Admissions, Referrals and Placement Suitability Policy

Wayland Stables Care Farm

Policy owner: Jake Payne, Business Manager

Approval date: 06/08/2026

Effective date: 01/09/2026

Next review: August 2027, or sooner after a serious placement concern, commissioning change or material change to WSCF's offer

> **No placement without sufficient information:** WSCF will not accept or begin a placement merely because a space is available. Safety-critical referral, safeguarding, SEND, medical, behaviour, transport and consent information must be received, assessed and translated into agreed controls before first attendance.

1. Policy statement

WSCF will make fair, evidence-based placement decisions that match the person's needs and intended outcomes with the farm's competence, staffing, environment and activities. Decisions will respect equality, participation and safeguarding and will not promise provision that WSCF cannot safely deliver.

2. Scope and legal status

This policy covers referrals for children and young people to WSCF's non-school alternative provision. Adult-service admissions use the relevant adult service agreement and safeguarding arrangements.

The commissioner and registered school/local authority retain statutory education, attendance, SEND and placement responsibilities. WSCF is responsible for due diligence, safe delivery and prompt escalation. A placement agreement does not transfer school registration or create a right to formal suspension/exclusion by WSCF.

Before increasing hours or changing the model, Business Owners must review whether WSCF could meet the legal definition requiring independent-school registration; informal labels or multiple commissioners do not remove that risk.

3. Principles

Best interests and welfare; child voice; non-discrimination and reasonable adjustments; least-restrictive safe support; clear outcomes; accurate information; compatibility with current groups; privacy on a need-to-know basis; and no fee, urgency or commissioner pressure overriding safety.

4. Referral pathway and decision control

1. Commissioner submits the controlled referral form and required evidence; WSCF acknowledges receipt and identifies gaps.
2. Jake Payne coordinates a multidisciplinary paper assessment and, where useful, a visit or meeting with the student and parent/carer.
3. WSCF records suitability, adjustments, risks, staffing, activities, transport, start conditions and any reasons for decline or deferral.
4. An authorised decision is issued: accept subject to conditions, request further information/assessment, offer a time-limited assessment placement, or decline with factual reasons.
5. Before first attendance, parties approve the placement agreement, individual plans, induction and communication routes. A trial does not bypass safeguarding or safety controls.

5. Required referral information

Domain	Minimum evidence before start
Identity and authority	Legal name, date of birth, address, parental responsibility, emergency contacts, commissioner and registered setting, funding/decision authority and collection permissions.
Education and outcomes	Reason for referral, timetable/current provision, baseline, intended outcomes, EHCP/SEN support, curriculum priorities, review date and reintegration/next-step aim.
Safeguarding	Current and historical risks needed for safe delivery, plans, social care/youth justice involvement, missing/exploitation/self-harm concerns, allegations or harmful behaviour, approved information-sharing route.
Health and access	Medical conditions, allergies, medicines, disability, mobility, communication, sensory and personal-care needs; clinical plans; consent; emergency and evacuation arrangements.
Behaviour and safety	Triggers, regulation, strengths, known violence/weapons/fire-setting/substance/sexualised behaviour, restrictive-intervention history, absconding/leaving risk, animal/tool/vehicle suitability and effective strategies.
Practical arrangements	Attendance days/times, transport and handover, dietary/religious needs, devices/images consent, clothing/PPE, contact hierarchy and absence/incident reporting.

6. Suitability assessment

Assess the student's strengths, wishes, age, development and outcomes against staffing ratios/competence, current cohort compatibility, site accessibility, animals, tools, machinery, chemicals, food, weather, transport, one-to-one needs and emergency capability.

A diagnosis, EHCP, disability, previous exclusion or behaviour history is not an automatic reason to refuse. Identify reasonable adjustments and additional resources first. WSCF may defer or decline only where essential evidence is absent, the service is outside competence, risk cannot be reduced adequately, or the placement would materially compromise another person's safety or education.

7. Visits, consent and student participation

Offer information in a form the student can understand and seek their views about goals, activities, worries, relationships, communication and safety. A familiarisation visit may inform—not replace—the formal assessment.

Obtain and record appropriate parent/carer and commissioner permissions, and the student's consent/assent where relevant, for attendance, emergency care, transport, information sharing, photographs/digital work and specific higher-risk activities. Refusal or uncertainty is explored without coercion.

8. Placement agreement and pre-start controls

Agreement field	Required position
Purpose and outcomes	Why WSCF is suitable; measurable intended outcomes; what WSCF will and will not provide.
Timetable and accountability	Start/end or review dates; days/hours; registered school roll and attendance coding responsibility; named contacts and escalation times.
Support and safety	Staffing, adjustments, healthcare/behaviour/risk/missing plans, prohibited or phased activities, PPE and emergency arrangements.
Information and reporting	Daily/weekly communication, progress report frequency, incident/absence/safeguarding routes, data sharing and record retention.
Transport and handover	Responsible party, authorised collectors, late/early/failed collection, locked-gate notification and travel risk.
Review/endings	Initial and six-week review or agreed frequency; success/concern criteria; funding notice; planned transition and urgent safety review.

9. Induction and phased start

Before or at first attendance, provide an accessible induction covering named staff, farm boundaries, locked gate, arrival/collection, visitor rules, animals, tools/machinery, toilets, food/allergens, phones, smoking/vaping, safeguarding/help, fire/first aid and what happens if distressed or wanting to leave.

A phased start may reduce risk but must have explicit purpose, duration, review and education continuity. It must not become an undocumented reduced timetable or informal exclusion.

10. Review, change and concern

Review early adjustment and at least every six weeks for commissioned child placements unless a shorter interval is required. Compare evidence with outcomes, attendance, engagement, wellbeing, safety and student voice; update plans and record actions.

Material change in risk, health, safeguarding, attendance, staffing, timetable or activity requires prompt reassessment and commissioner/parent involvement. Urgent safety restrictions are proportionate, recorded and reviewed; WSCF does not formally suspend or permanently exclude a student from their registered school.

11. Ending or declining placements

Plan endings with the student and commissioner, transfer necessary safeguarding/medical/progress information securely, return property/medicines and confirm the destination and responsibility handover.

Unexpected endings require an urgent placement review, same-day safeguarding and attendance consideration, written reasons, interim education/transport responsibility confirmed by the commissioner, and no abandonment at the gate or unverified collection. Disputes use the Complaints procedure without delaying safety action.

12. Records, equality and assurance

Keep referral evidence, decision rationale, adjustments considered, conflicts of interest, placement agreement, plans, reviews and ending/transition record. Restrict access under the Data Protection Policy.

Jake Payne audits missing information, decision times, declines/deferrals and reasons, adjustments, early endings, incidents, attendance and outcome reporting at least termly. Use evidence to improve the offer; do not manufacture success or incident figures.

Appendix A - Referral decision checklist

Authority and registered setting confirmed; safety-critical information complete; student voice obtained; SEND/medical/access needs assessed; group compatibility checked; activities and staffing competent; transport/handover agreed; plans and consents current; legal registration threshold considered; decision and conditions authorised; first review booked.

Appendix B - Decision record

Field	Record
Referral	Student identifier, commissioner, date received, proposed timetable and purpose.
Evidence/gaps	Documents reviewed, people consulted and unresolved information.
Assessment	Strengths, needs, hazards, reasonable adjustments, resources and compatibility.
Decision	Accept/conditional/assessment/defer/decline; reasons; authoriser and date.
Pre-start	Agreement, plans, consent, induction, transport, start and review dates.
Change/end	Review evidence, restrictions, transition, handover and commissioner confirmation.

Sources and related guidance

Non-school Alternative Provision: Voluntary National Standards — Department for Education.

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools — Department for Education.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years — Department for Education and Department of Health.

WSCF Safeguarding, Attendance, Student Behaviour, First Aid, Visitor, Data Protection and Transitions policies — Wayland Stables Care Farm.

Approval record

Approved by	Role	Signature	Date
Jake Payne	06/08/2026	Jake Payne	06/08/2026

Next review due: August 2027, or sooner under the review triggers in this policy.