine whether the admission criteria is met and a good 'fit' is likely.

Should the centre consider itself to be an unsuitable placement for the child for any reason as detailed in the above 'Admissions criteria', the application will not be progressed to the next stage. The decision made at Path Hill Outdoors is final and cannot be overrode by the local authority or school.

Please note, failure to disclose information that may affect the validity of the admissions process at any stage may lead to the process being terminated.

If Path Hill Outdoors feels that they can meet the needs of the child, we will discuss with the referrer the approximate start dates. The referrer will submit all paperwork to the 1 to 1 programme manager or small group programme manager for them to decide and allocate a placement.

4. Offer agreed Any placement offered will be subject to the full cost of the placement unless there has been prior agreement between the placing authority and PHO. Once the local authority / school/ referrer has agreed a placement and funding and contracts have been signed, the parents/carers or referrers will need to arrange transport with the relevant council.

We will request a completed and signed contract from the local authority, school, referrer and require parents/carers to complete medical and permission forms. The placement will not start until the contracts have been signed and information has been provided.

5. Bespoke transition We will consider the student's needs to create a transition plan. Some students require shorter sessions initially, or different start times to ensure they miss the busier

part of the day. Some students require an extra visit before starting, particularly if it was a long time before they last visited.

Refusal of placement

Path Hill Outdoors will only refuse a place on the following grounds and based on admission and assessment guidelines and that:

1. Path Hill Outdoors is full and therefore, there are no available places
2. The child's needs do not meet the admissions criteria as specified above. If the child's needs cannot be met, this will be specified in writing to the referrer as part of the consultation period
3. There is insufficient funding available to fund a place for the child's needs
4. The placement is unsuitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEND
5. The placement is incompatible with the effective education of other students
6. The placement would be incompatible with the effective use of resources
7. Please note that the decision made by Path Hill Outdoors is final and cannot be overrode by the local authority, parent/carers or referrers

Reviewing a child's placement

A placement at Path Hill Outdoors will be reviewed annually in line with statutory requirements within the EHCP. If it is felt that the placement is no longer meeting the needs of the child or the placement of the child is impacting the needs of the other children, then an early review may be called and placement will be terminated.

Exit criteria

- a) The child has progressed to such an extent that they could now thrive in mainstream or specialist provision with support
- b) The child's attendance drops significantly and they are no longer accessing PHO (see Ending a Placement at Path Hill Policy)
- d) The child or referrer express the wish for a change in provision
- e) The child's behaviour has become a threat to the health and safety of other children and/ or staff.
- f) The child's behaviour has become detrimental to the learning and emotional needs of the other learners. Path Hill Outdoors strongly feel that no child's behaviour should compromise the opportunities of others within the centre.
- g) There is insufficient funding available to place a child and meet their needs.
- h) The child's needs change to include additional support that was initially not forecasted in the initial assessments during the admission process.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Path Hill Outdoors welcomes all applicants irrespective of any learning needs and/or disabilities. However, its facilities (physical and otherwise) for children with significant learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities are currently limited.

Path Hill Outdoors will do all that is reasonable to comply with the Equality Act 2010 so that we may accommodate the needs of disabled applicants or medical needs for which, with reasonable adjustments, PHO can cater adequately. PHO will do all that is reasonable to ensure the application procedure (and any information about the centre) is accessible for disabled applicants and will make such reasonable adjustments as necessary. (See Accessibility Plan)

Parents/carers must inform Path Hill Outdoors when submitting a referral form of any special circumstances relating to their child which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and ability to fully participate in the education provided by PHO.

Parents/carers of disabled children may be invited to a preliminary meeting with the Director or a 1 to 1 Manager to discuss ways in which any disadvantages could be lessened or eliminated from the admissions process and to ensure that the applicant can be adequately catered for should an offer of a place be made.

Path Hill Outdoors may request further information, such as a medical certificate or occupational therapist's report, and any associated correspondence from the student's current provision that PHO considers necessary to make a fair assessment.

If, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, PHO is unable to adequately cater for the needs of those children with disabilities, parents/carers will be informed why an offer will not be made. If an applicant's disability becomes apparent after admission, PHO will consult with parents/carers about what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made to allow the young person to continue at the centre.

If, after reasonable adjustments have been considered, Path Hill Outdoors is unable to adequately cater for and meet the needs of the student, the Director may request parents/carers to withdraw their child.

Reviewed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Warwick".

Julia Warwick- Director September 2025