

Thriftwood School and College Admissions Policy



Date: February 2024

**Approved by: Local
Governing Body**

Last reviewed on: May 2026

Next review due by: May 2027

Admission criteria

Name of school	Thriftwood School and College
Designation	Moderate learning difficulties
Number of funded places	266
Age range	5-19 years

Please be aware that although we are designated to cater for students from age 5, our youngest class is Year 3 which means we currently have no Reception, Year One or Year Two classes and we have no plans to change this in the future. At present, we do not have a year 14 offer.

Introduction

To access a place at Thriftwood, the pupil concerned:

Must have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) which names Thriftwood School in Section I

Have a primary need of moderate or complex learning difficulties;

Must require access to an appropriately differentiated, broad and balanced curriculum; and will exhibit one or more additional needs as a subsidiary need at a mild or moderate level:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Asperger Syndrome
- Sensory and/or mild/moderate physical difficulties
- Social and emotional difficulties arising from their learning difficulties and not in addition to these needs
- Medical needs
- Speech and language needs

Description of primary needs met by Thriftwood

Pupils with moderate/complex difficulties will have cognitive attainment levels which are considerably below age-related expectations in the majority of areas in the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Pupils will typically be functioning in the majority of areas of the curriculum at least 4-5 years behind their chronological peers and they will have much greater difficulty than their chronological peers do, in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration, under-developed social skills, communication and interaction difficulties or mild/moderate physical difficulties.

Nearest suitable provision

It is our belief that all pupils should, unless there are exceptional circumstances, be able to attend their nearest suitable school and should, wherever possible, be educated within their local community. We, therefore, recommend that pupils attending Thriftwood should live within our local community and should not attend our school if there is another suitable school which is closer to their home address.

Visits

In cases where a parent/carer/person with parental responsibility is considering a possible placement at our school for a pupil, the family will be encouraged to make an appointment to visit

the school or college site respectively. For KS2/3 1:1 visits are allocated during the autumn and spring term on a first come, first served basis and visit dates fill very quickly. Priority will be given to families of pupils who reside in the catchment area and who already have an Education Health Care Plan. Parent presentations are also held at the end of the autumn term for families unable to secure a personal tour. Parents should also visit Thriftwood's website to view the virtual tour on there. Staff will not comment about the suitability or otherwise, nor make an offer of a place before the Local Authority has made a recommendation about placement and formally consulted with the school. If a parent/carer/person with parental responsibility contacts the school in relation to placement prior to any formal contact having been received from the Local Authority, they will be referred to their local SEND Operations Team in the first instance. For KS4/5 visits, please contact the college site, and arrange a visit with the Pastoral team.

The school reserves the right to refuse visits to parents/carers if the family address is outside Essex or to defer visits if the year group is oversubscribed with no prospect of a place within the current academic year.

Consultations

It is assumed that the responsibility for admissions is devolved from the Trustees to the Headteacher.

When a formal consultation is received from the Local Authority (in accordance with its legal duties under Sections 33 and 39 Children and Families Act 2014), the school will consider the request and respond within the statutory time limit set out within the SEND Code of Practice 2015. After considering all available evidence, if the school decides it is not appropriate to offer a place, it will confirm the reasons for that decision to the Local Authority. The reasons will be expressed in terms of the needs of the pupil and the efficient education of other children already at the school or the efficient use of resources so that the Local Authority can understand why the school considers that the pupil does not meet the published admissions criteria.

Similarly, where the school determines, based on all available evidence, that it can meet the needs of the pupil concerned and there is a space available, then it will also confirm that in writing to the Local Authority. The decision of whether to offer a place is agreed between the school and the Local Authority.

Requests for places for pupils who do not reside within the political boundaries of Essex County Council should be made through the local SEND Operations Team.

If the school receives a formal consultation from another Local Authority, they will notify the local SEND Operations Team, and share the consultation paperwork with them.

If Thriftwood is oversubscribed (over PAN, over recommended class sizes according to the physical size of the room / the needs of the learners in the class) the Local Authority will seek to place any further learners in the next nearest / suitable provision.

Consultation process

When a formal consultation is made for a place at Thriftwood, the Local Authority will send the EHCP, the most recent Annual Review Report (except in the case of new EHCPs) and any reports about the pupil from the professionals involved. The Local Authority will also share its view on whether placement at the school is considered to be suitable, the reasons for this and the details of any other schools/settings also being consulted. Within the Essex Mid SEND Operations Team, we have a monthly SEND Headteachers admission panel where all students seeking a placement in a specialist setting in the mid area of Essex are discussed. This enables headteachers to share expertise and work together to find the correct provision to meet a child's needs.

Thriftwood will review the consultation papers and request any additional reports required to enable it to form a view about the suitability or otherwise of a placement. In some cases, where this is deemed necessary, a member of the school staff will visit the pupil in their current setting to undertake observations and speak with existing school staff. On occasion, this may be a joint visit with another Mid Essex SEND provision to determine appropriate provision to meet needs.

Given the number of consultations received for places for secondary and Key Stage 2 transfer, a formal meeting will take place in the Autumn Term and again in the early Spring Term of each academic year involving representatives from the Local Authority and the Senior Leadership Team of the school to help determine which pupils will be offered placements for the following September. With all phase transfer places offered by mid – February.

Thriftwood School and College offers a modified curriculum and specialist provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and complex needs for which it is provided with an identified level of funding by the Local Authority. The school is not intended for pupils who do not have a primary need of mild/moderate learning difficulties. The admission of pupils with, for example, complex behavioural, social and emotional needs or severe learning difficulties would compromise the efficient education of other pupils and would not be in the best interests of the pupil concerned.

Transition into Thriftwood

When a placement has been agreed upon by the Local Authority, family and school, staff from the school will make contact with the pupil's current placement to arrange an appropriate transition programme with an exchange of information and reciprocal visits where practical and appropriate. The transition may begin with a phased/part-time/reduced hours starting point, depending on the needs of the pupil and the school/class. New parents will be invited into school in the Summer Term for a familiarisation presentation.

Moving on from Thriftwood

Where it is determined by the school, through both formal and informal assessment, that either:

- The changing needs of the pupil indicate that an alternative type of provision may now be more appropriate, Thriftwood will utilise the Annual Review process to discuss and facilitate any proposed change of placement. This will be conducted in an open and transparent manner with the pupil's family and the Local Authority, ensuring that the pupil's best interests are the primary focus of any such discussion.

Transitioning from Thriftwood School to Thriftwood College

The vast majority of our pupils, will naturally transition from the school site at the end of year 9 to the college site for years 10 onwards. This does not require a new application process. For those students for whom Thriftwood College is not appropriate, individual discussions will be held with the family through the Annual Review process.

Admission appeals

Admission appeals are managed through the Essex SEND Operations Team. Please see their website for further details regarding this process.