



Admissions policy

Approved by:
The Directors of Strive Alternative Provision

Signed on behalf of the Directors by:
Stacey Hickey, Head of Operations

Date Approved: October 2026
Review Date: October 2027

1. Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity and transparency around the admissions process to Strive Alternative Provision and to ensure that decisions are fair, consistent, child-centred, and safeguarding-led.

Strive recognises that many children referred to alternative provision have experienced disrupted education, unmet special educational needs, trauma, anxiety, or exclusion from mainstream settings. Admissions decisions are therefore made carefully, with the welfare, safety and long-term outcomes of the child as the central consideration.

Safeguarding Considerations in Admissions

Safeguarding is a central consideration throughout the admissions process. All referrals are reviewed in line with Strive's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).

The referrer/commissioner must provide sufficient information for Strive to assess suitability and plan safely, including relevant safeguarding concerns, risk assessments, attendance history, behaviour and regulation information, SEND/EHCP documentation, medical information and involvement with external agencies. Information should be shared lawfully, proportionately and on a need-to-know basis. Where essential information is missing, the admissions process or proposed start may be paused until it is received.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by and aligns with the following legislation and guidance:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice (2015, updated guidance applied)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

DfE Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners (2026)

DfE Non-school Alternative Provision: Voluntary National Standards (2025)

DfE Alternative Provision statutory guidance (updated 2025)

Education Act 1996, including section 19 duties relevant to local authorities

- Education and Inspections Act 2006

Strive is a commissioned alternative provision provider. This policy reflects the duties and expectations relevant to commissioners and education providers, while recognising that the commissioning school or local authority retains its own statutory responsibilities for the child or young person.

3. Behaviour, Regulation and Safety Considerations

Admissions decisions take into account behaviour, emotional regulation, and support needs in line with Strive's *Behaviour and Relationships Policy*.

Strive recognises that behaviour is a form of communication and will consider children whose behaviour reflects unmet needs, trauma or anxiety. However, placements will only be offered where behaviour can be managed safely and does not present an ongoing risk to the child, other pupils or staff.

Where behaviour presents significant safeguarding concerns, additional risk assessments may be required prior to placement.

4. About Strive Alternative Provision

Strive Alternative Provision provides primary and secondary day placements for children and young people aged 6–18.

We support pupils with:

- Communication and interaction needs
- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs
- Neurodivergent profiles, including autism and ADHD
- Trauma-informed and attachment-aware needs

Many pupils may:

- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Be Children We Care For or previously looked after
- Be placed via schools or local authorities

Placements are commissioned by schools and local authorities and are subject to availability, suitability, and funding.

5. Admissions Criteria

5.1 Special Educational Needs

Strive may be able to meet the needs of children who:

- Have an EHCP or are undergoing assessment, indicating:
 - Autism spectrum condition and associated communication needs
 - ADHD
 - Anxiety or emotionally based school avoidance
 - Speech, language and communication needs
 - Neurodevelopmental or early developmental trauma
- Have a learning profile and level of need that can be supported safely and effectively within Strive's curriculum, staffing and environment
- Present with co-occurring mental health or medical needs

All admissions are subject to an individual assessment of whether needs can be safely and effectively met within Strive's curriculum, staffing, environment and available resources, including through reasonable adjustments where required.

SEND and Graduated Response

Admissions decisions are informed by Strive's *SEND Policy* and the *SEND Code of Practice*. Consideration is given to whether the provision can deliver outcomes through appropriate, reasonable adjustments and a graduated, needs-led approach.

Where a child has an EHCP, Strive will review the plan and relevant professional advice to determine whether the commissioned package can appropriately contribute to the specified outcomes and provision. The commissioning local authority remains responsible for its statutory EHCP duties.

5.2 Circumstances Where a Placement May Not Be Suitable

Strive does not operate blanket exclusions based solely on diagnosis or disability. A placement may not be suitable where, following individual assessment and consideration of reasonable adjustments:

- The child requires specialist clinical, therapeutic, psychiatric or highly intensive support that Strive is not commissioned, staffed or equipped to provide safely
- The child requires specialist physical, medical or sensory facilities or support that cannot reasonably and safely be provided within Strive's premises or staffing model

6. Young Person Views and Parental / Carer Preference

Strive places high value on:

- The voice of the child
- The views of parents and carers
- The commissioning school or local authority

Admissions decisions consider whether:

- The placement aligns with the child's views and aspirations (where expressed)
- Parents/carers are supportive of the placement and Strive's policies
- The proposed placement is appropriate to age, ability, aptitude and SEN

7. Age, Ability and Cohort Compatibility

Admissions requests may be considered for pupils in:

- Key Stages 1–4
- Post-16 / NEET (16–18)

Consideration is given to:

- Educational stage and upcoming transition points
- Compatibility with existing cohorts
- The impact on the effective education and wellbeing of other young people

8. Travel and Accessibility

Admissions will consider whether:

- Travel time is reasonable and appropriate for the child
- Travel arrangements would not negatively impact wellbeing, regulation or engagement

Transport remains the responsibility of the commissioning authority or parents/carers unless otherwise agreed.

9. Admissions Procedure

Admissions operate on a rolling basis, subject to availability, suitability and agreed commissioning. Safeguarding information must be considered before a placement starts. Where concerns are identified, the DSL will advise on safeguarding and

information-sharing requirements; the placement decision will be made through the admissions process with appropriate leadership and commissioner involvement.

Stage 1 – Initial Enquiry

Referrals may be made by:

- Schools
- Local authorities
- Parents/carers or advocates may make an enquiry; formal placement requests must be agreed with the commissioning school or local authority

Initial discussions and visits allow Strive to gather information and determine potential suitability.

Stage 2 – Assessment and Information Review

Strive will request and review:

- Referral form
- EHCP documentation (where applicable)
- Professional reports and risk assessments

Relevant medical information, healthcare plans and emergency arrangements

Current attendance, behaviour/regulation and risk information

- Safeguarding information

Where relevant information is incomplete or has not been disclosed, Strive may pause the assessment or proposed start until sufficient information is available to make a safe and informed decision.

Assessment may include:

- Observations in the current setting
- Short visits to Strive

Stage 3 – Decision and Funding Agreement

If Strive considers the placement suitable:

- Start dates and provision model are discussed

- Where required, the referrer/commissioner completes its own panel, approval or funding process
- Funding and contracts must be agreed before transition begins

Stage 4 – Bespoke Transition

Every child receives a personalised transition plan, adjusted to individual needs and pace. This may include phased attendance and relationship-building support.

10. Refusal of Placement

Strive may refuse a placement where:

- No suitable places are available
- The child's needs cannot be safely met
- Funding is insufficient
- Identified risks to the child, other young people or staff cannot be reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable and proportionate measures
- The requested package cannot be delivered safely or effectively within the agreed commissioning arrangements and available resources

All decisions not to offer a placement will be communicated clearly to the referrer, with the principal reasons recorded. Decisions will be based on the individual child's needs, safeguarding and risk information, Strive's ability to deliver the requested provision safely and effectively, reasonable-adjustment considerations, cohort and site capacity, and the proposed commissioning arrangements.

11. Reviewing a Child's Placement

Placements are reviewed:

- Annually via EHCP review (where applicable)
- Earlier if concerns arise regarding suitability, attendance, safety or wellbeing
- Persistent non-attendance is treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in line with Strive's Attendance and Engagement Procedures and Child Protection Policy

12. Exit Criteria

A placement may end where:

- The child is ready to transition to another provision
- A key educational transition point is reached
- Attendance significantly deteriorates

- The child or referrer requests a change
- Risk has escalated to a level that cannot be safely managed despite review, reasonable adjustments, risk-management measures and appropriate multi-agency discussion
- Needs change beyond Strive's ability to meet them
- Funding ceases or becomes insufficient

13. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Strive is committed to the Equality Act 2010 and will consider reasonable adjustments throughout referral, assessment, transition and placement. A child will not be refused solely because they are disabled or have a particular diagnosis.

Where Strive concludes that needs cannot be met safely and effectively despite reasonable adjustments and proportionate support, the reasons will be recorded and explained clearly to the commissioner and, where appropriate, parents/carers.

Related Policies

This Admissions Policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- SEND Policy
- Attendance and Engagement Procedures
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

END OF POLICY

MONITORING & REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance, commissioning requirements or significant operational changes. The Head of Operations is responsible for coordinating review and ensuring relevant updates are communicated.

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes Made	Approved By
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2025.1	July 2025	Full rewrite and update to 2025 legislation	Directors of Strive AP (via SH)
2026.1	October 2026	Annual review; updated safeguarding guidance, AP standards, SEND/equality wording and admissions process	Directors of Strive AP (via SH)