Admissions and Referral Policy

Document Control

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out how South Cumbria Skills Exchange (SCSE), operated by Whamos Training and Development CIC, accepts referrals for and admits learners to its Alternative Provision (AP). It describes our AP offer, the information we require at the point of referral, our assessment and admission process, and the circumstances in which we would decline or end a placement.

This policy is required by the DfE's standards for unregistered Alternative Provision (Standard 3.1: Admissions, Recruitment, Roll and Attendance).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all referrals made to SCSE for Alternative Provision by commissioning schools, local authorities, and (in limited circumstances) other commissioning bodies acting on behalf of children of compulsory school age.

It does not cover registration onto our open training courses or adult learning programmes, which are governed separately by our Student Initial Diagnostic Assessment Policy and standard enrolment processes.

3. Our AP offer

SCSE offers Alternative Provision to children and young people who, for whatever reason, are not currently thriving in mainstream education and would benefit from a different approach. Our offer is built around:

- **Small group and one-to-one provision** in a calm, predictable environment at our Devonshire Road Industrial Estate site, Millom
- **Practical, creative learning** with filmmaking and media production at the heart of the offer
- **Pathways to qualifications** including QNUK and other awarding-body certifications where appropriate
- **Trauma-informed, neurodivergence-affirming practice** suitable for learners with SEMH needs, autism, ADHD, anxiety, school refusal and complex life circumstances
- **Active partnership with commissioning schools** so SCSE complements rather than replaces the learner's wider provision

Placements may be:

- **Short-term** (a single half-term or term) — focused on re-engagement, assessment, or specific goals
- **Medium-term** (typically one academic year) — for learners requiring sustained alternative provision
- **As part of a full-time package** combined with other provision the commissioning school arranges

SCSE does not offer full-time, sole-provider Alternative Provision for the cohort defined under the Children Not Receiving a Suitable Education (CNRSE) legal duty. Where a learner's circumstances would require full-time AP

registration, SCSE works in partnership with a registered school or local authority who carry the lead responsibility.

4. Who can refer

Referrals to SCSE are accepted from:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher, or named referrer of a learner's commissioning school
- Cumberland Council's Alternative Provision team
- Other local authorities' AP commissioning teams
- In exceptional cases, by direct parental enquiry, where the learner is electively home educated or otherwise not on a school roll — these enquiries are routed through Cumberland Council's CME team to confirm appropriateness

SCSE does not accept self-referrals from learners under 16, nor referrals from third parties without the consent of the parent/carer and the commissioning body.

5. Information required at referral

When a school or local authority makes a referral, SCSE requires the following before progressing to assessment:

Identity and contact: - The learner's full name, date of birth, and Unique Pupil Number (UPN) where available - Home address and contact arrangements (with consent regarding who may be contacted) - Parents/carers' or guardians' names and contact details, with confirmation of parental responsibility

Educational context: - Current school and year group - Attendance history (recent terms) - Academic progress information including reading age and any current targets - Any existing SEN Support Plan or EHCP - Educational psychology assessments or specialist reports where available

Safeguarding: - Any current or recent safeguarding concerns - Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan, or Looked-After Child status - Allocated social worker, family support worker, or Youth Justice worker (where applicable) - Cumberland LADO involvement history (if any) - Information about parents/carers that affects safeguarding (e.g. estranged parent who must not be given information, contact orders)

Behaviour and risk: - Any history of violence, aggression, or self-harm - Known triggers or sensitivities - Risks associated with specific times of day, peers or situations - Past missing-from-education or missing-from-home episodes - Substance use history - Any forensic involvement

Health: - Medical conditions and care plans - Medication, including any administered during the school day - Mental health diagnoses, CAMHS involvement, current support arrangements - Allergies and dietary requirements

Practical: - Transport arrangements - Times of attendance required - Specific goals the commissioning school wants the placement to deliver - Duration of placement intended

The referral is made via a written form (SCSE Placement Referral Form, available on request) and supported by relevant attached documents. SCSE does not accept verbal-only referrals.

6. Assessment process

On receipt of a complete referral, the SENDCo and DSL review the information together. Within five working days SCSE will:

- Confirm whether the referral is being considered, declined, or paused pending further information.
- If being considered, arrange a placement assessment, which typically involves:
- A visit from the learner and parent/carer to the SCSE premises
- A conversation with the learner about their interests, hopes and concerns
- A discussion with the parent/carer about what is and isn't working
- A practical taster activity, often filmmaking-related
- A planning meeting with the commissioning school's DSL and SENDCo

- Produce a written placement plan covering:
- Aims of the placement and expected outcomes
- Days/hours of attendance
- Curriculum and activity outline
- Specific support and reasonable adjustments
- Safeguarding division of responsibility (including who is the named DSL for the learner during the placement)
- Information-sharing arrangements
- Review schedule
- End-date or review point
- Confirm the placement in writing to the commissioning school and parent/carer.

7. Placement agreement

For every placement, a written placement agreement is signed by:

- The commissioning school (or local authority)
- The parent/carer
- The Director(s) of SCSE
- The learner where they are able to give meaningful assent

The agreement records the placement plan (above) and includes:

- The standards of behaviour expected
- The complaints route
- The procedure if the learner does not arrive (see Missing Child Policy)
- The arrangement for review meetings
- The commissioning fee where applicable
- The end-of-placement transition plan

8. When SCSE may decline or end a placement

SCSE will decline or end a placement where:

- The provision required falls outside the scope of SCSE's offer or available resources
- The referral information is incomplete and the commissioning body cannot provide it
- The risks presented by the learner cannot be safely managed at SCSE's premises with the staff available, even with reasonable adjustments
- The commissioning body has not agreed appropriate division of safeguarding responsibility
- Placement would breach the legal threshold for full-time AP registration without the appropriate registered school or LA arrangements in place
- The capacity of the cohort already at SCSE means a further placement would compromise the wellbeing of existing learners

Where a placement is declined, SCSE provides a written reason to the commissioning body and offers, where possible, suggestions for alternative provision.

Where a placement is ending earlier than planned (for example, because the placement is no longer meeting the learner's needs or because risks have changed), SCSE convenes a transition meeting with the commissioning body, parent/carer and learner to plan a safe handover. SCSE does not end a placement abruptly except where there is an immediate safeguarding or safety reason.

9. Equality, diversity and non-discrimination

SCSE does not discriminate in admissions on the basis of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Decisions to decline a placement are based solely on the suitability of the offer for the learner's needs, the capacity of SCSE to deliver it safely, or the appropriateness of the commissioning arrangements.

10. Information sharing and records

Information shared with SCSE as part of a referral is held in line with our Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy. Records are:

- Held securely (encrypted cloud storage and locked physical files)
- Accessed only by staff who need them
- Retained for the duration of the placement and a defined period after
- Shared with new providers at transition with consent and in line with KCSIE

Where a placement is declined or ends, SCSE retains the referral records for safeguarding and statutory purposes but does not use them for any other purpose.

11. Roll and attendance tracking

SCSE maintains a daily roll of all learners on placement. Attendance is reported to the commissioning school on the same day for safeguarding purposes, and weekly in summary, in line with Cumberland Council expectations. Non-attendance is responded to in line with the Attendance Policy and Missing Child Policy.

12. Fees and contracting

Where SCSE delivers AP under commission, fees are agreed in writing with the commissioning body before the placement begins. SCSE does not charge parents or carers directly for AP delivered under a commissioning arrangement.

13. Concerns and appeals

A commissioning body, parent/carer or learner who disagrees with an admission decision may:

- Discuss the decision informally with a Director
- Raise the concern formally via the Complaints Policy
- Where the decision concerns provision named in an EHCP, escalate via the SEND Code of Practice routes including the Local Authority SEND team and (if unresolved) the SEND Tribunal

14. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside:

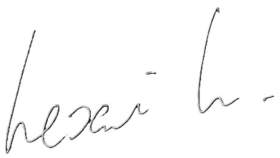
- Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Missing Child and Child Missing from Education Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy

15. Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Directors, or sooner if DfE non-school AP standards, commissioning arrangements, or our offer change.

Approval & Review

This policy has been approved on behalf of the Directors:

Elizabeth Amos-Milburn *Co-Director*	**Alexandra Gager-Liebhart** *Co-Director*
	

Date of approval: 18th May 2026

Next review: 18th May 2027

Schedule 1 — Record of Changes

Version	Date	Nature of Change
001	18th May 2026	Initial published version included in the Combined Policies and Procedures 2026 edition.