



WILDS LODGE
SCHOOL

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Date of issue: September 2025

Review Cycle: Annual

Next Review Date: September 2026

Wilds Lodge School is part of Newcome Education, which is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its learners and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values: ACCEPT

- Authenticity
- Connection
- Curiosity
- Empowerment
- Positivity
- Tolerance

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Wilds Lodge School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the [Education Act 1996](#), which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance [Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility updated August 2023](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative

- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school contracts the services of third-party organisations to ensure regulatory compliance and implement best practices for:

- HR and Employment Law
- Health & Safety Guidance
- DBS Check processing
- Mandatory Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and other relevant training
- Educare / National College (online CPD)
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover
- Neotas (Online searches / Social Media checks)
- VVW (legal)

Where this policy refers to 'employees', the term refers to any individual that is classified as an employee or a worker, working with and on behalf of the school (including volunteers and contractors).

Wilds Lodge School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, learners and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Wilds Lodge School.

The policy documents of Wilds Lodge School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Wilds Lodge School is an independent specialist provision for children and young people or children and young people who have been diagnosed with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) as their main presenting need and meet the criteria listed below. The school offers weekly boarding placements for our male learners and co educational day placements for learners aged 5-19, currently with a provision to admit up to 120 learners.

Wilds Lodge School is part of Newcome Education, which is owned and operated by

Cavendish Education Group who run a wide group of specialist schools for children and young people with a range of special educational needs and disabilities, including social and communication disorders and Specific Learning Difficulties.

Learner class sizes at Wilds Lodge School are managed to ensure small groups, with no more than eight learners per class. Where possible, placements will commence at the beginning of an academic term, although consideration will be given to individual circumstances. Where appropriate a gradual transition will be planned, involving multi-agency liaison and school visits.

As a registered independent school (not listed by the Secretary of State under Section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014), those with parental responsibility and the young person concerned may request that Wilds Lodge School be named in the young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and the local authority will consider this request. However, the local authority is not under a specific duty to secure a place, and nor is Wilds Lodge School under a (section 43) duty to admit a particular learner. However, Wilds Lodge School follows the spirit of¹ the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2015, and Admissions Code (December 2014) when considering placements.

2. ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Places are usually offered for the start of September. However, Wilds Lodge School appreciates that learners may be out of education for a variety of reasons, when it is important for them to return to full time education. Therefore, Wilds Lodge School does take admissions at other times of the year, subject to the Head's discretion. All referrals are considered on an individual basis. Where learners meet the eligibility criteria, a place will only not be offered if, after assessment, it is considered that Wilds Lodge School would not have suitable provision to meet the learner's needs.

2.1. Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria for young people applying are:

- Wilds Lodge School having space in an appropriate class/peer group. Wilds Lodge School does not hold a waiting list, as it is felt this may hinder the process of learners being placed at another suitable provision, and potentially remaining out of education.
- The learner must have a proposed draft, or final Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Details of the learners' Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs are outlined in their EHCP.
- The learner, academically, is ideally working towards their expected levels and showing readiness to learn. However Wilds Lodge School recognises that some learners are not always ready to learn, and our priority is to nurture and encourage in order to improve their readiness.
- That all those with parental responsibility are in support of the placement and in agreement with the strategies and ethos of the school. Continued support of

those with parental responsibility and partnership with Wilds Lodge School is essential for the success and viability of any placement.

- That the learner is local authority funded.
- The learner lives within a reasonable distance of the school. Government guidance states that the travel distance from home to school as a general rule should not exceed 45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for secondary learners. Wilds Lodge School appreciates that due to the limited nature of SEN provision that longer journey times may be unavoidable, and so will not necessarily preclude a referral. Also, journey times may be longer for boarding placements, as travel will only be at the start and end of each school week.

2.2. Assessment of whether Wilds Lodge School can ‘meet need’.

We consider the young people who apply on an individual basis. Where a learner meets the eligibility criteria (as set out in 2.1) we will only decide not to offer a place if Wilds Lodge School:

(a) considers itself to be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs of the learner; and/or

(b) the placement would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others, and/or the efficient use of resources.⁵

Assessment of whether we can meet a learner’s needs is a very difficult process and can depend on a variety of factors such as: the journey time they would face; whether their chronological year group is working at a compatible level (with differentiated curriculum); whether they would have a socially compatible peer group; and whether we have the right academic offer.

In line with the Equality Act 2010, Wilds Lodge School does not discriminate on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Wilds Lodge School will make reasonable adjustments to ensure young people with disabilities receive the same provision, as far as possible, as the other young people in our care. It should be noted that Wilds Lodge School is allowed to be selective based on academic ability .

The school’s ability to meet need is based on our current cohort and the learner’s presentation at the time of assessment. Should an application be unsuccessful, however, we understand that the learner’s needs (and our cohort) may change over time. It is for this reason that we welcome reapplications one year after a previous decision has been made.

There may be circumstances where the assessment process indicates that a learner will require a higher level of support and resources to meet their additional complex needs. On these occasions Wilds Lodge School would require complex needs funding in addition to the standard school fee.

2.3. Priority Considerations

Our referrals are considered on a 'first come first served' basis and it should be noted that all learners at Wilds Lodge have SEND, EHCPs and their needs should be considered as a priority. However, Wilds Lodge School recognises that children in care are amongst the most vulnerable children in society, therefore there is great importance in finding these young people an appropriate educational setting as quickly as possible. Wilds Lodge School will therefore give first priority to 'looked after' or 'previously looked after' children.

2.4. Waiting list

Wilds Lodge School does not hold a waiting list where there is no available space in a year group as we believe this gives 'false hope' to parents/carers wishing to explore places who may then hold off from seeking alternative provision. However, we do still encourage local authorities to submit applications for these year groups, so we can give them a formal response.

2.5. Appeals

As an independent specialist setting Wilds Lodge School is not bound by the School Admissions Code 2022 and does not have an appeal process in relation to our admissions process. However, it should be noted that we handle our referrals with the utmost care and attention and should you be unhappy, you are welcome to raise your concern with the admissions team, or make a complaint to the school under our 'Parental Complaints Policy', the latest version of which can be found on our website.

3. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE

Wilds Lodge School's admission procedure has up to six stages:

3.1 Enquiry Stage

Those with parental responsibility or the local authority are able to contact the Admissions Team by:

- Email: admissions@wildslodgeschool.com
- Website: <http://wildslodgeschool.co.uk>
- Telephone: 01780 767254

They may discuss the school provision and/or enquire about the admission procedure.

Appointments to visit the school are available on request, providing an opportunity to tour the school and meet with various staff members.

3.2 Application Stage

Applications for learner placement are made by local authorities who send Wilds Lodge School the learner's final or draft EHCP, in addition to the appendices (supporting documentation) referred to in Section K of the EHCP.

Following a letter of consultation and receipt of paperwork from the local authority, the Admissions Team will review the documentation and, where possible, respond to the local authority within 15 working days to:

- confirm receipt of documents;
- request further information from the local authority, if required;
- send parent/carer questionnaires and school questionnaires to provide further current information on the learner's needs and to support their assessment;
- confirm in principle that Wilds Lodge School may be able to meet the needs of the learner and to arrange further assessment; or
- advise that Wilds Lodge School is unable to meet the needs of the learner at this time.

3.3 Assessment Stage

Where Wilds Lodge School may be able to meet the needs of the learner in principle, an assessment will be arranged. Assessments vary depending on timescales, availability and the learner's needs and may involve:

- attending Wilds Lodge School, for approximately half a day;
- visiting the learner's home; and/or
- visiting their current education provision.

Following assessment Wilds Lodge School will notify the local authority that Wilds Lodge School is either:

- offering a place, and will prepare a report outlining the offer;
- unable to meet the learner's needs at this current time, and will prepare a report outlining reasons why;
- recommending a further assessment visit, to explore other aspects of the placement (such as exploring social and educational compatibility with another class group);
- seeking further clarification from professionals as to suitability of placement (this might include an Educational Psychology assessment).

An assessment report will be sent to the local authority within ten working days of the final assessment, outlining Wilds Lodge School's decision regarding placement. Any offer letter will include details of fees, support level, proposed amendments to the EHCP and a start date.

It should be noted that Wilds Lodge School is unable to reconsider applications made for placement within 12 months of an assessment decision declining to make an offer.

Typical Assessment Visit

Where learners are invited to Wilds Lodge School for an assessment visit, this may include, but not be limited to, the learner having:

- a tour of the school;
- a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team;
- time within a classroom alongside peers of a similar age and stage of learning.

Discussion will take place with those with parental responsibility prior to an assessment visit, to discuss how best to prepare the learner for the assessment. Where appropriate a schedule and social story will be sent to help in this preparation.

3.4 Offer (if applicable)

Where an offer is made, it will be held open for a period of three months from the date of the offer letter, in which time the local authority should notify Wilds Lodge School of its acceptance or decline of the offer.

Where the local authority declines an offer, and those with parental responsibility choose to appeal the local authority decision not to support placement, the offer will be held open until the outcome of the tribunal has been determined. Wilds Lodge School will comply with assessments and visits as required by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Tribunal (SENDIST).

3.5 Transition (if applicable)

Where the local authority confirms acceptance of an offer, the school will contact those with parental responsibility and the current school (if applicable), to commence transition planning and an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) will be issued. An IPA is the agreement between a school and local authority that sets out the terms and conditions of the learner's placement at Wilds Lodge School.

A start date for the learner will be agreed, and the IPA must be signed by the local authority and received by Wilds Lodge School at least two weeks before placement starts. A learner will only be able to commence their placement at Wilds Lodge School once the IPA is finalised.

Wilds Lodge School will liaise with those with parental responsibility, and the local authority to devise a Transition Plan for the learner, which may include:

- visit days to Wilds Lodge School before the learner is on roll;
- a part-time timetable and schedule for gradually increasing attendance;
- aims for the learner's transition including individual strategies relating to each learner and their SEMH needs.

Wilds Lodge School will send a welcome pack to those with parental responsibility, including information about the school, consent forms and learner information forms.

Previous school files and other relevant professional reports will be requested from the local authority, including safeguarding records.

The SENCO and Therapy Team will plan provision of therapeutic assessment and input as outlined in the EHCP.

Gradual transition plans will be reviewed regularly with an aim to move towards full-time attendance as soon as is appropriate. We recognise that for some young people who have become anxious about attending school, the priority will need to be forming trusting relationships with the class team and learner support team, helping the young person to feel safe and secure within the school setting.