HEATHERMOUNT SCHOOL

Admissions Policy

Document title	**Admissions Policy**
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Version number	**V9**
Review cycle	**Every 3 years***
Approved by	**Senior Leadership Team**
Date of review	**September 2028**

Document history

Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
V1	12th May 2020	Julie Swann	Annual Revision
V2	20th July 2020	Julie Swann	Legal adjustments
V3	4th Sept 2020	Julie Swann	Further adjustments
V4	30 June 2022	Julie Swann	Annual Revision
V5	1st March 2023	Julie Swann	Amendments due to change of ownership
V6	8th November 2023	David Stewart	Updated to Independent changing PAN number and ages in line with new status
V7	24th March 2024	Julie Swann	Update following annual review
V8	11th September 2024	Cathy friend	Updated in line with KCSIE 2024
V9	1st September 2025	Julie Swann	Update due to change of KCSIE date

- **Review may be more frequent, subject to any significant changes in Education Law, linked legislation in reference to admissions in line with ISI regulations, or significant applicable changes in KCSIE, other than annual date change.**

Heathermount School 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 students 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 value: 'building confidence and preparing students for life.'

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Heathermount 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
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover

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

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils 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 Heathermount School.

The policy documents of Heathermount School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasion, a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the republication 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.

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1. Introduction

Heathermount is an independent specialist school owned by Cavendish Education. It is registered with the Department for Education to accept a Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 90-day students between the ages of 5-18.

The school provides an education for children and young people who require Autism specific provision, which is their primary need, tailored to meet the student's social, sensory and communication needs, as well as providing support to enable them to manage their levels of anxiety and access the National Curriculum.

2. Aims

To ensure there are robust and transparent systems in place to support a fair and consistent but flexible multi-disciplinary approach to admissions.

To ensure that there is a procedure that sets out the processes that will be followed in managing and responding to referrals in a timely manner, in accordance with government legislation under Children & Families Act (2014) section 28 (CFA) and CFA 39(4) in order to assess the suitability of the school for the individual.

3. Scope

This policy is relevant to Local Authorities, Families; Cavendish Education, School Governors, Staff and Students, who are all stakeholders in the admission of a student to Heathermount.

4. Equal opportunities

Heathermount will promote equally the rights of students regardless of race, disability, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Heathermount has a multi-faith ethos as its foundation and recognises the value and importance of other people's faiths and beliefs.

5. Admissions Criteria:

To be admitted, students must meet the following criteria:

- Students will have a primary diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition, demonstrating a range of needs resulting in inflexible thinking patterns, social communication and interaction difficulties, emotional dysregulation and sensory difficulties. Different diagnosticians use different methods to diagnose but the guidelines from NAPC and NICE Clinical guideline 128, should be followed.
- It is acknowledged that students may have co-occurring conditions, such as, but not limited to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Specific

Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia), Dyspraxia or other health needs. Students may also have mental health needs, which will be supported primarily by their local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), for those under 18.

- Heathermount School may or may not be able to provide the specialist support or specific environments required for those conditions and needs; however, the student's primary need must be identified as Autism Spectrum Condition.
- All students must have an EHCP either finalised or in draft and agreed and be referred by the local authority.
- Students may have abilities that display atypical learning styles and uneven (spiky) profiles of cognitive strengths and difficulties, but they will need to be either just below average (no more than 2 years), average or above average ability within the National Curriculum.
- Heathermount can meet the needs, in full, of the statutory requirements as described in Part F - Educational Needs, of the student's EHCP.
- Heathermount can meet the dietary requirements of the student, as explained in medical evidence.
- All placements are for 38 weeks and are preferred to be full time. We are mindful that these may initially need to be part time, subject to the needs of the child and their previous educational experiences.
- Students, families, and local authorities must agree to be full participants in the admissions consultation procedure (below) and agree to take part in an age-appropriate peer group, academic, social, emotional and impact risk compatibility assessment. This consultation must be funded by the local authority at the school's published fee structure rates and agreed prior to any admissions consultation process.
- Families may approach the school directly with questions about possible admission. However, when this happens, the Admissions Lead will redirect them back to the LA who would be responsible for funding a placement to ensure collaborative partnership, transparency, and consistency in approach.

6. The Admissions Consultation Procedure (ACP)
(see also appendix 1 the Admissions Flowchart)

Our Admissions Consultation Procedure (ACP), as follows, ensures that we are able to fulfil our duty to work with local authorities, under section 28 CFA and to ensure that we are able to make representations to the authority concerning the proposed admission of the student. Students will not be admitted unless they receive an offer of admission after the ACP.

a) Students can be referred to Heathermount by their local authority (LA) who provides copies of the students' Educational & Health Care Plan (EHCP) together with key documentation which, at Heathermount School's request could include but is not limited to:

- Latest annual review report;
- Teacher assessment of cognitive functioning levels;
- Educational Psychology report;
- Autism Diagnosis report;
- And any other relevant information that provides a profile of the student's needs, such as speech and language and occupational therapy reports.

b) On receipt via secure email or post, the documentation is collated into a consultation folder, which is then reviewed by Heathermount's Admissions panel which consists of the Head/Deputy/Assistant Head Teacher, Senior Therapy Lead, Admissions Lead, Head of Pastoral Support and Designated Safeguarding Lead. A minimum of three of these professionals must be in attendance for any consultation review panel and at least two signatures obtained.

c) The panel will consider whether the school is suitable for the age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs of the child and whether the attendance of the child or young person at the requested school or other institution would be incompatible with –

(a) the provision of efficient education for others, or
(b) the efficient use of resources

d) As part of this process, the panel will also carry out a review of the existing age/stage appropriate peer group and carry out an impact risk compatibility assessment based on the academic, social and emotional capacity of the proposed appropriate identified class group. Furthermore, the panel will consider the current pupil number in the class and the skills set of the staff. Heathermount class sizes are operated at:

- **Primary:** Foundation, KS 1 & KS 2 consisting of 6 students maximum per class with minimum of one teacher and one teaching assistant
- **Secondary:** KS3 & KS4, Post 16 consisting of 8 students maximum per class with minimum of one teacher and one teaching assistant

Students are expected to sustain being taught for most of the time in a class of up to 6 students in the primary phase and in a class of up to 8 students in the secondary phase. We are unable to support students who find it too difficult to be taught in such classes on a full-time basis or those who need full time 1:1 support (other than for a short period of transition or for specific medical/safety needs).

We need to ensure that there is compatibility between students. The school will carefully consider the vulnerability that is likely to be felt by any student within the school. If a student admission is deemed to have a potentially negative impact, for reasons of health and safety or compatibility around

behavioural responses, a placement may not be suitable, and the assessment would be terminated.

e) The panel may request further information from or consultation with the child's family, current school (if in school) or previous school (if out of school) and the local authority maintaining the EHCP. School visits to the present setting may take place to observe the young person in a familiar environment. Home visits may be made if the young person has been out of school for a significant length of time or there are specific reasons identified during the consultation process.

f) Once the panel have met and agreed suitability, the Admissions Lead will contact the local authority to confirm potential suitability, subject to further assessment (below) and offer potential visits to Heathermount school by the family and child concerned; with a view to then participate in "taster sessions".

7. Assessment process for Taster sessions and 12-week formal assessment.

g) If all parties agree, 5-day taster sessions are offered to ascertain whether the young person could potentially be admitted to Heathermount. There is a cost to the LA for the taster sessions and the fee must be agreed by the LA, prior to any participation in taster sessions. Families are not able to fund taster sessions themselves.

h) Depending on the needs of the child, the taster's sessions may, at the school's discretion, take the form of full or half days or a mixture of half and full days and this will be discussed in advance with the family and the LA.

i) Prior to taster sessions, the Admissions Lead, meets with the family to construct a risk assessment, including any medical needs. The Admissions Lead also creates a profile of the child which is circulated to all staff prior together to ensure that the whole school has a robust awareness of each child's individual needs.

j) If the taster sessions are positive for all parties concerned, the local authority is provided with a synopsis, written by the school, which will then offer to place the child on a full 12-week assessment, with a view to determining whether the student should be admitted, subject to any waiting list requirement (see below). There is a further cost for this to the LA, which must be agreed before commencement.

k) This 12-week assessment period is very flexible to meet the individual needs of the child and may take the form of full days and half days. During this time, the child continues to be placed in an ability and, where possible, age-appropriate class, although this may alter during the assessment if an alternative option needs to be sought. They will have a full speech and language and occupational therapy assessment, which also includes assessment for sensory integration. Other assessments also take place such as a reading age assessment and input from the wider therapy team, which may include clinical psychology. Formal and informal observations of the child are also carried out during this time.

l) At the end of the 12 weeks, a review is held with the family and local authority. Either prior to, during or following that review, Heathermount will inform the family and the local authority, whether or not it will offer to admit the student permanently, subject to any waiting list requirement. during which, if all parties agree, a permanent placement is offered.

m) Some students may need to be added to a waiting list pending a place in the appropriate class becoming available. Where available places cannot be created within a reasonable amount of time in the appropriate peer group, this may mean that a place cannot be offered.

n) At any time during the assessment period, any of the school, family or local authority may terminate the assessment if it feels that it is not in the best interests of the child and that it is not likely that a full placement can be offered.

o) We need to ensure that there is compatibility between students. The school will carefully consider the vulnerability that is likely to be felt by any student within the school. If a student admission is deemed to have a potentially negative impact, for reasons of health and safety, a placement may not be suitable, and the assessment would be terminated.

8. Assessment process capacity

We always endeavour to arrange the composition of classes to provide the best possible educational experience for all students and are mindful of the impact of new additions who are being assessed on our existing cohort.

We recognise and plan for the known disruption which assessment students have upon the school population and any particular class group by setting levels in terms of numbers that ensure the minimum disruption to all parties concerned.

We, therefore, provide the following capacity levels, which are also subject to the school's discretion to vary to meet particular circumstances:

- Careful weekly monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team and Admissions Lead regarding capacity at the time in each class.
- When we are full, the tolerance level for admitted students will match the number of students who are leaving, i.e. if there are 3 potential leavers for July, then a maximum of 3 new students will be admitted in the following September, depending on which key stage has vacancies and the pupil number capacity in each class.
- Students are expected to sustain being taught for most of the time in a small class of up to 6 students in the primary phase and 8 students in the secondary phase. We are unable to support students who find it too difficult to be taught in class or in a small group on a full-time basis. This would require "bespoke provision" and we are not able to provide additional appropriate spaces to be able to meet this need.

9. References:

- The Children & Families Act 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education; Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges, last updated September 2025
- National Association of Primary Care (NAPC) link to website: https://napc.co.uk/about-us/
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) link to website for guidance on Autism guideline 128 (Autism Spectrum Disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis): https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg12
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

Heathermount administers all student registration procedures in line with "Working Together to improve school attendance" August 2024.

Appendix 1.

FLOW CHART FOR ADMISSIONS PROCESS

STAGE 1 OF THE PROCESS

Direct Parent Enquiry

Parents to complete the online Enquiry form available on the Heathermount website. For Parents whose local authority **have NOT** consulted at this time an invitation to the next OPEN EVENT will be sent to enable a generic group view of the school setting. A virtual tour is available on the website as an alternative.

We would advise any parent seeking a placement following an open event visit to ask their local authority to send us papers for consultation.

For Parents whose local authority **have** consulted, a bespoke visit will be arranged in due course. Please note these visits will only be offered IF the school have offered the next phase of the process and the local authority have agreed to tasters to be done.

Direct LEA enquiry OR LEA agreement to parental request to send papers. LEA send papers to Heathermount for a full review.

Admissions Team review the papers. Applications only considered if there is a clear report of an Autistic Spectrum Condition which may include, ASD, Asperger Syndrome or HFA as the **primary** need.

Following the admissions team review, Heathermount decline to take the application further.

Heathermount believe a "potential exists" and offer 5 days of taster sessions to both LEA and parents. The LEA will be required to pay a fee for this assessment and therefore their agreement must be received before the assessment can proceed. The 5 day taster includes observational assessment and an opportunity for school staff, family and student to consider whether the setting could potentially meet the needs in full. The Admissions Lead (AL) is responsible for the preparation of a student profile and risk assessment, which is distributed to all staff at least 24 hours in advance.

Head teacher/Admissions Lead writes to the LEA and parents to advise that Heathermount decline to take the application further following the 5 day taster. A rationale will be provided.

The lead teacher is responsible for the collation of information from all staff about the students 5 day taster, using the observation sheet. This information is then put into a synopsis by the AL. The synopsis of the 5 day taster is provided to the LEA and a 12 week formal assessment may be offered. As the LEA is required to fund the 12 week assessment, their agreement to pay costs must be received before the assessment can proceed.

STAGE 2 OF THE PROCESS

