

Admissions Policy

Status	**Update**
Published	**October 2026**
Review Cycle	**Annually**
Next Review	**October 2027**

Lead Staff	**Jane Hatwell**
Chair of Governing Body	**Alex Krutnik**
Headteacher	**Jane Hatwell**

Vision and Values

Our school vision is to provide an *outstanding, nurturing, learning environment*, where all our pupils can achieve their full potential and progress to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Our mission is to provide each and every pupil with the best possible education, delivered in an environment that is supportive, caring and safe.

"Getting it right for every pupil"

At Stone Bay we focus on *Evolving Excellence* in all that we do, working towards making our school the best it can be for pupils, staff and families. We are creating lasting *Trust* with all our stakeholders, *Empowering* each other to learn and grow. By adhering to policies and clear processes we ensure *Fairness* and transparency in our decision making and actions, whilst ensuring we are *Collaborating* with others and always looking for ways to help each other to deliver excellence for our pupils.

Rights Respecting Schools

The Unicef UK Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) is based on principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. The RRSA seeks to put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's ethos and culture to improve well-being and develop every child's talents and abilities to their full potential. A Rights Respecting School is a community where children's rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

Stone Bay has been awarded the Silver Award by UNICEF. This is awarded to UK to schools that show good progress towards embedding children's rights in the school's policy, practice and ethos, as outlined in the RRSA Strands and Outcomes

Staff wellbeing

The Leadership Team and the Governing Board of Stone Bay School are committed to promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and to providing suitable support for all staff. Taking action to prevent ill health and promote good health makes good educational and business sense, as sickness absence carries high costs both in monetary terms and in terms of the impact upon performance, teaching and learning, morale and productivity, which may disrupt or compromise pupil progress.

All members of staff are entitled to be treated fairly and professionally at all times. The Governing Board of Stone Bay School takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer to all members of staff and a number of policies and procedures have been made in relation to this duty.

1. Purpose and status of this policy

This policy explains how admission to Stone Bay School is considered and how the school responds to consultations from local authorities. Stone Bay is a maintained foundation special school. It is not a mainstream school operating an ordinary admissions round and the school does not directly allocate places to children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. The local authority is responsible for finalising an EHC plan and naming the school or other institution in Section I, subject to the statutory framework.

The policy is intended to ensure that decisions and consultation responses are lawful, evidence-based, transparent and focused on whether Stone Bay can meet an individual pupil's needs safely and effectively without incompatibility with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources.

2. School designation and provision

Stone Bay School is a Foundation Special School providing day and residential provision for pupils aged 4 to 19. Its designation is Communication and Interaction with Severe and Complex Learning Difficulties. The primary need for the school's population is autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with severe and complex learning difficulties, with pupils' main area of need within Communication and Interaction.

Day provision principally serves Thanet and East Kent. Residential provision is countywide. Residential admission is not automatic when a school place is named or agreed; the suitability and availability of residential provision must be considered separately through the relevant commissioning and assessment arrangements.

3. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has regard to the Children and Families Act 2014, in particular sections 33, 38, 39 and 43; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014; the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years; the Equality Act 2010; and relevant Department for Education and Kent County Council guidance.

Under section 39 of the Children and Families Act 2014, where a parent or young person requests a particular maintained school, the local authority must consult the school and must name the requested school unless one of the statutory exceptions applies. The relevant exceptions are that the school would be unsuitable for the child or young person's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or that attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources.

Where Stone Bay is named in a final EHC plan, the governing body must admit the child or young person, subject to any lawful amendment of the plan or order of the First-tier Tribunal. Nothing in this policy gives the school a power to override a final EHC plan naming Stone Bay.

4. How parents and young people express a preference

Kent County Council advises that a child must have an EHC plan to apply for a special school place and that school preferences are discussed through the EHC planning or annual review/phase-transfer process. Families considering Stone Bay are welcome to obtain information about the school and, where practicable, visit before expressing a preference. A visit does not constitute an assessment, an offer of a place or an indication that the school can meet need or has an available place.

Parents and young people should direct requests for Stone Bay to the local authority responsible for the EHC plan. The school cannot reserve, promise or offer a place directly. All communication must go via KCC.

5. Profile of pupils for whom Stone Bay is designed

Stone Bay is designed for children and young people whose needs are consistent with its specialist designation. In considering a consultation, the school will look at the whole EHC plan and supporting evidence rather than diagnosis alone. Relevant considerations may include:

• the nature and severity of the pupil's communication and interaction needs, learning difficulties and autism-related needs;

• the pupil's developmental and learning profile and the curriculum pathway required;

• communication systems, sensory regulation, health, personal care, mobility and therapeutic needs;

• behavioural presentation, vulnerability, supervision and safeguarding needs;

• the provision specified in Section F of the EHC plan and whether it can be delivered within Stone Bay's staffing, environment and specialist offer; and

• the likely peer group and whether the pupil can be educated safely and effectively alongside the pupils already placed in the relevant cohort.

A diagnosis of autism, or the fact that a pupil has an EHC plan, does not by itself establish that Stone Bay is suitable. Equally, no pupil will be rejected merely because their needs are complex. Each consultation is considered individually against the statutory tests.

From September 2021, prospective pupils should be between 4 and 19 years of age, of either sex (although gender may limit availability of suitable residential accommodation).

Prospective pupils have a diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder and experience one or more of the following difficulties:

- Communication Difficulties
- Impaired Social Skills
- Severe and Complex Learning Difficulties
- Global Developmental Delay

The school cannot meet the needs of students who experience:

- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)
- A primary psychiatric disorder
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD)
- An Atypical diagnosis where provision requires individual teachers and separate teaching/classroom space.

6. Curriculum pathways and class organisation

Pupils are organised broadly by key stage and need. Stone Bay uses pre-formal, semi-formal and formal learning pathways. Placement within a class is needs-led and may change as a pupil develops. Age is relevant, but it is not the only factor when forming safe and educationally coherent groups.

Class size is determined by the needs of the pupils, staffing required, the physical room available and the safe delivery of each pupil's EHC provision. The school's admissions guidance indicates that lower-school classes are generally groups of 6 to 8 pupils and upper-school classes are generally 8. These figures describe the school's model; they are not admission numbers or a guarantee that a vacancy exists in a particular year group or class.

7. Local-authority consultation process

When Stone Bay receives a formal consultation, the Headteacher or delegated senior leader will review the papers supplied by the local authority. The school will normally consider the current EHC plan, professional reports and other relevant information supplied with the consultation. Where information is insufficient to reach an informed view, the school may ask the local authority for clarification or further evidence.

The school will respond within the statutory consultation process and any reasonable deadline set by the local authority. Its response will identify whether Stone Bay considers itself suitable and, where it objects to being named, will explain the evidence and statutory basis for that view. The final decision remains with the local authority unless determined by the First-tier Tribunal.

8. Matters considered when responding to a consultation

The school will undertake an individualised assessment. Depending on the pupil and proposed cohort, this may include:

• the pupil's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs;

• whether the provision in Section F can realistically and consistently be delivered at Stone Bay;

• the needs, vulnerabilities and EHC provision of pupils already in the proposed class or cohort;

• the physical environment, including classroom size, circulation space, quiet or breakout space, hygiene/personal-care facilities and safe access to specialist areas;

• staffing levels, specialist expertise and whether additional staffing would in practice overcome any incompatibility;

• risk assessments, health and safety, safeguarding, behaviour support and supervision requirements;

• the effect of admission on the education, regulation, safety and access to provision of existing pupils;

• the availability of an educationally appropriate peer group and curriculum pathway; and

• whether reasonable steps could remove any identified incompatibility without adversely affecting existing pupils or resulting in an inefficient use of resources.

Capacity is relevant but will not be treated as a stand-alone legal reason for refusing a pupil. Where the school is full or a class is at its safe operating capacity, Stone Bay will explain the practical consequences of an additional admission and link those consequences to the statutory tests, supported by evidence about the particular cohort, environment, staffing and provision.

9. Incompatibility with the efficient education of others

Where Stone Bay considers that attendance would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, its consultation response will set out the likely impact on identifiable educational provision rather than relying on general statements about pressure on the school. This may include loss of access to teaching space or specialist areas, disruption to carefully constituted peer groups, inability to deliver existing pupils' specified provision, increased risk or dysregulation, or staffing and supervision arrangements that would materially reduce other pupils' access to education.

The school will also consider whether there are reasonable steps that could prevent the incompatibility. Where additional staffing alone would not address a physical, cohort, curriculum or environmental incompatibility, the response will explain why.

10. Suitability

Stone Bay may advise that it is unsuitable where the evidence demonstrates a material mismatch between the pupil's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs and the school's specialist designation, curriculum, peer group or provision. Any such view will be based on the individual evidence and not on a blanket exclusion criterion.

11. Efficient use of resources

Where relevant, the school may provide evidence to the local authority about resources that would be required to admit and educate a pupil. The local authority is responsible for applying the statutory test. Stone Bay will not treat cost alone as determinative and will distinguish ordinary resourcing pressures from expenditure or

changes that would be disproportionate or would undermine the efficient use of resources.

12. Equality, disability and reasonable adjustments

Stone Bay will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will not discriminate unlawfully in admissions-related matters. The school will consider reasonable adjustments and reasonable steps to address barriers or potential incompatibility. Consultation decisions will not be based on stereotypes, diagnosis alone or assumptions about disability.

13. Children and young people without a final EHC plan

As a special school, Stone Bay ordinarily admits pupils through the EHC plan process. The SEND Code of Practice permits placement in a special school without an EHC plan only in limited statutory circumstances, including certain assessment or emergency placements where the required parties agree. Any such proposal must be considered with the local authority and Headteacher and must comply with the applicable statutory conditions. It does not create a general route for direct admission to Stone Bay.

14. Phase transfer and in-year admissions

Consultations may arise through phase transfer, annual review, a change of placement or an in-year move. The same statutory tests apply. The existence of a pupil of a similar age, a theoretical year-group space or an unoccupied desk does not in itself establish that Stone Bay can make suitable provision. The school will consider the actual class/cohort into which the pupil could realistically be placed and the impact of that placement.

15. Residential provision

Stone Bay provides residential provision alongside its day school. Residential provision is designed to support identified educational and care outcomes and is subject to separate suitability, safeguarding, staffing, accommodation and commissioning considerations. A request for Stone Bay as the educational placement should not be taken to mean that a residential place is available or required.

16. Transport and journey considerations

School transport is determined by the local authority under its own policies and statutory duties. Stone Bay does not refuse admission solely because a pupil lives at a distance. However, where a consultation identifies that the proposed journey may materially affect the pupil's ability to access education, regulation, health or

specified provision, the school may draw that evidence to the local authority's attention as part of its consideration of suitability and the overall placement.

17. Transition

Once Stone Bay is named and a placement is confirmed, the school will work with the family, current setting, local authority and relevant professionals to plan transition. Transition will be personalised according to need. It may include information sharing, visits, visual supports, staff liaison and a phased transition where this is educationally appropriate and agreed. A phased transition will not be used to delay admission unlawfully.

18. Disagreement, mediation and appeal

The local authority, not Stone Bay School, makes the decision about which school is named in an EHC plan. Parents and young people have statutory rights to challenge relevant local-authority decisions, including through mediation arrangements and appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability), where applicable. The local authority's decision letter should explain those rights. Stone Bay will cooperate with lawful tribunal directions and provide evidence when required.

19. Monitoring, records and review

The Headteacher will ensure that consultation responses are recorded and that relevant evidence is retained. The governing body will keep this policy under review to ensure that it remains consistent with the school's designation, provision and current statutory guidance. This policy does not fetter the governing body's duty to consider each consultation individually.

20. Key references

- Children and Families Act 2014, particularly sections 33, 38, 39 and 43.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014.
- DfE/DHSC, Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.
- DfE, SEND: guide for schools and alternative provision settings.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Kent County Council, Choose a school for your child with SEND.

Parent and carer summary

Stone Bay is a specialist school for pupils aged 4 to 19 with autism and severe and complex learning difficulties. If your child has an EHC plan and you would like Stone Bay to be considered, you should express that preference to the local authority. The local authority will consult Stone Bay. We will carefully review your child's individual

needs and the provision in their EHC plan alongside the class and cohort that could realistically meet them. We do not operate a waiting list or offer EHC-plan places directly. The local authority makes the final decision about the school named in Section I of the EHC plan.