



Admissions Policy

Written January 2021 – Review January 2022

Phoenix Autism Trust (PAT) - A Pathway Towards Independence and Employment
Registered Company no. 09615159 Registered Charity No. 1172227
Registered Office: 49 Bow Road, London, E3 2AD

1. Background

Phoenix College is an Independent Specialist Provider of Further Education for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who already have, or are in the process of obtaining, an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The College is operated by the Phoenix Autism Trust (PAT). The Trust grew out of the long established Phoenix Special School and has been able to draw on the considerable experience and expertise of the school. The charity (PAT) and Phoenix College are now completely independent, under the control of an experienced Board of Trustees.

For 5 years PAT operated Phoenix and Tower Hamlets (PATH) Partnership. This service provided specialist Further Education under a sub contract arrangement with Tower Hamlets (now New City) College of Further Education. The curriculum and staff experience delivered there has now transferred to and is expanding and developing in Phoenix College. So although Phoenix College is new the opportunities for students have been developed over several years and will further develop.

PAT has the status of a specialist provider under the Secretary of State's 'Section 41' Approved Provider list. It also has a contract to provide Specialist Further Education from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (the ESFA). Obtaining this recognition requires a stringent assessment process undertaken by these Government agencies. Phoenix College is also inspected by Ofsted and its reports and ratings are publicly available.

In addition, an approved quality assurance system is operated by the College.

2. Mission and purpose

Phoenix Autism Trust is a registered charity that exists to support young learners in and around London with autism and related difficulties affecting communication to be able to learn, thrive and reach their full potential.

The Trust's purpose is to enable those who are its service users and students to live ordinary lives and be active in their home communities, enjoying community living as independent as possible, accessing community services and employment or meaningful activity and enjoying friends and relationships. The Trust regards these as the foundations of good health and wellbeing and representing the best prospect of avoiding long term institutionalisation, which remains one of the major risks to young people with autism where they also have a significant learning disability.

3. The offer to students

Phoenix College offers students with autism or related communication difficulties a full day curriculum, designed and delivered around them, aimed at achieving those increased life chances that are described above. We prioritise the development of communication, employability skills, independent living skills and understanding relationships so that the transition to adult life is successful and fulfilling. The programme for each student is worked out with them and their family with progress points set out, measured and monitored with formal reviews at least annually, in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

The College offers courses ranging from 1 to 3 years which may be followed up with Supported Internships where this is feasible. The College operates 3 terms a year and functions on a normal academic year.

Attendance is for 5 days a week of at least 6 hours per day and 38 weeks per academic year. The period of study may be in our central college or in one of our linked placements in the community, or in work experience. This is deliberately kept flexible to reflect the fact that every students needs are different and their path to independence unique to them.

Download our prospectus here for more information about the courses of study.

Take a virtual tour of Phoenix College campus on our website www.phoenixcollege.london

4. Admission criteria

- a. Phoenix College admits students aged 18 to 25 (very exceptionally from the age of 16) with a primary diagnosis of autism or a closely related communication difficulty plus learning disability or difficulty. The learning disability or difficulty may be in the range moderate to severe. It will admit students with behaviours that challenge subject to a risk assessment and subject to the student having the capacity to comply or rapidly learn to comply with the student code of conduct.
- b. Students may be referred by their local authority, school, their family, or may self-refer from anywhere in England but the student must be within one hours travelling distance to the main college site in Tower Hamlets during term time.
- c. The student must already have or be in the process of obtaining an EHCP which must by the time of admission name Phoenix College as the agreed provider of further education. This is because it is a condition of government funding that all students must possess an EHCP.
- d. Funding from the young person's local authority must have been agreed by the time of admission. This is a requirement as the Charitable Trust is not able to independently fund students' placement costs.
- e. Admission of all students is via the college assessment process, which requires that students must, at the point of admission, be able to communicate at PECS level 6 or equivalent and be able to use public transport albeit with support or supervision.
- f. The assessment seeks to satisfy the College that the student seeking placement will be able to follow a course of work related learning and is able or can quickly be helped to learn how to comply with the student code of conduct. The code of conduct is applied solely in order that the college can comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act and secure the welfare of other students. The SEND Code of

Practice (the statutory code that details the 2014 children and families act upon which SEND funding for education is mandated by government) specifies that:

- The College is suitable for the young person's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs (meaning that the young person has the kind of special educational needs that the college is designed to meet)
 - The attendance of the young person at the College would be incompatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources. (meaning that the potential student's needs or behaviours would either be a risk to the learning or safety of other students, or that meeting their needs would be unrealistically costly or would divert resources from other students in a way that would harm their prospects)
- g. Admissions to the college are made at the commencement of the academic year, the September of the student's commencement year. In year admissions may be made on a discretionary basis by the college principal. The SEND code of Practice requires that all local authorities must undertake the transition Review and make the referral by 31st March in the commencement year, or at least 5 months prior to the beginning of the academic year. Referrals made later than this may result in delaying admission or offering admission to the following academic year.

5. Admissions process

- a. The process will commence once the application forms have been received by Phoenix College admissions officer. In all cases the admissions officer communicates within 3 working days with the student or their representatives and with the local authority where there is a formal referral from the local authority that the application has been received.
- b. The College's assessment of the potential student will, wherever possible, take place in that young person's current educational placement, usually their current school. It may also take place in the student's home, or residential or supported living setting if they reside away from the parental home. This process enables the college assessment team to talk with those who know the student well and where

necessary seek reports from other professionals in order to establish a baseline of where they have reached educationally and developmentally to date.

- c. The process will seek to confirm that the parents/carers, or the potential student where they have capacity (within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act) or if they do not have capacity that a Best Interests Decision has been made in accordance with that Act, have expressed a clear preference for placement at Phoenix College.
- d. The potential students needs will be assessed with reference to the existing cohort of students and the college environment to establish that the efficient education of others question is satisfied (see para 4.f above).
- e. Where a local authority has made the referral for placement they will have consulted the college in line with their statutory duties under the SEND Code of Practice. Many local authorities will have considered placement with a local specialist provider well ahead of formal referral. In these circumstances the College is required to and will respond to the local authority within 15 days.
- f. Particular attention will be given to the EHCP, or draft EHCP where it is in the process of agreement. The contract between the student, the College and the local authority is, fundamentally, to deliver the outcomes set out in the EHCP by delivering the special educational provision set out there.
- g. We encourage applicants and where appropriate parents/ carers to visit the college as part of the assessment process. Assessment is inevitably a two way process and it is always preferable that the potential student feels confident about the placement choice. We are well aware that leaving a school that may have been the young person's only setting outside of their home environment for as long as 15 years is a very big step.
- h. We may contact and seek written information from other professionals who have been involved with the student. This will be particularly so where the student has additional health needs that need to be supported whilst in college.
- i. Assessment is provided as a free service, excepting where the student resides further than an hours travel time from Phoenix College, when the College reserves the right to charge for that assessment at a rate that will be agreed before assessment commences and will be a reflection of not more than actual staff costs and travel costs.

- j. Where referral has been made without the apparent knowledge of the student's home local authority the college will inform that authority that referral has been made and assessment is to commence.
- k. After admission there will be further assessment for the first 4 weeks to determine the threshold for the funding package required from the local authority (basic funding for the courses to be taught and the basic level of SEND funding are paid through the ESFA, which is an agency of central government)
- l. In the event that the student and their representatives prefer a placement at Phoenix College but the placement is not agreed by the student's home local authority an offer of placement may be made, admission being subject to agreement by the local authority, or the approval of a placement at Phoenix College by the SEND Tribunal. Phoenix College can direct students and their families or representatives to information about how to access the SEND Tribunal. As a section 41 approved provider the student has the right to 'name' Phoenix College in their EHCP and go to Tribunal to seek to secure placement where the home local authority refuse to make and fund the preferred placement.
- m. Once placement has been agreed, travel to college has been arranged and where necessary funded and the placement funding is in place (or it is clear that it will be in place) then an induction pack will be sent to the student. This will include the draft study programme.
- n. Where the College is fully subscribed and no places are available for the academic year selected applicants and their home authority will be advised immediately. The option will remain of undertaking assessment, subject to the agreement of Phoenix College and placement on a waiting list for admission in year should a vacancy arise, or for admission in the following academic year.

6. Admissions decisions

Admissions to Phoenix College are made through its admissions panel. Where admission is declined the student, their local authority and the student's representatives will be advised that the application for admission has been declined and the reasons for that decision. The panel is advisory to the College Principal and

her decision is final. Declining admission does not preclude further application for admission from the same student in a later academic year, or where there has been a material change to that potential students circumstances that alters the reasons given for declining admission.

Written: Jan 2021

Date of next review: Jan 2022

Review group: Trustees