

Admissions Policy

Author	Kelly Moss
Name of responsible officer	K Moss (Interim Head of School)
Approving Committee	Governing Body
Statutory Basis	Statutory
Requirement to publish on website	Yes
Reviewed	September 2026
Date ratified by approving committee	September 2027
Review period	Every year

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1. Rationale

At Vermont School, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. We recognise that children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs require relational, trauma-informed support in order to engage with learning and build resilience.

We are a specialist provision for pupils aged 5–11 whose Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) identifies SEMH as a primary area of need. Pupils may have additional needs in the other three areas secondary to this.

Our pupils often have gaps in emotional development caused by disrupted life experiences. At Vermont School, we meet these needs through a nurturing, structured environment where behaviour is understood as communication and every child is supported through attuned relationships, emotional literacy, and co-regulation.

This admissions policy ensures that pupils placed at Vermont School can access the specialist support they need to feel safe, valued, and ready to learn—laying the foundation for lifelong wellbeing and success.

2. Legislation and Guidance

Vermont School's admissions policy is developed in accordance with the statutory framework for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation and guidance.

The **Children and Families Act 2014** outlines the duties of Local Authorities, governing the provision of special educational needs services and ensuring that children with SEND receive the support required through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The Act mandates that Local

Authorities must identify and assess children with SEMH needs and ensure they are placed in appropriate educational settings.

The **Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)** provides statutory guidance for Local Authorities, education providers, and health services on supporting children with SEND. It highlights the importance of providing suitable education placements and ensuring the needs of children with SEMH are met through tailored support.

The **School Admissions Code (2021)** does not apply to maintained special schools. Vermont School is maintained by the local authority, and is specifically organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs. Admissions to Vermont School are administered by **Southampton City Council**, which, as the admissions authority for all special schools, holds the statutory responsibility to place pupils appropriately. In the event of oversubscription, it is the Local Authority's decision—**in consultation with the school and Aspire Community Trust**—to consider increasing pupil numbers above the agreed place numbers. Appeals regarding admissions are overseen by the Judiciary.

The **Equality Act 2010** places a duty on schools to ensure that children with disabilities are not discriminated against. This includes ensuring reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate children with SEMH needs and that the school environment is inclusive, accessible, and supportive.

The **Human Rights Act 1998** confers a right of access to education. This right does not extend to securing a place at a particular school. Admission authorities, however, do need to consider parents' reasons for expressing a preference when they make admission decisions, though this may not necessarily result in the allocation of a place.

The **School Standards and Framework Act 1998** provides that the admission authority for a maintained school must comply with any preference expressed by a parent except where to do so would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources.

3. Criteria and arrangements

Pupils usually join the school at the start of the school year, however by arrangement with the Headteacher, pupils can access places at other times of year. Consideration will be given to the numbers in and the profile of each Key Stage.

4. Eligibility Criteria

- The school can meet the pupil's special educational needs and disability in line with our core offer. See appendix 1.
- The child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) identifies SEMH as a primary or secondary area of need. Pupils may have additional needs in the other three areas secondary to this.
- The pupil's placement is not incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated.
- The placement is an efficient use of resources.
- The LA has named the school in a pupil's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

5. Referral to the school

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- Prospective pupils will be referred to the school by the Southampton City Council (SCC) SEND team.
- Placement at the school is only available through a referral from SCC.
- Places will not be offered to independent applicants.
- Parents wishing their child to be placed at the school should contact their Local Authority in the first instance.
- Placement at the school will be by referral from SCC to the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body, who will consider the potential suitability of the pupil to the school profile and giving consideration to those pupils currently on role.
- The Headteacher will use the information within the EHCP and attached papers to inform a decision as to the suitability of the pupil for placement at the school taking account of the eligibility criteria described above and will inform the SCC SEND team within 15 days of receipt of the referral. The Code of Practice entitles parents to appeal the decision of the school or the Local Authority to the 'SEN and Disability Tribunal' should a placement not be made available.
- Transfer between school phases will be considered in line with statutory obligation.

6. Appeal Arrangements

The SEN Code of Practice entitles parents to appeal to the SEN and Disability Tribunal if their LA refuses to name their preferred school in the EHCP.

7. Access/Travel

Transport is usually provided and funded by the pupil's LA for eligible pupils.



Appendix 1: Core Offer for Vermont School

	Cognition and Learning	Communication and Interaction	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	Sensory and physical
We are likely to be able to provide for…	• Pupils with specific learning difficulties that have additional impact on their SEMH needs. • Pupils who are able to work close to, at or above age-related expectations. • Pupils who are able to access a subject based curriculum. • Pupils who can access a curriculum differentiated through presentation, pace of delivery and recording mechanisms. • Pupils working significantly below age related expectations as a result of their SEMH needs and gaps in their learning. • Pupils who have difficulty sustaining attention and require substantial adaptations to support this.	• Pupils with a good level of functional communication and who are able to express their wants and needs. • Pupils who are able to understand instructions but may need this broken down into smaller steps. • Pupils who have difficulty interacting with others due to a social communication disorder.	• Pupils who have significant difficulties understanding and regulating their emotions which has led to learning taking place outside the classroom and/or exclusions. • Pupils who have significant sensory needs that impact on them accessing a mainstream classroom consistently. • Pupils who have difficulties developing and maintaining relationships with peers and staff. • Pupils with diagnosed mental health needs that require access to a high level of support. • Pupils experiencing significant anxiety and require a smaller environment. • Pupils requiring a high level of autism friendly strategies to support their SEMH needs effectively.	• Pupils who are independently mobile and able to access the school environment independently.

• Pupils who have health needs that do not require a high level of intervention or onsite nursing provision. • Pupils who have health needs that are not directly related to the primary area of need, requiring minimum intervention and can be met through delegated health support.	• Pupils who have assessed social care needs that impact on their SEMH needs. • Pupils who are looked after to the local authority and have experienced multiple home and school moves resulting in a detrimental impact on their SEMH needs. • Pupils who are open to the Youth Offending team and impact is evident due to the multi professional support.