ADMISSIONS POLICY

Helping students make a positive start at SKAPE

ORGANISATION	SKAPE North East Ltd	POLICY REFERENCE	P08
UPDATED	10 November 2026	NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW	10 November 2027
POLICY OWNER	Centre Manager	RELATED POLICIES	Safeguarding; Behaviour; Attendance; Equality and Diversity

01 INTRODUCTION

SKAPE provides alternative education and support for students aged 7–19 who may benefit from education outside their usual setting. This may include students at risk of exclusion, students experiencing barriers to attendance or engagement, and students who need a different approach to support their education.

We want each student to make a positive start, feel listened to and understand how SKAPE can help them move forward. Referrals are made by schools, academies, local authorities or other authorised commissioners through the arrangements that apply to the placement.

02 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy covers referrals, admission decisions, induction, initial assessment, placement reviews and transition. It applies to staff involved in these arrangements and explains how we work with students, parents/carers, commissioning schools, local authorities and supporting professionals.

03 ADMISSION CRITERIA

Admission is based on the following questions:

- Can SKAPE offer the student suitable education and support which meets the purpose of the placement?
- Can the student's individual needs and identified risks be safely supported within SKAPE's provision, staffing and environment, with reasonable adjustments where appropriate?

Each referral is considered individually. A student will not be declined solely because they have SEND, behavioural needs or require reasonable adjustments. Where SKAPE cannot safely or appropriately meet the student's needs, this will be discussed with the commissioner and the reasons recorded.

04 RESPONSIBILITIES

- Centre Manager: oversee referrals and admission decisions, ensure support and risk arrangements are in place, and agree placement aims and review arrangements with the commissioner.
- DSL or deputy DSL: review relevant safeguarding information, agree reporting contacts and arrangements, and work with the commissioner's DSL or safeguarding contact where concerns arise.
- Staff supporting induction: help the student settle in, complete the welcome activity at a suitable pace, record what matters to the student and use this to inform first-week pastoral support.
- All staff: follow agreed support plans, record attendance and progress, share relevant observations and report safeguarding concerns promptly.
- Commissioning school or local authority: provide the information needed to plan a safe placement, agree oversight and review arrangements, and fulfil its own education, attendance and safeguarding responsibilities.
- Students and parents/carers: help us understand what support works, take part in planning and reviews where appropriate, and let staff know about changes or concerns.

05 REFERRAL PROCEDURE AND TARGETS

SKAPE works with commissioners across different local authority areas. Referral, procurement and placement procedures vary between areas and SKAPE will follow the relevant commissioner's arrangements for each placement.

- Before a placement begins, SKAPE will request sufficient information to decide whether the placement is suitable and to plan support. This includes relevant education, SEND, safeguarding, medical, attendance, behaviour and risk information, along with emergency contacts and any restrictions on contact or collection. Missing information needed to keep the student safe must be clarified before the placement starts.
- The purpose of the placement, expected outcomes, planned timetable and review arrangements will be agreed with the commissioner. The student and parents/carers will be involved as appropriate. Any education needed outside the SKAPE timetable must be addressed through the commissioning arrangements.
- The commissioner should ensure parents/carers understand why alternative provision is being offered and how the placement will work.
- Any required placement agreement, contract or commissioning documentation will be completed through the relevant commissioning arrangements.
- Placements will be reviewed with the commissioner at least half-termly, or more often where the student's needs, the purpose of the placement or safeguarding concerns require it. Progress will be considered against the agreed targets and outcomes.
- Attendance expectations will be explained to the student and parents/carers. Reporting and absence follow-up arrangements will be agreed before the placement begins.
- Transport, travel costs and safe handover arrangements will be agreed with the registered school or commissioner and parents/carers before the student starts. Responsibilities will be recorded in the placement arrangements.

06 SEND AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Where a student has SEND, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), is looked after or has other additional needs, SKAPE will request and consider the relevant information before admission. This helps us decide whether we can meet the student's needs and what support or reasonable adjustments are required.

SKAPE will work with the commissioner, parents/carers and relevant professionals throughout the placement. Where relevant, this will include the student's social worker, designated teacher or Virtual School and the arrangements in their Personal Education Plan. We will contribute to reviews and provide information on attendance, attainment, progress, wellbeing and engagement. The local authority remains responsible for maintaining an EHCP and securing the provision it is required to arrange; placement plans must take account of the student's agreed provision.

07 THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND INITIAL ASSESSMENT

1. The referral is received and logged through the relevant commissioner's process.

2. Staff review the referral information and request anything further that is needed.

3. An initial visit or interview is arranged with the student and, where appropriate, their parent/carer, commissioner or supporting professional.

4. Staff discuss individual needs, risks, reasonable adjustments and placement aims, listening to the student's views.

5. The Centre Manager confirms whether SKAPE can safely and appropriately meet the student's needs and informs the commissioner.

Where a placement is agreed, the student will normally begin with an introduction programme and an initial six-week assessment period. The length and intensity may vary depending on the student and the purpose of the placement. This period does not delay support, reasonable adjustments or safeguarding action, and it does not replace earlier reviews where needed.

The introductory period is used to build relationships, establish appropriate baselines and understand attendance, engagement, learning and support needs. Assessment will be appropriate to the student; formal testing will not always be suitable.

Where a school commissions the placement, the student will normally remain on roll with their registered school, which retains accountability for their education. Where a local authority or another body commissions the placement, responsibilities will be set out in the commissioning arrangements.

08 FIRST DAY INDUCTION AND PASTORAL SUPPORT IN THE FIRST WEEK

On their first day at SKAPE, each student will have a 1:1 induction with a member of staff. This is an opportunity to help them settle in, meet staff and understand what they can expect from their placement. Staff will explain centre expectations, who the student can speak to if they need help, and relevant safety and emergency arrangements.

The SKAPE “Getting to know you” induction activity is included in Appendix 1. Staff will use it as a supportive conversation about the student’s experiences, strengths, interests, barriers to learning, helpful support and personal goals. The activity may begin during the first visit or induction and be continued during the first week, at a pace that suits the student. The activity will inform part of the pastoral work during the student’s first week. Staff will use what the student shares to plan check-ins, help them build relationships, identify what helps them feel safe and settled, and agree small, achievable first steps. Relevant information will also inform their individual programme, reasonable adjustments and any support plan. This is a starting point for getting to know the student, rather than a test or a stand-alone admission decision. Together, the student and staff member will identify suitable goals and agree when to check in again. Staff will revisit these as the placement progresses and share relevant information with colleagues and the commissioner where appropriate. Completed activities will be kept securely. Any safeguarding concern must be reported immediately under the Safeguarding Policy; staff must not wait until the activity is finished or the first week has ended.

09 SAFEGUARDING AND WORKING WITH COMMISSIONERS

Before a placement starts, SKAPE and the commissioner will agree safeguarding contacts, information-sharing and reporting arrangements. SKAPE will provide written confirmation of appropriate safeguarding checks on staff and others working with students in line with the Safer Recruitment Policy, and will inform the commissioner of relevant changes that may affect a student’s safety.

SKAPE follows its own Safeguarding Policy alongside the relevant commissioner’s policy and agreed procedures. The commissioning school retains its overarching safeguarding responsibility, while SKAPE remains responsible for students in its care. For local authority placements, responsibilities and reporting routes will be agreed with the authority, involving the registered school where relevant.

SKAPE’s DSL will liaise promptly with the commissioner’s DSL or local authority safeguarding contact about concerns and serious incidents. Staff must take necessary protective action and make referrals without waiting for a placement review or the commissioner’s response. Call 999 where there is immediate danger. Safeguarding concerns may require an immediate placement review.

10 ONWARD REFERRAL AND PLACEMENT REVIEW

A placement may be reviewed where the student's needs, risks or circumstances change, agreed outcomes are not being met, or SKAPE can no longer safely or appropriately meet need. This will be discussed promptly with the commissioner and the reasons clearly recorded.

Decisions to pause attendance at SKAPE or end a placement will follow the Behaviour and Exclusion policies and the commissioning arrangements. Physical attacks, serious threats and other serious incidents will trigger an immediate placement review. Repeated disruptive behaviour despite appropriate support and adjustments may also lead to a review. Decisions must be proportionate and take account of the student's needs, available support and the safety of others.

SKAPE will support the student, parent/carer and commissioner with the information needed to plan the next stage. Any immediate change to attendance must include safe supervision and handover arrangements. The registered school or commissioning local authority remains responsible for arranging suitable education where required; ending a SKAPE placement does not remove a student from their school's roll or replace a statutory school exclusion decision.

11 RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk assessment forms part of admission and continues throughout the placement. SKAPE considers the student's needs, known risks, triggers, protective factors, reasonable adjustments and the support needed to keep the student and others safe.

The pathway below may be used alongside the student's individual risk assessment and Behaviour Support Plan. It helps staff recognise changes and respond to support needs. It must not be used as a stand-alone reason to refuse or end a placement. Serious incidents must be addressed immediately, whatever level was previously recorded.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	SUPPORT AND RESPONSE
1	Settled presentation; no or minor incidents; engaged in learning; responds to support.	Usual support and reminders; learning and engagement recorded.
2	Some disruption, dysregulation or low-level incidents; increased support needed; signs of distress or frustration.	Frequent reminders or regulation support; restorative discussion where appropriate; incident and learning records as needed.
3	Persistent refusal or dysregulation; significant disruption; verbal abuse; reckless or aggressive behaviour creating increased safety concerns.	Follow the individual risk and behaviour plan; increase staff support; inform the commissioner as appropriate; review the placement if concerns persist. Serious incidents require an immediate review.
4	Immediate or serious risk of harm, aggression, bullying or unsafe behaviour that cannot be safely managed within current arrangements.	Take immediate safety and safeguarding action; involve senior staff and the DSL as appropriate; contact the commissioner promptly and review the placement and risk arrangements.

12 ADMISSIONS RECORDS AND ATTENDANCE

SKAPE keeps a record of students placed at the provision, including the student's details, source of referral, year group or age, placement dates and commissioner. Records will be kept securely under the Confidentiality and GDPR policies.

- Staff will record attendance each placement day on LearnTrek and maintain the written register required by the Attendance Procedure.
- SKAPE will provide a daily attendance update to the commissioning school. Unexpected absence will be reported promptly to the registered school or local authority commissioning contact under the agreed arrangements.

- The registered school will normally contact parents/carers to follow up absence. SKAPE staff must also follow safeguarding procedures without delay where a student's whereabouts or safety is a concern.
- SKAPE will work with the student, parents/carers and commissioner to understand barriers, encourage attendance and support engagement so the student can get the most from their placement.
- The commissioner retains its own statutory attendance and safeguarding responsibilities. Where attendance is persistently low or the placement is not achieving its aims, SKAPE will review support and next steps with the commissioner.

13 REINTEGRATION AND TRANSITION

Where appropriate, placements should support re-engagement with education and a successful next step. A reintegration or transition aim will be agreed with the student, parent/carer and commissioner where suitable for the placement.

Progress will be reviewed regularly. The next step may be a return to mainstream education, specialist provision, another suitable setting or an appropriate post-16 pathway. SKAPE will share relevant information and work with those involved to support continuity of learning and pastoral support.

14 RELATED POLICIES GUIDANCE AND REVIEW

Read alongside the Safeguarding, Safer Recruitment, Equality and Diversity, Behaviour, Exclusion, No Bullying, Positive Handling, Confidentiality, GDPR and Complaints policies; the Attendance Procedure; and relevant healthcare, support and risk arrangements.

This policy takes account of KCSIE 2026; DfE Arranging Alternative Provision: A Guide for Local Authorities and Schools (February 2025); the DfE voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision; the Equality Act 2010; and relevant SEND and data-protection requirements. Legal responsibilities will be followed by the bodies to which they apply and through agreed commissioning arrangements.

DfE guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2; www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision; www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-school-alternative-provision-voluntary-national-standards.

The Centre Manager will review this policy annually, or sooner following significant changes in guidance, student needs or SKAPE's arrangements. Students and parents/carers may raise questions or concerns through staff and the Complaints Policy.

15 DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY

DATE	CHANGE	APPROVAL	REV.
10/08/2023	Initial policy	K. Watson	01
21/08/2024	Annual Policy review	K. Watson	02
29/08/2025	Annual Policy review	K. Watson	03
03/03/2026	Annual Policy review	K. Watson	04
23/09/2026	Policy review	K. Watson	05
10/11/2026	SKAPE branding and layout updated; terminology standardised; admissions, safeguarding and placement review arrangements aligned with related policies and guidance; induction activity added as an appendix to inform first-week pastoral support.	L. James	06

APPENDIX 1 • PART 1 OF 4 • YOUR FIRST VISIT

Getting to know you

A conversation about you, school and how SKAPE can help you move forward.

This is your chance to tell us what you think. There are no right or wrong answers. You can talk, write, draw, point to a card, ask for a break or skip a question.

My name: _____ **Today's date:** _____

01 How are you feeling today?

Circle or tick any that fit today:

☐ Settled	☐ Curious	☐ Happy
☐ Unsure	☐ Worried	☐ Hopeful

How did you feel when you heard about SKAPE?

What are you hoping for, or worried about, today?

What helps you feel comfortable when you are somewhere new?

What is one thing you would like us to know about you?

APPENDIX 1 • PART 2 OF 4 • YOUR EXPERIENCE

Your school story

We want to understand what school is like from your point of view.

You do not have to talk about anything you would rather keep private. We can focus on what makes learning easier for you now.

02 The things that worked — and the things that did not

When school goes well, what is good or helpful?

What things make school difficult for you?

What are you good at, interested in, or proud of?

03 Coming to SKAPE

Why do you think you are coming to SKAPE?

What have adults told you about coming to SKAPE? Does that match what you think?

What do you wish others understood about you?

APPENDIX 1 • PART 3 OF 4 • CARD ACTIVITY

What gets in the way?

Use your printed education barriers cards. Choose the ones that fit, change the words, or make your own.

04 Education barriers card sort

Place cards in three groups: “Makes school harder for me”, “Sometimes”, and “Not really me”. It is also fine to say “pass”.

Pick up to three cards that feel most important. Tell us what happens and what might help. An adult can write your answers while you talk or point.

My card / barrier	What this is like for me	What might help at SKAPE
1 / 2 / 3		

05 What support works for you?

What signs might tell an adult that you need a bit of help or a break?

If something starts to feel difficult, what would you like adults to do?

Is there anything you would like us to avoid doing?

APPENDIX 1 • PART 4 OF 4 • LOOKING AHEAD

Your goals at SKAPE

Choose goals that matter to you. They can be about learning, friends, confidence, feelings, or something else.

A 0–10 rating helps us understand what matters to you and how ready you feel. Any number is okay — it is not a test.

GOAL 1 Something I would like to work towards

I want to... _____

How IMPORTANT is this goal to me? Circle one number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0 = not important yet 10 = very important

How CONFIDENT am I that I can do it? Circle one number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0 = not sure yet 10 = really sure

Why this goal matters / what will help: _____

One small first step: _____

GOAL 2 Something I would like to work towards

I want to... _____

How IMPORTANT is this goal to me? Circle one number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0 = not important yet 10 = very important

How CONFIDENT am I that I can do it? Circle one number.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

0 = not sure yet 10 = really sure

Why this goal matters / what will help: _____

One small first step: _____

To feel ONE point more confident, what would need to happen?

A little more support / a small change might be...

BEFORE WE FINISH

One thing SKAPE can do next:

_____

We will check in again on:

_____