Thallo
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

Admissions and Referrals Policy

Thallo Education Ltd.

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Approved By	May MacKay-Morris - Director
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1. Aim

Thallo Alternative Provision is a small, non-school alternative provision offering calm, relational and low-arousal part-time education for secondary-aged young people whose barriers to education are predominantly internalised.

This may include young people experiencing emotionally based school avoidance or non-attendance, anxiety, masking or shutdown, sensory or social-communication differences, executive-function or attention difficulties, low confidence, and difficult previous educational experiences. Thallo is need-led rather than diagnosis-led and a formal diagnosis is not required.

This policy sets out how referrals are considered, how suitability and capacity are assessed, how placements are agreed and introduced, and how attendance and placement reviews are managed. Our aim is to make decisions fairly, transparently and in the best interests of the young person while maintaining the emotional and physical safety of everyone attending the provision.

2. Nature of the provision

Thallo provides flexible, part-time placements. The pattern and number of commissioned sessions will be agreed for each young person according to their needs, intended outcomes, capacity and the commissioner's requirements, up to Thallo's maximum commissioned offer.

Thallo is not designed primarily as a behaviour-management or high-arousal provision. A referral will therefore be considered carefully where a young person's current presentation or level of risk is likely to require staffing, facilities, specialist clinical support, security measures or behaviour-management arrangements that Thallo cannot safely provide.

A decision that Thallo is not suitable is not a judgement about the young person. It means that, on the information available, Thallo cannot safely or appropriately meet the identified needs within its model, staffing, environment or commissioned offer.

3. Referrals

Referrals may be received from Suffolk County Council, schools or other commissioning education settings. Other enquiries may be considered where they fall within Thallo's operating and commissioning arrangements.

Thallo will consider referrals without unlawful discrimination and in accordance with its Equal Opportunities Policy. Reasonable adjustments will be considered throughout the referral and placement process.

Information requested at referral may include, where relevant:

- the young person's current education and attendance circumstances;
- the reason for referral and intended outcomes of the placement;
- SEND information, EHCP or SEN-support information where applicable;
- communication, sensory, emotional-regulation and accessibility needs;
- health, medical, allergy and medication information relevant to safe provision;
- safeguarding information and involvement of social care or other professionals;
- known risks, previous risk assessments and safety plans;
- relevant learning information, interests, strengths and previous educational experiences;
- the views of the young person and parent/carer;

- proposed hours, duration, review arrangements and funding/commissioning information.

Only information reasonably necessary to assess and safely plan the referral will be requested and it will be handled in accordance with Thallo's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

4. Initial consideration and information gathering

On receipt of a referral, Thallo will review the available information and may seek clarification or additional information from the commissioner before deciding whether the referral can progress.

Where the referral appears potentially suitable, Thallo may arrange an initial meeting or visit involving the young person and, where appropriate, their parent/carer, commissioner and other relevant professionals. The purpose is to understand the young person's needs, strengths, preferences, risks and barriers to engagement, and to consider whether Thallo's environment and approach are a good fit.

For young people who find unfamiliar environments, meetings or transitions difficult, the referral process will be adapted where reasonably possible. This may include a quieter visit, visual information, reduced demands, shorter contact, communication through a trusted adult or other individualised arrangements.

5. Suitability and placement decisions

A placement decision will consider:

- whether Thallo can reasonably meet the young person's identified educational and support needs;
- whether the placement is consistent with the intended purpose and outcomes of the referral;
- the young person's safeguarding, health and safety and individual risk information;
- the likely impact on the safety and wellbeing of the young person and others attending Thallo;
- whether reasonable adjustments can enable safe and meaningful access;
- the staffing, environment, group composition, resources and specialist competence required;
- Thallo's current capacity and availability;
- the proposed hours, duration and funding arrangements;
- the views of the young person, parent/carer, commissioner and relevant professionals.

Suitability will be considered individually. Thallo will not use diagnosis, disability, protected characteristics or a young person's previous attendance difficulties as automatic reasons to refuse a referral.

Where additional information or a specific adjustment could make a placement workable, Thallo will discuss this with the commissioner before reaching a final decision where practicable.

The outcome will be communicated to the commissioner. Where Thallo is unable to offer a placement, the reason will be explained clearly and linked to suitability, safety, capacity or the limits of the provision rather than to assumptions about the young person.

6. Commissioned placement agreement

No placement will commence until the key commissioning arrangements have been agreed. These will normally include the start date, expected pattern of attendance, commissioned hours, intended outcomes, review arrangements, funding/rate and the respective responsibilities of Thallo and the commissioner.

Where a young person remains on the roll of a commissioning school, that school retains its responsibilities for the young person's education and attendance. Thallo will provide agreed attendance, engagement, progress and safeguarding information to support the commissioner in fulfilling those responsibilities.

7. Induction and transition into Thallo

Induction will be personalised. The purpose is to help the young person understand the provision, establish safe relationships and begin engagement without creating unnecessary pressure.

Induction may include:

- a pre-placement meeting or familiarisation visit;
- information about the environment, adults, routines and what to expect;
- a visit at a quieter time or before other young people are present;
- attendance with a trusted adult for an agreed part of the transition where appropriate;
- a reduced or phased initial timetable where this supports engagement;
- discussion of interests, strengths, communication preferences and reasonable adjustments;
- confirmation of emergency contacts, medical information, safeguarding arrangements and individual risk controls;
- agreement of initial learning and personal-development outcomes.

A phased start is not required to increase in a fixed or linear way. The placement pattern will be reviewed against the young person's needs, engagement and agreed outcomes.

8. Individual planning and risk assessment

Before or at the start of a placement, Thallo will ensure that sufficient information is available to deliver the placement safely. An individual risk assessment or support plan will be completed where the information indicates that one is required.

Planning will identify relevant strengths, needs, triggers or barriers, communication approaches, reasonable adjustments, medical or safeguarding information, risk controls, agreed outcomes and arrangements for responding to foreseeable difficulties.

Risk assessment is intended to enable participation safely, not to exclude young people simply because they have additional needs or previous difficulties.

9. Attendance and absence

Young people are expected to attend the sessions agreed within their commissioned placement. Thallo recognises that many young people referred to the provision may have significant barriers to attendance. Attendance concerns will therefore be approached through curiosity, safeguarding awareness and collaborative problem-solving rather than punishment.

Attendance will be recorded for every commissioned session and shared with the commissioning school or local authority in accordance with the placement agreement.

Parents/carers should notify Thallo of an expected absence as early as possible. Where a young person does not attend and no satisfactory explanation has been received, Thallo will begin first-day contact promptly in accordance with its safeguarding arrangements.

Unexplained, repeated or concerning absence will be considered as a potential safeguarding indicator. Thallo will contact the commissioner and other relevant professionals where appropriate and will not wait for a fixed number of days before escalating a concern where risk is identified.

Where attendance is becoming difficult, Thallo will work with the young person, family and commissioner to understand barriers and review the placement plan. This may include adjustments to timing, duration, environment, transition arrangements, communication or learning activity where these are reasonable and consistent with the commissioned placement.

10. Review of placements

Placements will be reviewed at intervals agreed with the commissioner and sooner where there is a significant change in need, attendance, risk, engagement or circumstances.

Reviews may consider:

- progress towards agreed educational and personal outcomes;
- attendance and engagement;
- the young person's views and experience of the placement;
- parent/carer and commissioner feedback;
- whether reasonable adjustments or support arrangements remain appropriate;
- changes in safeguarding, medical or risk information;
- whether the commissioned hours, activities or duration remain appropriate;
- transition or next-step planning.

11. Ending or changing a placement

A placement may end at the agreed completion date, because agreed outcomes have been achieved, because the commissioner changes or ends the placement, or because a review concludes that Thallo can no longer safely or appropriately meet the young person's needs within the commissioned arrangement.

Thallo will not withdraw a placement solely because attendance is low or engagement is difficult without first considering the reasons, safeguarding context, reasonable adjustments and whether the placement plan can appropriately be adapted.

Where Thallo believes a placement may need to end early, it will normally discuss the concerns with the commissioner and seek an orderly transition. Immediate action may be required where there is a serious and imminent risk to safety or another exceptional circumstance. Relevant safeguarding information will be shared appropriately to support continuity of care and education.

12. Concerns about a referral or placement decision

Questions or concerns about a Thallo referral or placement decision should first be raised with the Provision Lead. Thallo will review whether the decision was based on accurate information, applied this policy fairly and considered relevant reasonable adjustments.

Where a placement is commissioned by a school or local authority, decisions about whether that body commissions or continues a placement remain matters for the commissioner under its own procedures. Thallo's internal review process does not replace any statutory school-admission, SEND, exclusion or local-authority review or appeal route that may separately apply.

13. Fees and funding

Commissioned fees will be agreed with the commissioner before a placement begins and will be recorded in the relevant placement or provider-offer arrangements. Changes to commissioned hours or other chargeable arrangements will be agreed before they take effect.

14. Equality, safeguarding and information governance

Admissions and referral decisions will be made consistently with Thallo's Equal Opportunities Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Health & Safety Policy and Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

Safeguarding concerns identified during referral or induction will be acted upon promptly. A referral process will never be used as a reason to delay appropriate safeguarding action.

15. Monitoring and review

The Provision Lead will monitor referral outcomes, declined referrals, placement endings, attendance patterns and relevant complaints to identify any concerns about fairness, accessibility, safeguarding or the continuing suitability of Thallo's admissions arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where Thallo's service model, commissioning arrangements, relevant law or guidance materially changes.