



Phoenix College

Admissions Policy

February 2026

February 2026 – Review February 2026

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



PHOENIX COLLEGE

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

WHO ARE WE?

Phoenix College is an Independent Specialist Provider of Further Education for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who have an **Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)**. We offer a 3-year programme of study to applicants aged **19 to 25** mainly with a primary diagnosis of autism, a closely related communication difficulty plus learning disability or difficulty. This is a summary of our Admissions Policy. For the full policy please visit our [website](#).

YEAR 13

VISITS AND APPLICATION

We highly recommend that students visit Phoenix College during Year 13 so they can decide if they would like to apply for a placement by the end of that academic year.

YEAR 14

ASSESSMENTS AND OFFERS

We would like to start our assessment process for new students at the beginning of Year 14. That would make it easier for students and parents to name Phoenix College in their EHCP Annual Review if students are offered a placement.

Students from Phoenix School also need to apply for a placement at Phoenix College.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

- Diagnosis of autism
- Ambitious about employment
- Able to access the community
- Taking public transport safely

Phoenix College does not offer 1-to1 support. Our current staff ratio in class is 10 students and 3 members of staff.

CONTACT

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www.phoenixcollege.london

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TIMELINE

YEAR 13
Visiting Phoenix College
Applying for a placement

YEAR 14
Assessments
Placements being offered

1. Background

Phoenix College is an Independent Specialist Provider of Further Education for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who have 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. This is deliberately kept flexible to reflect the fact that every student's needs are different and their path to independence unique to them.

For any young person who is interested in enrolling, we encourage them and their families to visit us during year 13. Hopefully they will apply during the first half term in year 14 so that we can offer them a place during their first term of the last year of school.

For more information about the three-year course we offer, please visit our website:

www.phoenixcollege.london

4. Admission criteria

- a. Phoenix College admits students aged 19 to 25 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; however, they must be able to learn safely in a small group environment with reduce support.
- b. 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 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. The young person must already have a Freedom Pass, or start the process of obtaining on prior to enrolment. Freedom Passes allow them free travel on all London public transport, and having one is essential for students to be able to access our community-based curriculum. Proof of possession of a Freedom Pass will be asked as part of the enrolment process.
- e. 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.
- f. 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 with reduced support.
- g. The assessment seeks to satisfy the College that the student seeking placement will be able to follow a course of work-related learning.
- h. The college will 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)
- i. 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.
- j. Application can only be made following the understanding that, as per our Safeguarding Policy, if a student's attendance drops below 90%, this would trigger a cause for concern, and where indicated, reported for statutory intervention in accordance with the pan-London procedure. Low attendance constitutes also a breach of contract between the ESFA and Phoenix College and may compromise the student's funding. Under exceptional circumstances, a special leave during term time must be requested via completing and handing over to the College's administration an Application for Special Leave During Term Time form.

5. Admissions process

- a. Applicants (potential students) and where appropriate parents/carers must visit the college as the first step 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. Visits can be done either at our Open Morning or Open House events, which will happen once at every term.
- b. Applicants or parents must complete the college application form to provide their contact details for college's records.
- c. They also need to complete a Transition to Further Education form, which Phoenix College will send to the local authority for requesting a formal consultation.
- d. The admission process will commence once the local authority has sent a formal consultation to Phoenix College.
- e. The College's assessment of the potential student will start with the EHCP analysis, then, wherever possible, observation at the 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.
- f. Assessment is provided as a free service, excepting where the student resides further than an hour 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 reflect not more than actual staff costs and travel costs.

- g. 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.
- h. 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.
- i. Particular attention will be given to the EHCP. 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.
- j. 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.
- k. 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
- l. Should Phoenix College feel it meets the potential student's needs and therefore is the best setting, a Conditional Offer of placement will be offered. The potential student will then be invited to attend a 4-week Transition Programme during summer term. If no concerns are raised during this programme, students will then proceed with their enrolment.
- m. Our assessment process is rigorous but, in the event that further information is made available to us either before or after admission of the young person, we reserve the right to rescind the offer of a placement if the provision within the final EHC plan is amended and cannot be delivered by Phoenix College.
- n. 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.
- o. 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)
- p. 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 refuses to make and fund the preferred placement.
- q. 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.

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 his 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.

7. One-year extension

Phoenix College will consider a one-year extension if:

- a. There were major safeguarding concerns that hindered engagement in learning;
- b. There were major distressed behaviour concerns that hindered engagement in learning;
- c. The student is ready to attend external work placements, not ready to transition to permanent supported employment yet but in the process of overcoming significant barriers to employment;
- d. The student was not “ready for learning” but has made massive improvement on engaging and learning;
- e. The student was subject to major changes before graduating from Phoenix College (i.e. changes in the home situation, changing boroughs, changes in the family situation – such as losing the primary carer, etc.)

Written: February 2026

Date of next review: February 2027

Review group: Phoenix Autism Trustees