



HEARTWOOD HOUSE

Policy document control box	
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Policy owner (including job title)	Cathy Taylor (Executive Headteacher)
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1.03	20/9/2022	Executive Headteacher	Minor updates	Policy review to reflect the appropriate roles for Executive Headteacher/Centre Headteacher
1.04	20/3/2024	Executive Headteacher	Review and rebrand	

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Purpose

This policy enshrines that Heartwood House seeks to clarify its 'target group' of students and to ensure that all students admitted will benefit from placement and allow/enable other students to progress academically and 'personally'.

Scope

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that all potential commissioning agents, parents / carers of prospective students and the students themselves understand the requirements for admission and continued attendance.

Policy statement, provision and safeguards

Heartwood House is an independent school providing for young people who are either not attending school (mainstream or other) or finding continued attendance at school damaging to their mental health.

Heartwood House provides for students studying at KS3 and KS4. On occasion they may admit a student who is chronologically outside those key stages, but whose needs are best met by studying at either of these levels (eg a year 12 student who has missed a significant amount of their secondary education and needs to gain accreditation at GCSE level).

Admission may be sought either by parents or by a commissioning agent, the latter being most frequently school or local authority.

Our expectations are that any young person referred to Heartwood House will:

- want to attend Heartwood House,
- have a commitment to learning,
- acknowledge the needs and rights of other members of the community and their own responsibilities in ensuring those rights are met.

It is essential that all potential referrers grasp fully the requirements of the final criterion. Heartwood House seeks to offer an environment within which students can study successfully, and develop self efficacy, a place within which they feel physically and emotionally safe at all times. The centre is small and students have to be able to work together in a supportive manner. All students must contribute positively to the environment, or, at the very least, not actively damage the learning or personal development of their peers.

The SEN Code of Practice

Under the SEN Code of Practice, if a local authority consults with Heartwood House regarding a student with an EHCP, Heartwood House is required to offer them a place, unless:

- It would be unsuitable for the student's age, ability, aptitude or needs
- The student's attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

Admissions Criteria

Due to the highly individual nature of the provision at Heartwood House it is not considered appropriate to have blanket admissions criteria - each student should be viewed as an individual and assessed for suitability as such. It is extremely important that the admissions process should be open-minded, fair and non-judgmental.

However, there are particular "red flags" when reading a student's paperwork that would mean that a place would usually be declined, on the basis of the second criteria above - that their attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others.

These red flags include:

Persistent, or extreme, physically aggressive behaviour

Persistent bullying of peers (where previous intervention has failed to prevent this)

Persistent and regular tendency to abscond (as we are not a secure site)

It is important that Heartwood House does not unfairly discriminate against students and therefore the above criteria are put in place purely because of the vulnerable nature of our students. Our students, who have experienced abuse or bullying in the past, would be further traumatised by exposure to the above and therefore the education of these students would be incompatible with the efficient nature of our other students.

An important caveat to the above criteria is where a student has demonstrated aggressive behaviour in the past only when highly stressed, for example, when in an unsuitable mainstream environment and when placed in an untenable situation for them. Many of our students have found themselves in situations prior to joining Heartwood House where aggressive behaviour has felt like the only way they were able to communicate their extreme distress and this should not be seen as grounds for unsuitability.

There are also occasions when a student referral is deemed to be inappropriate - we cannot refuse to offer a place under the SEN code of practice but we may advise that the students' needs could be better met elsewhere. This includes where the student's primary need is not a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need - for example a student with moderate learning difficulties but no SEMH needs. This may also include where a student has complex medical/physical needs and these are their primary area of need.

Admissions process

Referrals at Heartwood House are received and processed according to the following initial procedure.

- Referral is received from the local authority SEN team;
- Referral is screened by means of an initial review of paperwork for obvious examples of unsuitability as described above - immediately unsuitable referrals are declined at this point.
- Potentially suitable referrals are added to a prospective student list and dated to assist with future admissions priority. From the date of receipt we have 14 days to respond to the local authority;
- Parent/carer is contacted to arrange an informal visit to the centre. The visit will also include time spent with the Centre headteacher where an informal chat with the student and parent/carer can provide valuable opportunity for assessment of the student's SEMH needs. This visit can also include an informal activity with the SENCo, in cases where the SENCo has concerns about their ability to access the curriculum.
- Written permission is requested from parent/carer to contact other professionals working with the student.
- Once written permission is received, telephone appointments are arranged and calls made with the SENCo of the previous school as well as other professionals e.g. CAMHS where appropriate.
- The EHCP and all appendices are carefully reviewed for any areas of concern which may not have become immediately apparent. Questions are asked of the local authority SEN officer if clarification is necessary.
- A response is provided to the local authority SEN team detailing: whether we can meet the student's needs; the level of provision required; the cost of this provision; and a provisional start date.
- Students for whom it is decided we are unable to meet their needs have their details removed from our records at this point.
- The local authority will respond and let us know whether they agree to fund the student for a place at Heartwood House (note: they will have

usually consulted with more than one provision so it may be that we lose even the most suitable students at this stage on the basis of cost or geographical location).

- We will agree a start date with the local authority, complete placement agreements and make arrangements for the student's admission. The student will begin our person centred transition arrangements which are overseen by the SENCo.

Transition arrangements and initial trial period

Each student receives a person centred transition into the centre. Some students are ready to start immediately on a full time basis, some students are very anxious and may only be able to walk past the centre with their hood over their faces and take a quick peek at it - and there is a whole spectrum of presentations between these two extremes. Therefore some students receive a period of outreach home support before coming to the centre - and most students receive a graduated transition to a full time timetable.

Once a student starts attending the centre, there is a 6 week trial period where we have the opportunity to assess more thoroughly whether we are able to meet their needs. Some students' needs have not been accurately assessed or documented - and some students present very different needs in the Heartwood House environment in comparison to their previous environment.

Initial strategies used by staff are those documented in the EHCP, which is distilled into a smaller summary document by the SENCo and which all staff read and sign before working with the student.

The staff team meets at the point where the student has been attending the centre for three weeks. At this point a 'formulation' is produced for the student, with all staff members contributing their thoughts, experiences and useful/unproductive strategies they have found for that student.

Having produced a formulation based on every staff member's contribution and experience with the student, the SENCo compiles a list of strategies that are working well in our environment and updates the summary document accordingly. These are strategies that the SENCo looks out for staff using when completing learning walks and observations. This assessment and formulation is carried out at the three week point in order that alternative strategies can be tried during the 6 week assessment period, where this is decided to be necessary.

At the 6 week point, the staff meet again and decide whether it is possible to meet the student's needs at Heartwood House and whether their needs are compatible with the needs of other students. Terminating a student's placement at this stage would undoubtedly be very difficult for the student, but the careful initial admissions process means that this is very rare - although it is used where necessary.

Records management

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for the safekeeping of this policy. This policy will be available for all staff on the staff drive.

Legislation and Guidance that inform this document

- The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations (2012)

Other Heartwood House policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Use of Reasonable Force