National Autistic Society

Autism Accreditation

Specialist Award manual

2023-2026

Specialist educational, social care and health provisions

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Name of service:

Willow Dene School

To be completed by your consultant:

Reference no:

002637

Date of assessment:

25th - 28th December

Lead assessor:

Ursula Wheatley

External moderator:

Joanne Neill Smith

Outcome of previous assessment:

Advanced

To be completed by the Quality Manager:

Committee decision:

Advanced

Date of committee decision:

17/01/2025

Foreword

Autism Accreditation started in 1992 with the overall aim to improve autism practice across both social care, health and education. Since that time, we have worked with over 1,000 different service providers and at present, our work is impacting on over 35,000 autistic people's lives.

Whether you are new to accreditation or working towards re-accreditation this manual will guide you through your accreditation journey. Once you have filled in the self-audit, action plan and case studies, you can submit this document to your consultant who will complete the assessment and hand the report on to the accreditation awards committee. The committee decision will be included in the report and the now fully completed manual will be returned to you. Throughout the manual, you will find advice and information to help you on your way.

The Accreditation team welcome the opportunity to continue working with you to achieve the highest standards of good practice in supporting autistic people.



Christine Flintoft-Smith

Christine Flintoft-Smith
Head of Autism Accreditation

Foreword

Autism Accreditation mission

We work to ensure that society works for autistic people.

We set the standard for best autism practice and provide frameworks across all sectors to develop supportive environments and cultures that produce positive quality of life outcomes for autistic people.

We are seen as the experts on autism practice and our kitemark acts to reassure autistic people and families of the standard of support they should expect to receive from providers.

Our aims

Set the standard for best autism practice:
Working with autistic people, families and professionals and we use the latest research to inform the standards set.

Sustainable:
We provide a programme of development and resources that can be maintained and built upon year after year.

International kitemark:
Our kite mark is recognised as a sign of best autism practice by autistic people, families and professionals. It offers assurance that the services provided by the organisation are of the highest quality.

Reach:
To ensure that all sectors are targeted to provide best practice across the board, our awards and frameworks are tailored to organisation types.

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Section One

Your Autism Accreditation journey: An overview

- Our framework of best practice
- Awards criteria

Your Autism Accreditation journey	
Pre-assessment Carry out a comprehensive and detailed review of current practice using our self-audit tool. Implement an accreditation action plan based on the self-assessment. Optional sessions can be booked with your consultant to help you complete the self-audit and action plan, review documentation or observe and reflect on practice.	**Assessment** Assessment days include observation of practice, oversight of key person-centred documentation, and discussions with key people within the provision (including autistic people, where possible) Observations may also be undertaken by an independent moderator. Online accreditation survey is sent to autistic people and/or families/advocates. A report summary of assessment findings and areas of strength and development is produced by the consultant and sent to the Committee awarding body.
Committee decision The Accreditation Awarding Committee consider assessment report and decide if an Award can be given and at what level: Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced. Once a provision has achieved an Advanced Award, there is an option of applying for Beacon Status in recognition of the work they sharing expertise and knowledge of good practice in supporting autistic people. You can read the full criteria here.	**Maintaining and progression** Provisions are offered a new assessment plan if they wish to stay in the programme. They can continue to access consultant support and work on areas of development identified from their assessment. They also have the opportunity to request a further assessment to show they are maintaining the standards or have progressed to the next level. We recommend this occurs within three years to ensure that our Award can be considered a meaningful reflection of current practice.

How long does each step take?

This depends on:

- how well good autism practice is already in place and consistent across the provision at the point of registration
- how much time and resources can be committed to carrying out the self-audit, implementing the action plan and preparing for the assessment.

However, we do recommend that right from the start you set your own dates as targets to work towards. This will help maintain a focus and direction. You can always review these dates if the progress you make is greater or less than you expected. For example:

Jan 2024	Register with the programme
By July 2024	Complete self-audit
July 2024 - Jan 2025	Implement action plan
Jan 2025	Book assessment *
Jan - June 2025	Work on completing action plan and preparing for assessment

*Remember assessments should be booked at least six months in advance.

Your assessment plan

On registering with Accreditation, you should receive a copy of your finalised assessment plan. The assessment plan outlines the work that Accreditation considers necessary to assess a provision, together with associated costs. You can find out more by reading our terms and conditions .

The assessment plan will tell you how many consultant visits are included in the plan. If you are not intending for your whole service to be assessed, your plan should list what will be included. For example, there may be specific care homes that you want to be included in the assessment or specific departments or classes in a school. This should be listed accurately in the plan.

During the pre-assessment phase, you may wish to add to expand or reduce your registration. You will need to seek the agreement of the Head of Accreditation to do so, by completing an amendment proposal form. This can be requested from your consultant or downloaded from the Accreditation members' section of the National Autistic Society website.

Section one

Our framework of best practice

Support should be:	What does this mean
Person-centred	• Each autistic person receives support that is uniquely tailored to them as an individual. • Autistic people and, where appropriate, their family/advocates, are actively involved in shaping the support they receive in ways which are meaningful to them.
Evidence-informed	• Approaches employed to support autistic people are informed by credible research that shows positive outcomes for autistic people, together with practitioner expertise and the lived experience of autistic people. • Approaches are regularly evaluated to show they are achieving intended outcomes and changes made if they are not. • Whilst approaches can be those which are widely established within the field of autism, they should be adapted according to what will work best for the individual. • Where approaches may be less well-established, they are delivered by, or supported by, appropriately qualified and experienced professionals, are based on a good understanding of autism and closely monitored to ensure that they are not ineffective or harmful.
Strengths-based	• A strengths-based approach begins with a holistic assessment not just of an individual's needs and challenges, but their skills, interests, preferences and strengths. • Support first and foremost seeks to celebrate and build upon these assets.
Directly promotes wellbeing	• Support is based around activities which each autistic person finds enjoyable, relaxing or engaging, and provides them with a sense of achievement and purpose. • Approaches are identified which help maintain the wellbeing of each autistic person, including where appropriate proactive and preventative strategies to avoid anxiety or distress and to help them understand and regulate emotions and sensory reactions. • Consideration is given to what changes need to be made to the environment or the way staff engage with the autistic person to support their wellbeing and engagement.
Active	• Autistic people are supported to actively take part in purposeful and meaningful activity that impacts on their quality of life. • Autistic people are taught relevant skills in communication, independent living, problem solving and decision making to empower them to have greater control, autonomy and purpose in their lives. • Autistic people are actively involved in and contribute to their community.

Section one

Awards criteria

Aspiring	• The service meets some of the criteria to be Accredited but there are one or more gaps or inconsistencies related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people. These areas of improvement directly impact on outcomes for some of the autistic people supported by the service and require a significant amount of work to address.
Accredited	• Staff have a working knowledge of evidence-informed approaches associated with good autism practice. • They can adapt these specialist approaches so that support is person-centred and tailored to individual qualities, abilities, interests, preferences and challenges. • Adaptions are made to the environment to support individual wellbeing and self-reliance. • Each autistic person develops skills and confidence in communicating with others and engaging in a range of rewarding social activities. • Each autistic person develops skills and confidence in carrying out tasks independently and in being empowered to make their own decisions, leading to them having greater control and autonomy in their lives. • Each autistic person enjoys an increasing range of sensory experiences whilst developing regulation strategies to help them avoid sensory overload. • Support enables autistic people to take part in activities which are purposeful and engaging and which promote their emotional wellbeing and social inclusion. • Proactive and preventative strategies are employed to help each autistic person avoid anxiety or distress and to help them understand and regulate their emotions. • Feedback from autistic people and/or, where appropriate, those that represent their interests, is overall good, confirming that the majority are happy with the support given and how they are involved and consulted. • Whilst there may be some gaps or inconsistencies related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people, these can be addressed quickly and in a relatively short period of time, within the provision's existing resources and capabilities.
Advanced	• The service meets all the criteria to be Accredited at a high level of quality and consistency. • Feedback from autistic people and/or, where appropriate, those that represent their interests, is excellent, confirming that an overwhelming majority are happy with the support given and how they are involved and consulted. • There are no or very limited gaps or inconsistences related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people.
Beacon Status	• The provision has received an Advanced Award within the last 18 months. • The provision can demonstrate exceptional work done to impact on knowledge and understanding of autism amongst families, external professionals and the local community. • A provision will only be considered for a Beacon Award on submission of an application form to our independent panel of professionals with considerable expertise in the field of autism.

Section one

Awards criteria: further consideration

Surveys of autistic people and/or families

Autism Accreditation values feedback from autistic people and, where appropriate, those representing their best interests. Provisions, especially those hoping to achieve Advanced status, are expected to take reasonable effort to support as many autistic people as possible to participate in our confidential survey, taking steps to make it more accessible where necessary.

- For an Accredited Award, we would normally expect to receive at least 10% returns from surveys with over 50% of these returns rating support as always or mostly good.
- For an Advanced Award, we would normally expect to receive at least 33% return from surveys with over 75% of these returns ratingsupport as always or mostly good, with more in the always good category. The rest should be in the ok category with the exception of one or two responses in the poor category.

These guidelines will be applied with discretion according to context.

Statutory inspections

Award decisions will be primarily based on observations, interviews and scrutiny of support plans, alongside feedback from autistic people and their families. However. Committee decisions will consider evidence from statutory bodies that a provision does not fully meet regulatory standards

- Accredited Award will be withheld if the provision fails to meet statutory requirements related to wellbeing of autistic people,
- Advanced Award/Beacon Status will be withheld if the provision requires improvement or does not meet statutory requirements related to wellbeing of autistic people.

Some discretion can be given in applying these rules dependent on when any statutory report was completed and specific content. They also do not apply for services not subject to statutory inspection.

Autism Accreditation reserves the right to declare an award as void if evidence is provided by a regulatory body or other accountable and reputable sources of failings within the service related to wellbeing and safeguarding within18 months of receiving the award.

Section two

Your self-audit

- Completing your self-audit and action plan
- Self-Audit- **to be completed by the provision**

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

The self-audit tool can be found in this manual. It is based on our framework of best practice and is divided into five topics.

Commitment and consultation

Social communication, interactions and relationships

Functional skills and self-reliance

Sensory experiences

Emotional wellbeing

Our standards were created using an evidence-informed approach. This can be defined as the blending together of research evidence alongside practitioner expertise and the lived experience of autistic people. To achieve this, we considered current research into the field of autism, with particular bias toward research that employed participatory methods. We consulted with professionals registered with the accreditation programme to gain their insight. We made a specific point of ensuring that the professionals we consulted with included autistic people.

Commitment and consultation

To complete this first topic, you will need to think about:

- What are the main specialist approaches used to support autistic people?
- What training/ongoing professional development do staff receive in these approaches?
- How are autistic people (and where appropriate families, carers or advocates) consulted about the support received?

Quartet of difference

Our next four standards are based on what we refer to as the **quartet of difference.** These relate to the core areas where autistic people most frequently experience differences when compared to neurotypical people.

These differences can present as a combination of skills and strengths as well as challenges, particularly where such differences are not accommodated.

Each of these standards is broken down into a series of indicators. For each of these indicators, you are required to say what you do to address it and to give a rating score.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Rating criteria

Fully met	The service/school can provide clear evidence that this question is fully addressed consistently and to a high standard. There is no identified scope for improvement.
Partially met	The service/school can provide clear evidence that this question is addressed for each autistic person but there are clearly identified areas for improvement.
Not met	The service/school cannot provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this question is addressed for each autistic person and there is considerable scope for improvement.
N/A	The service/school do not feel that this question is of relevance to them. NB: you will need to be able to explain why this is the case.

Key points

- The self-audit is based on the same framework that we employ to assess provisions. It is therefore a good indicator of what areas will be considered when you are assessed.
- Feedback tells us that provisions find the self-audit provides an effective framework for development and the process of completing it encourages reflection and discussion.
- We believe that the self-audit process will only be useful to you if you complete it with honesty and self-reflection. Getting accredited will not depend on how well you complete the self-audit and there is no pass mark you need to achieve or any 'correct' responses.
- Some questions may be very challenging. This is intentional as we want the self-audit to be aspirational and thought provoking even for very good provisions.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Setting up a Quality Action Group

We recommend that you ask other staff members to join a Quality Action Group (QAG) to meet regularly to work on the self-audit and action plan.

The QAG should ideally include representation from different departments and levels of management and autistic people or other stakeholders.

You may have a core of regular members as well as those you ask to join you to discuss specific topics or issues.
In some provisions, it may not be possible to set up a QAG and you may find yourself doing most of the work alone.

However, it is important that you find ways of consulting with and including others so the self-audit is truly representative of your provision and not just one person's perspective.

Involving others

Try to think of ways in which you can engage the whole staff in the process. For example, you may run a staff workshop where people are put in small groups to address specific areas using an appreciative feedback approach. This will provide insight into whether there is a shared understanding and where they may be gaps and inconsistencies.

Staff may also come up with examples of things that are happening in the provision that you may have overlooked or are unaware of.

When engaging autistic people and, where appropriate, their families, it may be best to think of key questions that relate to the self-audit and how you think these could be presented in a clear and accessible way. For example:

What activities do you like doing at the day centre? Are there other activities you would like us to offer? (For some autistic people, this could be asked using augmentative or alternative communication).

Do you think staff do enough to support your child's emotional wellbeing? Are there other things you would like them to do?

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Appreciative Enquiry Approach

We recommend you use an Appreciative Enquiry Approach to complete the self-audit. This is a strengths-based approach that focusEs on what is already working and buildS upon this rather than identifying problems and trying to fix them. As such, it has been found to be a more positive, constructive and empowering way of achieving change.

Discovery stage: *The best of what is.*	*Your QAG can take one of the indicators such as 'Each autistic person is supported to participate in rewarding social interactions (both spontaneous and structured) with staff, with each other and with members of their local community'. The QAG can then shareall the good work you already do in supporting autistic people to take part in social activities, identifying what activities or events have worked really well and sharing success stories.*
Dream stage: *What might be.*	*QAG members can then imagine what it would be like if the positive features that were identified in the discovery stage were embedded as everyday practice, for example, if social events that worked really well could occur more often or involve more people.*
Design stage: How can it be.	*The participants work together and try to identify steps that can make the dream stage a reality.*
Delivery stage: W*hat will be.*	*The participants create and implement an action plan.*

If you want to find out more, there are a number of online resources. For example, you can view the Appreciative Inquiry Resource pack from the Scottish Social Services Council and NHS Education for Scotland.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Creating an action plan

As you work your way through the self-audit, you are likely to identify lots of action points. We suggest you group these as:

- priorities- what must be done before the assessment
- back burner - Not essential but would be good if actioned
- quick wins - tasks that are relatively easy to carry out and can give a sense of progress.

In the self-audit tool, we include a simple template for an action plan but you may wish to create your own or incorporate it into an existing development plan.

Once your action plan is set up you should be able to predict how much time you will need to address all priority areas. You can go back to the original timescale you set yourself and decide if it needs to be revised.

It is unlikely that you will reach a point where you have completed all identified actions. However, when you feel reasonably confident that you can meet the criteria, you can think about booking an assessment. Remember, you need to give us at least six months notice so do allow for this in your plans.

You can continue to work on your action plan up to three weeks before your assessment, at which point you are required to send a final version of the self-audit and the action plan to your consultant.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Getting support

Our members area:

We have an Accreditation members are on the National Autistic Society website. These pages will provide you with resources that may help you in completing the self-audit and action plan.

General consultant support:

This is support that you can access at any point in the process without additional costs. You can access this support by emailing your consultant with a question. Maybe you don't know what to write for a particular indicator. Or maybe you are looking for some ideas around how you could address an issue highlighted in your self-audit.

Your consultant can advise you on the accreditation process and provide general advice about good autism practice. However, they are not able to give you specific advice on how best to support an autistic individual.

It is important that you take the initiative if you need such help. Your consultant knows you are busy and won't keep contacting you without a reason. If the consultant doesn't hear from you, they will assume you are making steady progress in working towards booking an assessment and that you don't need their help.

Your consultant may reply in an email or suggest a short phone or video call.

There is no additional cost for accessing general consultant support, providing the demands you are placing on the consultant in terms of time or resources do not become excessive. If the consultant believes this is the case, they will advise that you book in a consultant session.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

Getting support

Consultation session (on site):

You have the option of asking the consultant to carry out a consultant visit. To get the most out of the visit, you are strongly advised to plan what will happen on the day. The visit could involve one or more of the following activities:

- meeting to provide bespoke advice, review and feedback on the self-audit and action plan
- review and feedback on personal support plan documentation and assessment tools
- environmental audit or learning walk of your provision
- focused observations of current practice.

Please be aware of our safeguarding guidance which applies to any Autism Accreditation visit and can be found here.

Consultation session (virtual)

If you need bespoke advice and guidance on the self-audit then you might prefer to ask your consultant to provide support via a virtual meeting. A benefit of this is that your consultant should be able to arrange this at an earlier date than a site visit.

Your consultant will be able to advise you on whether the virtual session will be covered by your assessment plan or whether you will be charged an additional cost. This will depend on the length of the session. As a rough guide, two virtual sessions both lasting more than two hours would be charged at an equivalent cost to an onsite consultation visit.

Section two

Completing your self-audit and action plan

The self-audit tool can be found in this manual. It is based on our framework of best practice and is divided into five topics.

Commitment and consultation

Social communication, interactions and relationships

Functional skills and self-reliance

Sensory experiences

Emotional wellbeing

Commitment

Type of provision eg special day school; residential care home etc.

Special day school

How many people are supported by the provision?

304 children

How many of this number are autistic?

198 children

What is the range of autistic people supported by the provision (eg age; learning disability; verbal or non-verbal etc)?

We support children from 4 -19yrs of age we have a broad spectrum of children with severel learning difficulties to profound and multiple. All of our children present with a spikey profile of learning need. Our children's communication needs range from non-verbal to some that are able to use verbal communication.

Outcome of last statutory inspection if applicable. (eg body, date, outcome).

198 children

Commitment

What are the main specialist approaches used by staff to support autistic people?
This should include reference to social communication, sensory regulation, promotion of independence, and wellbeing.

As a school we are very eclectic in our approaches as we strongly feel that one approach does not fit all. We use the TEACCH? approach in all of our classrooms but we only use apsects of the approach. We access attention autism and have an in house trainer who provides regular training opportuntites for staff. As part of our behaviour management we follow Team Teach as aframework to support de-escalation and physical intervention when needed and have three in house trainers within school. in terms of sensory regulation our sensory team offer sensory circuits, sensory diets, sensory food groups, musical movement, tacticle groups and emoitional regulation groups. The team also meetand support staff teams to help meet individual childrne's needs within the classroom and within our extensive grounds through trampolining, our bikes and trikes/ swing area, as well as our splash and dash sessions in the pool.
Independence is at the centre of our curriciulum wheel and is promoted through out the day via self care routines, TEACCH work systems and how we set up routines through out the day.
We support wellbeing in a variety of ways through our curriculum delivery as well as our multi disciplinary working with the family support team, specialist teams

What training/ongoing professional development is provided for staff in delivering autism-related approaches or methods?

We have a very comprehensive induction programme that covers autism specific needs for staff that are in our autism classrooms. We offer a variety of CPD opportunities such as our 2 day Team teach training, attention autism training, TEACCH workshops as well as the opportunity to go on the 3 day TEACCH course. Our staff can request training via share point and can equally highlight this during their professional development conversations that happen on a termly basis. Our therapy teams work alongside our teams to offer communication training around various communication strategies such as PECS, core /fringe boards , intensive interactions and AAC.
Our sensory team and OT offer regular sensory processing training during and after school on sensory needs/sensory profiling, sensory circuits and delivering sensory diets. They also offer sessions on making food fun, musical movement and sensory awareness to class groups. Our music and art therapists also offer individual sessions with children or class groups if appropriate.

What processes are in place to ensure that each autistic person has a regularly reviewed personal support plan that identifies strategies and sets targets in relation to social communication, sensory regulation, promotion of independence, and wellbeing?

Our children have an annual review once a year where their annual targets are reviewed and set with parents and other professionals, Annual review targets are linked to key areas of need for each child. EHCP's are also reviewed and updated with suggested outcomes at end points of key stages.
All our children have learning targets set twice a year linked to their annual reviews. Learning targets are set with suggestions of contexts/tasks to complete with children at school and at home should parents wish to continue learning at home.
Teacher planning will also incorporate targets around social communication/regulation, independence or wellbeing depending on the nature of the session. Planning is annotated/reviewed and updated on a half termly basis.
Children accessing sensory processing sessions specific to making food fun, musical movement, sensory sessions will have targets set alongside the sensory processing team.
Our therapy teams offer a universal, targeted and specialist input to children and class teams. Targets are set at a targeted or specialist input and are agreed with the class teacher.

Consultation

How are autistic people consulted in the support they receive? *This should include reference to any adaptation to enable them to express their opinion.*

Many of our children are working at very early stages of development and so getting their input as to the support they receive is limited, however where possible we will always engage children in expressing choices/preferences on school life using pictures/symbols to support this. We have a school council that meet regularly to express opinions and make choices on important school decisions. Pupil voice is an important part of the annual review process, teachers will collate information regarding children's likes/dislikes, strengths and areas of development and relay them as part of the report and will also record video's of what the children enjoy, achieved or have as a strength.
At our secondary provision children access their specialist interest afternoon which is based on a strength and interest they wish to share with the rest of the year group. Children and parents are also involved in choosing their AQA unit awards and are largely based on interest and strengths and are chosen through child observation, visual supports and collaboration with parents.
Pupil voice is recorded and acted on via our school council, KS3 blog, twitter (x) account as well as instagram. We use our school newsletters/6th form newsletter to share success and achievements.
Pupil voice is also recorded on EFL (evidence for learning) where parents/families can comment on achievements/successes recorded by school staff in the form of photographs/video's on the app

How are families, carers and/or advocates who represent the best interests of each autistic individual consulted about the support being provided where appropriate to do so?

As stated above as part of the annual review process families/carers are involved in the review process and contribute to the annual target setting as well as the the setting of new outcomes for EHCP's at the end of key stages. We hold a parents evening each year so parents and carers can come into school to meet with staff and discuss their children's needs, strengths and areas of development. During these evenings we also provide a wider opportunity for families and carers to meet with therapists, school advisor team, sensory team to discuss interventions/strategies used with their child or for families/carers to simply ask questions. Our family support team offer and provide 1:1 sessions to support families on a variety of issues such as housing, benefits, blue badge applications, access to funding, support in navigating short breaks to name but a few.
At our secondary provision parents and carers are also invited in to start to discuss specialist interests and options for AQA unit awards.
Our parent coffee mornings host a group of parents that happily represent their community and individual families needs and are the best spokes persons when various agencies organisations come into school. Our parents have met with councillors, MP, short breaks team, transport and social care to share their views. More recently we had oxford university visit wanting to find out more about how we support our families. Our families also meet regularly with Healthwatch Greenwich who collate our families views and queries and share it with health services.

Social communication, interactions and relationships (1)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
C1	Staff are confident in using a range of communication approaches and systems relevant to the people they support.	We use a variety of approaches to support children with their communication we use PECS, topic boards, core and fringe boards, communication books and AAC. We have an AAC clinic where referrals can be made for AAC. SaLT work collaboartively with class teams to identify the best tools to trial with children. Classrooms take a total communication approach, staff carry visuals with them, halls and play spaces have communication boards, children have communication passports.	3
C2	Each autistic person's preferences, skills and strengths in understanding and responding to others are recorded.	communication and social interaction is an important part of our annual review process. Staff use our learning journeys assessment tool and or SaLT support to produce communication targets for children. We have a communication policy in place and Autism protocol and policy to support expectations and protocols. Communication passports also record likes/dislikes, what a child's yes and no may look like	3
C3	Each autistic person's challenges in understanding and responding to others are recorded.	We have an aultism protocol in place in all classrooms to supporT consistency of approach across the school. Classrooms hae labels, clearly define areas to support independence aand autonomy.	3
C4	The environment is organised to encourage autistic people to socially engage with increasing self-reliance.	We have an aultism protocol in place in all classrooms to support consistency of approach across the school. Classrooms have labels, clearly define areas to support independence and autonomy. We have an environment committee that meets regularly to discuss environment, displays and the wider environmental needs of the school	3
C5	All staff consistently use the best way of communicating with each autistic person within different contexts, including when out in the community.	We have a communication policy in place for staff to reference. All our children have an individual timetable in place, communiation tools such as PECS, topic boards, core and fring boards, communication books, AAC tools in place. Children use these across the school day and children will take the relevant tool for them out in the community.	2

Social communication, interactions and relationships (2)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
C6	Each autistic person has access to tools, training and programmes which help them communicate and express themselves within different contexts, including when out in the community.	Our children and young people have access to a variety of tools from PECS to topic boards, core and fringe boards to communication books and AAC tools. Children and young people are encouraged to express their likes/dislikes, preferences, comments using the most appropriate tool for them across the school day. Our secondary and 6th form express their preferences, options within their specialist interests and their enterprise projects.	2
C7	Each autistic person is supported to participate in rewarding social interactions (both spontaneous and structured) with staff, with each other and with members of their local community.	Our children and young people acess a vareity of sessions that support social interactions such as play and leisure, play times, communication sessions as part of their structured timetable. Choosing time is a time given to children to focus on more spontaneous exploration of play resources and interactions. Children have the opportunity to engage in various community events.	-
C8	Each autistic person is supported to develop skills in forming healthy relationships including friendships and intimate and sexual relationships.	our curriculum offers PSHE and RSE topics around friendships,family relationships, people who ehlp us, body chanages, puberty, public and private to name but a few. We recognise our children and young people need support learning around social situations, games and social rules.	3
C9	Each autistic person is supported to deal with challenging or unwanted social interactions including abusive or unhealthy relationships.	As part of our curriculum we do explore with those groups who are developmentally able to understand wanted and unwanted interactions, we touch on what makes a good and bad friend, what makes us happy and sad.	3
C10	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in their communication and social interaction are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and achieve optimum impact.	Success and achievements are shared on a daily basis via the home school contact book/email or phone call with parents, baseline and annual review reports also celebrate children's progress over the year. Assemblies and sharing times celebrate success as does class sharing times at the end of the day or individual sessions. We deliver play and leisure sessions to develop play skills and interaction skills. Children use a variety of tools depending on their developmental level and skill set suc has core	3
C11	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their communication, social interaction and relationships are identified, recorded, and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.	Success and achievements are shared on a daily basis via the home school contact book/email or phone call with parents, baseline and annual review reports also celebrate children's progress over the year. Assemblies and sharing times celebrate success as does class sharing times at the end of the day or individual sessions.	3

Social communication, interactions and relationships

Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit: 325)
Individualised approach to communication strategies for children including PECS, core and fringe boards, AAC devices as well as visual supports. Total communication approach in the classroom which is reflected in our autism protocol which is up in each class. Our use of individualised timetables to support children/young people's independence in transitioning across the school day. Communication sessions speciific to the learner profile of that group which will focus on key skills. The use of attention autism across the curriculum and our access to an in house trainer in the approach AAC clinic in place to support referrals to CENMAC and tertiary services such as the GOS hub. We also have specialist communication referral system in place so that teachers can seek out additional support for children's communication needs. Our eco committee focuses on how best to support and develop our learning and school environments and regularly update our corridor spaces and communication opportunities

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit: 325)
Further promoting communication tools for when out in the community

Functional skills and self-reliance (1)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
F1	Staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to encourage independence and reduce reliance on direct support. including supporting autistic people to make decisions and express opinions.	We follow the TEACCH approach in school to set out our classrooms to support independence within class. Visual/phiscal structures also support this. We use a vareity of timetables to support independence in transitioning around the class and wider school. We support independence throuhg the attention autism approach, demonstration and modelling to back chaining and teaching in small acheivable steps. Communication startegies support expressing choices, preferences, likes/disklikes	3
F2	Each autistic person's strengths and challenges in functional life skills are recorded.	Children work on tooth brushing skills, their toileting as well as independence skills such as tidying up, recognising their own belongings and collecting them. Some groups have PE kits and are learning to dress and undress ready for PE sessions. Children also work on dressing/undressing before and after their weekly swim session.	2
F3	Staff organise the environment to support and encourage autistic people to function with increasing autonomy.	Every autism classroom follows our autism protocol and environment protocols to ensure consistency of approach across the school. We ensure physical and visual structures are in place to support autonomy.	3
F4	Staff understand and consistently follow the best way of breaking down, structuring and presenting tasks so that each autistic person is able to complete them with increasing confidence and self-reliance.	We use a variety of approaches to support our children and young people through modelling ,demonstrating, back chaining, breaking tasks down, using a multi sensory approach to make learning practical and concrete where needed. We have had a big focus over the last couple of years on science and maths delivery making them practical, functional and transferable across the school day and this was focussed on as part of one of curriculum core priorities.	3
F5	Staff understand and consistently follow the best way of supporting each autistic person to understand and cope with transitions and changes in routine in different contexts and settings.	As part of our autism protocol all children and young people are expected to have a personalised timetable whether that is a now, now/next board, weekly timetable or diary to support their understanding of transitions and change. Class teams complete a transition profile at the end of the year to ensure that the most important and relevant information is shared with the next class. The use of viuals/communication tools/sensory tools is critical information to have shared as part of this hand over	3

Functional skills and self-reliance (2)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
F6	Each autistic person is supported in developing skills in making choices and taking decisions.	Communication is one of our essential strands to the curriculum and supports children making basic choices, expressing likes/dislikes, to request, label and make comments using the appropriate tool for them photo's/objects, PECS, topic boards or core/fringe boards. Teachers plan for communication opportunities across the curriculum	3
F7	Each autistic person is supported in developing daily functional life skills,	Self help skills is another of our essential strands within our curriculum. We support our children in learning to eat/drink, get dressed/undressed and with their toileting skills and teeth brushing. This is all bespoke to the child's cognitive level and physical level. We also offer our children food technology sessions where they can explore foods and basic cooking techniques. At secondary children take on more functional skills as part of their AQA unit awards	3
F8	Each autistic person is supported to develop skills in staying safe and healthy in a range of contexts.	Our PSHE and RSE programmes of study, support and develop children/young peoples understanding of safety in different contexts. P.E, PSHE, food tech cover healthy living skills as does swimming and our sensory processing sessions. We have individual risk assessments in place so that staff are aware of a child/young person's individual risks so that they can support them appropriately when in and out of school.	3
F9	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in becoming more independent (including making choices and expressing opinion) are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and achieve optimum impact.	Self help skills is another of our essential strands within our curriculum. We support our children in learning to eat/drink, get dressed/undressed and with their toileting skills and teeth brushing. This is all bespoke to the child's cognitive level and physical level. We also offer our children food technology sessions where they can explore foods and basic cooking techniques. At secondary children take on more functional skills as part of their AQA unit awards such as using the washing machine, cooking, using money to purchase items at the	3
F10	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their self-reliance and functional life skills are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.	Positive outcomes in self reliance and functional skills are reported on as part of the annual review process and shared with those people important to the child. Self help skills are one of our essential strands within the curriculum and independence is at the centre of our curriculum models across the school. Achievements are shared and recorded via obs/photographs/video which are shared by home school contact books/phone calls/emails or through our EFL app. We share successes through our news letters as well as our achievement session in the summer term.	2

Functional skills and self-reliance

Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit: 325)
We offer bespoke personal care/j PSHE topics for individuals and or groups which may cover growing up, body changes, appropriate touch, personal care to name but a few. We promote independence within the class for transitioning using our timetables as well as within learning opportunities such as swimming/PE dressing/undressing, food tech - food prep, work stations - learning skills. Using work systems within work station activities supports the practice of skills and developing independence in completing them which is a key skill in using the TEACCH approahc The use of EFL to record and share progress and achievements with parents who can then also comment and share home success has been a real positive outcome for our children and families. Our AQA unit awards reflect the functional skills learnt at secondary and how these are promoted and celebrated with families. Our enterprise groups in 6th form also develop a variety of functional skills that are transferable into the community Our visual supports on teeth brushing, toileting routines, dressing and undressing that are placed in the toilet areas and changing rooms also promote independence and skill development during the day.

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit: 325)
To use a more digital tool to record functional skill acquirement over a child/young person's time at school ,at present we use paper documents to record living skills but are looking at digital options

Sensory experiences (1)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
S1	The provision ensures that staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to support autistic people in their regulation of sensory input.	We have a sensory team that delivers a range of training opportunities and supports class teams and individual young people. Induction also covers sensory needs and what sensory praccesing is for new staff. Our sensory team offer sessions on food group, sensory box, musical movement, tactile defensiveness, sensory circuits as well as work on sensory diets.	3
S2	Sensory experiences and activities which have a positive impact on each autistic person are identified and recorded, for example, those which help an individual feel calm and focused, or provide enjoyment and pleasure.	Sensory processing is an important thread that weaves through our curriculum if children are not in a ready state to learn then they will struggle to acces their school day. Class teams offer a variety of movment breaks, sensory opportunities through out the day. Swimming, P.E, play time, ball pool, sensory circuit/regulation rooms, outdoor work e.g allotment, chicken coop all support our children's regulation and are big motivators for children. Our sensory team log the work they do with children/groups	3
S3	The challenges each autistic person may experience in regulating sensory experiences are identified and recorded.	Challenges in regulating and managing emotion are recorded as part of our children/young people's behaviour profiles as well as the strategies to support regulation/emotion which are detailed within the profile. Baseline and Annual reviews cover sections on sensory/communication needs so families are aware of what children have been working on or are currently working on. Learning targets also usually have a sensory/regulation target within where its appropriate. Sensory diets are	3
S4	Staff organise the environment to support and encourage autistic people to self-regulate sensory input and avoid sensory overload.	The autism protocol which is followed in all autism classrooms highlights what should be available and in place within the class environment to help a child/young person manage their self regulation and emotions. An environment learning walk is completed by senior leaders at the start of the year to ensure everything is in place and a spreadsheet is set up with this information. We have Sensory diets, which are used to support specific children who need more detailed input.	3
S5	Staff use proactive and preventative strategies (as best for the individual) to avoid sensory overload and discomfort which impacts on individual wellbeing.	Behaviour profiles detail preventative, pro-active and early intervention strategies to support children and young people. The profile will detail communication approaches and sensory needs/approahces to be followed. Staff follow the school's realtionship and behaviour policy as well as the physical intervention policy.	3

Sensory experiences (2)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
S6	Each autistic person is supported in using sensory self-regulation strategies and tools with increasing autonomy.	Each class group is unique and different and so how staff support children with their self regulation will look differently. Some of our young children are learning to self regulate through emotion boards, movement breaks or through using equip in class such as wobble and sit cushions, wieghted blankets, ball chairs/rocking chairs. Some children benefit from regular movement breaks or through accessing the sensory circuit. Some children are referred to our specialist sensory team to look at sensory diets, outdoor work	3
S7	Each autistic person is supported to tolerate an increasing range of sensory experiences including when out in the community.	All of our groups use a multi sensory approach to teaching where by different resources/materials are introduced to the chidlren. Our sensory team offer sensory box sessions, musical movement as well as sensory food group and tactile sessions. Children have visits out at least oncea a term, staff may take out ear defenders, chewy tubes visuals to support visits. Sensory team also offer support to families	2
S8	Each autistic person is enabled to regularly access sensory input which they find rewarding, for example, which helps them relax or which they find enjoyable.	All classes access a play and leisure session on a weekly basis where children can explore and play with motivating and fun resources/games. Many children enjoy the groups reading corner, going out on to balconies or exploring favoured toys/items in class. Some groups use 'working for boards' and some groups have choosing sessions to allow children to choose fun and engaging items	3
S9	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person to regulate sensory input and avoid sensory overload are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and achieve optimum impact.	behaviour profiles and or sensory profiles are completed where appropriate both review and explore sensory input and how best to support children. Sensory diets/and class timetables reflect sensory input that is needed.	3
S10	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their sensory self-regulation are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.	baseline reports and annual reviews reflect positive outcomes for young people in their learning, behaviour and sensory needs which are shared with parents. Learning targets reflect learning/behavioural and sensory needs as a focus Parents meetings also share this.	3

Sensory experiences

Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit: 325)
Sensory team meet regularly with class teams to review and update sensory diets/programmes for individual children Sensory team deliver and model sessions for sensory work, musical movement. Sessions on food sensitivities, tactile defensiveness and emotional regulation are also delivered. Staff teams/sensory teams and senior staff host MDT's to support children at crisis and work collaboratively to support the whole child. The importance of meeting our children and young people's sensory needs within the classroom environment and additional spaces around the school which go across the curriculum. Staff and parent training on sensory needs and the strategies and interventions to support them.

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit: 325)
Further develop the introduction of our emotional regulation groups across the wider school To develop connection plans to enhance our behaviour profiles in bringing together information around a child's trauma, sensory needs, communication strategies and supportive strategies.

Emotional wellbeing (1)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicators	How we do this	Rating
E1	The provision ensures that staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to support autistic people in maintaining emotional wellbeing.	Staff use a variety of tools to support our young people's emotional well being and sensory regulation through sensory diets, access to the sensory circuit, specialist teams referrals, food group, musical movement and sensory sessions. Through the curriculum and sessions such as PSHE, RSE, PE our children get to explore feelings, what they like,preferences	3
E2	Activities which each autistic person personally finds enjoyable, relaxing or which provide them with a sense of achievement and purpose are identified and recorded.	Our childreen/young people find a vareity of activities enjoyable from focussed learning sessions to PE, Swimming, ball pool/soft play to forest school and outdoor activiites. These are recorded as part of the annual review process but also through EFL and more informally in class	3
E3	Factors which may impact on each autistic person's emotional wellbeing (for example, which may cause them anxiety, stress or trauma) are identified and recorded.	We have a CAMHS in reach clinic on a monthly basis where we discuss individual children. We have a number of mental health first aiders across the school as well as a family support advisor's team. We have just starte working on trauma informed practice and the deputy head is implementing this across the school Children's behaviour profiles/risk assessments also outline any concerns for children	2
E4	The provision ensures that staff are knowledgeable and look out for mental health problems (especially those that are a particular risk for autistic people) as well as commonly co-occurring conditions. Staff are also aware of autism masking (especially but not exclusively in women and girls) and the impact this may have on emotional well-being.	We have a mental health and well being policy in place that supports both staff and children's well being. We have good links with the local LD CAMHS team who offer consults via our in reach clinic where we discuss concerns for our children. We also work with a variety of health profesisons and have also formed links with various health clinics at local hospitals such as ADHD and epilepsy teams to ensure we work collaboratively so support children and our families. We have a paediatrician/dietician/ continence and dental nurse that visit school on a regular basis for school appts. Staff are aware of masking and the difference between how children present at home and school and is often discussed as a matter of course between parents/teachers and senior leaders when needed	3

Emotional wellbeing (2)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicators	How we do this	Rating
E5	Staff organise the environment to support autistic people in their emotional wellbeing, to avoid anxiety and stress and to maximise participation and engagement.	Class teams follow our Autism protocol which focuses on the classes physical and visual structure. We complete an environment audit each year when classes start the year which are completed alongside line managers. We also use small room guidelines to guide the use of those small rooms attached and shared by classrooms. Balconies/garden areas are also used for break out space/sensory processing/play opportunities depending on the group.	3
E6	Each autistic person is supported to understand and regulate their own emotions and recognise how they are expressed by others.	Class teams do a lot of work on feelings and how children feel through the school day. Teams work hard on dentifying sensory strategies and interventions that work for individual children e.g movement breaks, sensory diets, access to sensory circuit, trampoline slots etc. Staff can complete specialist teams referral to request additional support for a particular child.	3
E7	All staff understand and consistently follow proactive and preventative strategies to help each person to stay calm and in control, and to avoid stress, anxiety and upset. When necessary, they are confident in employing bespoke non-restrictive de-escalation techniques.	All our children in the autism classrooms have a behaviour profile in place that helps outline triggers/function of behaviour as well as preventative, early intervention and adult responses to stress and upset. We use a variety of de-escalation strategies whether that is involving a new person, humour, distraction or a break to name a few. All staff are trained in a 2 day team teach training that focuses on de-escalation, trauma informed responses, communication and as a last resort how the physically support a child	3

Emotional wellbeing (3)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
E8	Policy and practice is informed by an understanding that autistic people are at high risk of developing long-term psychological harm from being exposed to restrictive practices. The provision is committed to ensuring that restrictive practices are not regularly or routinely employed and that they are only ever used in an emergency as a means to avert immediate harm. Their use is followed by a robust investigation to identify lessons learnt.	All staff in our autism classrooms are trained in a 2 day Team Teach course that is delivered by in house trainers. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort and as long as it is necessary, reasonable and proportionate. Any child requiring physical intervention has a behaviour profile in place and has an incident form completed to record the behaviour and restraint. Children who are struggling have behaviour action forms that we complete to record actions and support undertaken to keep track of incidents and what is working	3
E9	Each autistic person is enabled to access a range of activities which they personally find enjoyable and rewarding, including recreational and leisure activities.	As mentioned previously we have a broad range of sessions that chidlren find enjoyable across the school day. We identify reinforces, motivators and activities chidlren find enjoyable via their behaviour profile and communication passport but equally review this on a termly basis. Through curriculum delivery we take note of motivating and enjyable activities so that they can inform next steps and future planning	3
E10	Each autistic person is supported to learn new skills, try out new experiences and challenge themselves.	We promote the learning of new skills and concepts but we also recognise the importance of consolidating and transferring skills across contexts and adults is just as important. Children are set personalised targets as well as targets as part of their curriculum sessions. We promote visits from outside services and providers such as theatre productions, orchestra's etc. We also promote trips into the local community and further afield with our school journeys where children get a wealth of new experiences and challenges.	3
E11	Each autistic person is supported to be socially included within (and contribute to) their community and to make meaningful connections.	One of our core priorities for the last couple of years has been developing our links with the local community. We have a community group that meets regularly as well as friends of Willow Dene group who support us raise money for the school. Our children support with our fund raising through hosting and creating crafts for our stalls as well as leaflet dropping the local community. Children have opportunities across the school day and week to mix with other groups during play times and assemblies. Within their own group children have focused play and leisure sessions, as well as swim and PE	3

Emotional wellbeing (4)

Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
E12	The provision offers an inclusive environment in which each autistic person is empowered to recognise their autism as an integral part of who they are but also to explore and express diverse identities around gender, sexuality, race, religion and other aspects of their personality.	Many of our children and young people are cognitively working at very early developmental levels and so aiding their understanding about their autism is a challenge ,however where appropriate we will discuss what autism means, a young persons strengths and areas of need. As part of our PSHE offer we will explore gender/sexuality and relationships. As part of our TPPC (Time, People, Place and Culture' strand we expose children to a rich range of cultural backgrounds and religions.	2
E13	Support plans focus on the wellbeing and quality of life of each autistic person and actively reflect their likes and dislikes and what matters to them.	All of our child focussed plans such a learning target plans, behaviour profiles, communication passports, risk assessments reflect our children and young people's likes/strengths and areas of challenge. Each plan uses interests and strenghts to support our children and young people's well-being and quality of life.	3
E14	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in their emotional wellbeing are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and achieve optimum impact.	All profiles and plans are reviewed on a termly basis to reflect the current needs of the child/young person. Teams have regular opportunities to meet as part of our QA schedule so that strategies and approaches can be discussed. Senior leaders e.g lead for behaviour etc will meet with teams to review strategies and input. Line managers complete progress meeting reviews each term to explore how each child is managing to use strengths and interests to support development but to also explore	3
E15	Positive outcomes that each autistic person achieves in improving and maintaining their emotional wellbeing are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.	As stated before baseline reports and annual review reports are one way where we share progress and positive outcomes for each child/young person. In our secondary provision AQA unit achievements are evaluated and recorded. We use newsletters, home school book entries as well as twitter and our website to celebrate successes.	3

Emotional wellbeing

Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit: 325)
role of TLR readiness to learn and regulation sensory diets and sensory interventions role of the sensory team the training and delivery of a variety of sessions Team debriefs and meetings with teams to discuss triggers/supportive strategies to support a child/young person to overcome crisis. Our holistic approach to supporting behaviour.

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit: 325)
To develop a connection plan that brings together info on a particular child re comm/sensory needs/ trauma To further develop our incident debriefs with children so that staff feel confident in more formally supporting the repair and reparation stage of a crisis.

Section three

- Submitting case studies
- Case studies templates - **to be completed by the provision**

Submitting case studies

Your assessment is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how well your school or service supports autistic people.

Case studies can be an excellent way to showcase what you have helped autistic people achieve.

You can complete up to three case studies showing the impact of an initiative or specific programme for autistic individuals.

You can complete up to three more case studies about autistic individuals, that shows what difference the support they have received has made to the quality of their lives.

Try to really focus on identifying what positive outcomes have been achieved.

Ensure that actual names and identifying personal details of people you support are not included to preserve anonymity.

You do have the option of not filling in the case studies but this will mean that you will only be considered for an Accredited or Aspiring Award as case studies are required evidence for the Advanced Award.

Section three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (1)

Date initiative started:	September 2023

Description (What was the initiative?)

Develop the use of the Family Sharing tool on the Evidence for Learning (EfL) app to share photos, videos and messages between home and school

Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)

Most children travel in by school bus, so parents do not see the team who work with their child regularly. We had established and effective mechanisms for staying in touch with families, through the home-school contact book, phone calls and meetings. We used an evidence-based approach to assessment and this photo and video evidence of children ' s achievements was shared with parents as part of the annual review process. We wanted to enable more dynamic sharing of these celebrations of the children ' s successes between home and school to build connections between the class team and the family.

Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)

To extend parent communications to include better use of technology, ensuring that parents can access and share information about their child in a way that is safe, secure and that suits them. We know that close partnerships between school and families lead to better outcomes for children. Providing effective means to share ways of working and progress will support this process. We wanted school staff and families to combine their expertise about their children to work together towards common goals and share strategies and successes.

Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)

We developed a cycle of talking and listening to staff in a range of forums to support engagement, professional development and skills. This included 1:1 and group consultation and feedback meetings; formal and informal training and CPD opportunities; and mechanisms for sharing tips and strategies. We produced simple support guides with ' how tos ', solutions for common issues and ways to reduce workload. We worked directly with families to support them to set up accounts and training to use the app, using a range of communication methods: in person, phone, email and help guides.

What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)

Staff and families used the app to celebrate and share achievements and magic moments in real time. Class teams were able to use the app to model and problem solve; by sharing the way equipment or strategies were used at school or demonstrate techniques to support. Use of the app supported meaningful connections between the wider network of people who are important in the child ' s life, including those in other parts of the world. The app capitalised on the way people are used to communicating and accessing information and allowed the sharing of digital media with ease. Staff used speech-to-text to support with workload, and translation tools to connect with families where English was not understood well.

What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)

It strengthened relationships and communication between families and class teams, leading to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the child: their interests, needs and achievements and how these were supported in the home and at school. Communication through the app provided contexts for communication with the child that deepened their understanding, through repeated opportunities to talk about and share their experiences both at home and school. It enabled families who were new to the country to better understand how we worked with their child through

Next steps and lessons learnt

This was a core priority (part of the school development plan) in 2023-24. We had sign up from almost half of families in the school. We have a planned strategy to sustain the impetus and impact of the initiative and continue to expand it to more families, through our tried and tested methods of supporting both staff and families to recognise the benefits and have the skills to use the app (it is really easy to set up and use, but we recognise that people have different levels of digital confidence).

Section three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (2)

Date initiative started:	September 2023

Description (What was the initiative?)

SEND Support Hub and wider SENCO support - The Compass Partnership of Schools

Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)

The Compass Partnership of Schools consists of 14 schools, of which, 13 schools are mainstream provisions. Willow Dene is currently the only special school within the trust. The demographic of children with SEND within mainstream provisions are becoming ever more complex as special school places become more oversubscribed. Our leaders and teachers at Willow Dene hold a lot of expertise that we have a duty to share for the greater good of the trust and the individual children with the most complex of needs within the trust. We had already been providing pockets of support to individual schools and schools had begun adopting our Learning Journeys assessment systems for assessing their learners with SEND.

Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)

We aimed to provide responsive and timely support to the mainstream schools within the trust, through identifying common areas of difficulties within mainstream schools and marrying this up with the expert leaders within Willow Dene. These categories include, but are not limited to: General SEND Support, Behaviour, Sensory Processing, Communication, Curriculum, Assessment, Access and Specialist Equipment, Autism Specific e.g. routines, visual supports, structures etc., implementing phonics and early reading for learners with SEND, or any other areas that schools feel they need support with. This can be delivered in a number of ways such as conversations, resources, visits to Willow Dene, visits to the mainstream school to offer advice and guidance etc.

Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)

We created a platform for staff in mainstream schools within the trust to request support, following conversations with SENCOs and Head Teachers in their schools. This was through a simple form which uses power automate systems to notify a designated Willow Dene leader. This information is then triaged, and the case is assigned to the most appropriate Willow Dene leader with whom the particular expertise lies. This leader then sets up a call with the school to gain more information and then to agree a plan moving forward. Feedback is gained from the Willow Dene Leader about what has happened and the impact of the input.

What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)

This was extremely well received by the schools within the trust and requests came in for a range of support. 75% of the requests so far have been in relation to a child or group of children with an autism diagnosis or on a pathway to an autism diagnosis. These have related to sensory processing needs, integration into a mainstream classroom, positioning and access to learning, behaviour and autism specific strategies. We also noticed some commonalities in requests, and with further conversations with mainstream SENCOs we were able to establish termly SENCO workshops, hosted at Willow Dene addressing some of these common areas as a pre-emptive strategy to some of the support requests.

What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)

There have been a range of outcomes from specific cases, however, generally this has resulted in children within mainstream settings revceivng more support which is specific to their needs, SENCOs, Teachers and TAs have been more confident in support children's needs and implementing the right strategies to support their regulation, communication and access to learning. We have also been able to work with children who have transitioned to Willow Dene this year, which has given us a good understanding of their needs and ensure a solid start to Willow Dene.

Next steps and lessons learnt

The SEND Support Hub will remain in place, and we will continue to support our mainstream schools within the trust. We now have regular SENCO workshops in place which provides support on a range of areas including sensory processing and regulation and autism specific strategies. As we move forward this year, workshops will include a curriculum specific focus and how to support the most complex learners in accessing learning in mainstream. We have also established a termly newsletter celebrating inclusion and practice across the trust. We are continuing to consider ways that we can role this initiative out into the wider education community.

Section three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (3)

Date initiative started:	May 2023

Description (What was the initiative?)

Emotional regulation group - As part of our tutoring offer we on emotional regulation back in early 22/23 we recognised there were some children especially since COVID and or coming into school that needed additional support with their regulation. We identified a further group of children for Summer 24 that we felt required some additional support in their emotional regulation and understanding of emotions either because they were new into school or because we felt they had had a significant change or challenge in their life that had had a significant impact. Myself and

Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)

Having completed the tutoring trial and seeing the positive outcome on the children involved I then embarked on a trauma informed pracitioner diploma which highlighted for me the importance of recognising trauma and its impact on our children['s well being, ability to regulate and mental health. As lead for behaviour I also wanted to explore and research the impact of a more trauma informed approach to behaviour management and our children's well being at school. Most of our children are functioning at very early developmental levels and we know as a school that we are very good at supporting our children's general sensory regulation but we really wanted to explore the emotional side of regulation in a bit more detail.

Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)

The purpose of the initiative was to broaden our sensory processing offer to incorporate emotion labeling, emotion recognition, exploring what sensory input we like and don't like as well as building positive relationships through fun, motivating interactions and play based activities. In this initial block of support we wanted to focus on relationship building and ensuring the children had a connection with the staff delivering the session and that they had fun. The main objectives were ' To develop an awareness of myself and others.'. 'To develop my social engagement through voice/face by actively participating in activities.' 'To develop an awareness and/or preference to sensory input.'

Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)

(please see attached weekly plan in the case study folder of evidence as well as the individual children's observation sheets. We delivered the session through a structured approach of a starter song, followed by some interactions/games/songs to build a connection and trust followed by a review using visual supports to record what the children liked/disliked. After each session we completed an observation sheet where staff recorded how the children reacted and responded to the input and what they enjoyed or showed a preference for.

What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)

Once we had identified the children and the main objective we then planned the intervention out over 6-8 weeks and collated the resources and visuals to support the session. We then spoke to class teams as to timings and location of the group session. After each session we recorded an observation of the child's responses which are in the case study evidence folder. We also took photographs to send home and I created a powerpoint of my findings and impact ready to share with my tutor group on the trauma informed practitioner diploma which again is in the case study evidence folder

What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)

Sensory processing team and deputy head developed a programme of work for children working at a developmentally young leve to support their awareness and understanding of emotional regulation. Children had clearly identified preferences of sensory input recorded which could be shared with class teams and families. Class teams shared with the sensory team that they observed a clear difference in the chilren when they returned to class.

Next steps and lessons learnt

We developed this emotional group session for our early developmental learners focusing on social engagement, building relationships and sensory preferences, after delivering this group we then identified a group of young people who are working at the basic concept level who we felt would benefit from furthering their understanding of their own emotions, what they look like and make them feel but also what we can do to help change and over come their dysregulation and or distress. We are currently planning a block of sessions for this group so that we eventually have 2 types of group that class teams can refer children into.

Section three

Case Study about an autistic individual (1)

Name of individual	*Use Initials or number (no names)* K
Period of time covered	Sept 23-Jul 24

What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?

K joined Willow Dene as part of the EYFS cohort as a year 1 child and spent his first year at Willow Dene developing foundations for learning through an adapted EYFS curriculum. He participated in a breadth of adult and self directed learning opportunities, exposing him to approaches and strategies including Teach, Attention Autism & Intensive Interaction to support his learning. K has received input from the school's sensory processing coordinator, SaLT and ASD behavioral lead throughout the year. Visual

Description of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.

K previously attended a mainstream provision where he had repeated a year in nursery (as a reception aged child) though his placement had broken down as the school were unable to meet his sensory/emotional/learning his needs. He was supported on a 2:1 basis at his previous school setting and experienced frequent prolonged periods of dysregulation on a daily basis and directed challenging physical behaviours towards others. He found it challenging to cope within the social setting, making transitions and following the adult led agenda, and subsequently he was highly disengaged, distressed and not accessing the curriculum whilst at school. K joined Willow Dene in September

OUTCOMES

Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing

- K is supported on a 1:1 basis at school, though he can be paired with another child on a 2:1 basis when well regulated
- K accesses sensory supports throughout the day which assist his regulation and decrease periods of dysregulation, as a result he is better regulated and less emotional
- Behavioural triggers are largely identifiable and pre-emptive strategies have helped to reduce instances of challenging physical behaviour directed towards others
- K makes successful transitions within the department and across the school site
- K has an established communication system in place to communicate his preferences (choice making through gesture)
- K actively engages in all adult led sessions and displays enjoyment in these

Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes

K was initially baselined as an early development learner, with the majority of his assessment being recorded largely on the footsteps assessment book. He has made accelerated progress across the academic year and is now securely learning at an emergent concept level, recording progress against the objectives in the stepping out assessment book with a current assessment score of 84. K has achieved all of his initial baseline targets across a six-month time span and more challenging targets have recently been set at his annual review to stretch his progress throughout the course of the next academic year.

Next steps; transition

K has remained in Swan class as part of the EYFS cohort for the next academic year (Sept 24-25) with a class teacher and team members who know him well with who he feels safe and secure with. Initial support was sought at the beginning of the new year from the sensory processing coordinator to review and adapt sensory input to meet his changing sensory needs and strategies implemented consistently.
Ongoing support is provided to K and family via the class teacher, ASD behavior lead and family support team

Section three

Case Study about an autistic individual (2)

Name of individual	*Use Initials or number (no names)* Case Study 2
Period of time covered	September 23 - July 24

What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?

N ' s strengths and interests are used to distract her when she is fixated on specific items, places or ideas.
N enjoys creative art activities, and these are used to help N to calm down and regulate when she is feeling anxious or displaying behaviour.
N ' s strengths and interests are used to personalise her curriculum, particularly for accredited learning opportunities.
The school works together with N ' s mum to support N to be happy, calm and able to engage in learning activities

Description of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.

N would find it challenging to regulate herself, N can become anxious at times, N would become fixated on ideas, people, places etc, during which N would display some behaviours when unable to have particular items / follow own agenda. N needs support to keep herself safe online and in the community which can limit her experiences.

OUTCOMES

Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing

N's confidence in her own independence and ability to organise herself have grown since joining sixth form. She uses visual supports so she is away of her daily structure and is using this independently and has been able to transfer these skills into her sixth form venture where she is able to organise and access her business venture at Willow Delish. She now knows what is expected of her and is actively engaged in the cooking prep and selling of their foods. N is aware of what supports her regulation and what she likes and enjoys accessing these activities both at school and home

Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes

Evidence of N's progress in numeracy and literacy can be seen in her learning journeys. N has participated and achieved accredited learning which are evidenced in her Key Stage 4 personal learning plans and AQA certificates. N's annual review document shows her continued progress in all areas of the curriculum as well as her EHCP targets. Some specific examples of progress: N recently created posters for school events using a Chromebook which allowed her to learn and develop knowledge and skills in literacy and learning technologies whilst using her creative talents and supporting her to achieve the AQA unit ' Digital Photography: Editing images'. N was unable to keep herself safe online, after working on the AQA unit. 'A healthy relationship with technology.'N wasable to contribute to RHSE lessons about keeping safe online. She was able

Next steps; transition

N has transitioned in our sixth form, the strategies implemented have supported this transition and ensured it has been a smooth one. N is flourishing within sixth form loving being a part of Willow Delish catering venture. N is using skills previously learnt in school to be a key member of her venture and develop her vocational learning skills. N's skills learnt at secondary and carried into sixth form will continue to grow and help her continue to develop her place within the community ventures she will be exposed to over her time in sixth form.

Section three

Case Study about an autistic individual (3)

Name of individual	*Use Initials or number (no names)* K
Period of time covered	Academic Year 2023-24

What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?

K has attended Willow Dene throughout primary and secondary school. He was part of the first cohort of sixth form learners embracing the new curriculum model whereby K's week consists of business ventures (Monday-Wednesday) and preparation for adulthood (Thursday & Friday). K receives a bespoke curriculum offer to support his specialist interests, personal strengths and builds upon his communication, familiarity and confidence in an out of school setting. K uses visual supports including symbols, photos and

Description of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.

K has an autism diagnosis alongside processing delay, in his early years he attended a mainstream setting but at age 5 completed an in year transfer to attend Willow Dene School. K is a quiet and reserved young man and it takes time for him to build trust in adults. Adults who have worked alongside him over the years, know him well and can support him fully, knowing when to provide him processing time, challenge him and supporting him throughout his communication.

OUTCOMES

Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing

- K is supported by adults who know him well and as outlined is encouraged to work independently as much as possible with the support of known cues.

- K is supported by a visual timetable which he independently maintains and updates to help him to regulate and anticipate the structure of the day.

- K is continually supported to develop his social skills with known peers and adults in the different settings he experiences.

Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes

K has achieved so much in his time at Willow Dene. He has grown in confidence, independence and his communication has improved continually. Throughout sixth form his parents have regularly commented on how he communicates so much more and how he can relay the events of the day, he is supported to do this by writing a brief diary entry which is used as a prompt when having discussions. In regard to academic progress K has made progress against his targets and is working on the applying knowledge curriculum. He will remain with us at Willow Dene until the end of year 14, so 19 years old and we are confident that he will secure a supported internship or work placement within the hospitality industry. He has a repertoire of AQA accredited learning units which he has completed and will form his record of achievement for transferring to

Next steps; transition

K's post 19 plan will be discussed and agreed through his year 13 & 14 annual review as well as his annual Transition Outcome Meeting (TOM) lead by Greenwich borough. As detailed, we are confident he will secure part time employment when he leaves Willow Dene. We will support K in year 14 to 'bridge the gap' from school to employment as part of our curriculum plan.

Section four

The Autism Accreditation assessment

- Preparing for your assessment
- Your assessment
- Assessment report (to be completed by the consultant)

Section four

Preparing for your assessment

When will my assessment be?

If this is your first assessment, you can discuss with your consultant when you think you are ready. Once you have been assessed, we recommend that you have an assessment every three years.

You will need to give your consultant at least six months' notice of your preferred dates. Once you have agreed dates, you should receive a confirmation email from the Accreditation admin team and will be invoiced any outstanding fees, which need to be settled at least four months before the assessment.

If you need to postpone or cancel your assessment, let your consultant know as soon as possible. You can read our cancellation and postponement policy here.

What is the purpose of the assessment?

The assessment helps you to identify what you are doing well and what could be improved in how you support autistic people.

It also provides evidence for our committee to give you an award at Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced level.

What key questions will be considered?

- What key approaches are used to develop autistic people's social communication and self-reliance, to address sensory issues and promote emotional regulation and wellbeing?
- How well do staff implement and personalise these approaches when working with autistic people?
- How are person-centred support plans created and reviewed?
- What outcomes do autistic people achieve with the support offered to them?
- What do those who are supported think about how well staff work with them and understand their autism?

SECTION Four

Preparing for your assessment

What evidence will be considered?

- individual support plans and case studies
- interviews with staff and, where appropriate, people supported by the provision
- online survey of people supported by the provision and/or the family member representing their best interests
- observation of practice where appropriate and possible.

What paperwork do I need to send in before the assessment?

Three weeks before your assessment, you should return:

- the Specialist Award Manual with the self-audit, action plan and (optional) the case studies completed.
- key Policy documents related to the provision for autistic people (max. of five), for example, policies on autism; communication; sensory issues; independence; wellbeing; behaviour support; assessment etc.
- visitor guidance, for example dress code; documentation required; lunchtime arrangements etc.
- service Prospectus or Brochure.

Please do not expect the consultant to consider lots of paperwork. You need to be selective or provide a summary of key points from documents, otherwise documents will be left unread and important evidence may be missed.

Section four

Preparing for your assessment

How are the views of autistic people who are supported by the provision considered?

Accreditation expects to see evidence that autistic people are actively involved in their support plans and their views are sought and acted upon. This is commented on in all reports.

In addition, as part of the Autism Accreditation assessment, we send you a link to confidential surveys. These links should be sent out to autistic people and where relevant, to relatives, carers or advocates who represent their best Interests.

Adults over the age of 16:	Requirement unless the provision has determined that they lack the capacity to understand and respond to the survey even with reasonable adjustments in place.
Young people of secondary age (11-16):	Recommended and considered good practice unless they lack the capacity to engage in the survey even with reasonable adjustments in place.
Children of primary age (below 11):	Discretionary.
Relatives/carers/advocates who represent the best interests of individual:	Requirement unless the autistic person is over 16, has capacity and does not wish their views to be represented by others.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the inks are made available to anyone who is entitled to take part. You should also take reasonable actions to raise awareness that the survey is taking place, for example, via your website or through social media. You can also ask autistic people or their families/advocate to complete the survey onsite using any available device. The survey will still be confidential and cannot be recalled once submitted.

Whilst it is in your interest to actively encourage people to complete the survey, we trust you to act with professional integrity to ensure that the responses accurately reflect each individual's views without undue duress or interference.

Section four

Preparing for your assessment

What reasonable adjustments can I make to enable an autistic person to complete the survey?

There are two versions of the autistic person survey. Where an individual has learning disabilities, the easy read version is likely to be most appropriate but you can discuss this with your consultant.

Reasonable adjustments should be made to support an individual in completing the survey so they are not disadvantaged because of their autism or another disability.

For example:

- The survey questions could be read out to the individual and their spoken responses recorded on the survey for them.
- The survey can be copied and presented in a format that the individual finds more accessible, for example large print, symbols etc.
- Augmentative or alternative communication systems could be used to present questions and obtain responses.

Will I have an opportunity to talk to my consultant before the assessment?

Yes, your consultant will offer you a pre-assessment session at least a month before your assessment, either as a visit or a virtual meeting.

At the pre-assessment meeting, they will discuss with you what should be included in the observation timetable and who should be included in interviews.

You should plan a timetable of observations which should be sent to the consultant in a draft format at least a week before the assessment. The consultant may ask you to make some changes.

As much as possible the observations should provide insight into the range of activities typically offered by the provision. In a small provision we would expect each autistic individual and most of the staff team to be observed at least once, unless there is good reason why this would not be possible. In a larger provision, such as a school we would expect observations to reflect a cross-section, for example, each year group, different staff, and a range of activities.

Section four

Your assessment

How does your assessment start?

The assessment starts with you giving a presentation to the consultant. The presentation should describe key approaches you use to support autistic people in:

- social communication, interactions and relationships
- functional skills and self-reliance
- sensory experiences
- emotional wellbeing

You should also include in the presentation how you consult with autistic people (and, where appropriate, those that represent them) about the support they receive.

You should identify what you consider to be your overall strengths and next steps.

You may wish to give a pre-prepared presentation or, if you prefer, answer questions from the consultant on the topics listed above. You can discuss with your consultant whether the presentation can be given to them when they are on site or whether it would be more practical to present virtually.

Section four

Your assessment

What interviews should I arrange?

Interviews can be conducted face to face, virtually or over the phone. You will need to timetable interviews with:

- staff who work directly with autistic people to find out about what training and support they have received. This might include recently inducted staff as well as those who are responsible for mentoring or training their colleagues staff with responsibilities for delivering particular methods or approaches. For example, therapists or behaviour support co-ordinators
- staff with particular responsibilities for assessing, setting targets and monitoring progress for individual autistic people.

There is only a limited time available to carry out interviews so please be selective and think about who would be best informed to answer key questions.

Staff can be interviewed in small groups as this can be highly productive and an effective use of time. These could be grouped around a specific topic for example, professional development; therapeutic approaches; behaviour Support etc.

Provide a brief description of the role of the person being interviewed in relationship to their work for autistic people.

Discuss with the consultant the feasibility of interviewing autistic people. You can also ask your consultant whether any interviews with relatives/carers or advocates should be arranged. The consultant may not consider these necessary if survey feedback has been obtained.

People being interviewed over video should not record the interview. However, the consultant may wish to record the session to help them write the report. Recordings will only be used to write the report, stored securely, and deleted after the report has been written.

Section four

Your assessment

What personal support documents will the consultant need to access?

The consultant will need to review a sample of person-centred support plans. They can do this during a visit we ask for you to email them. All reasonable steps will be taken to keep emailed documents confidentially stored and they will be deleted once the report has been completed. However, if you prefer, you can send copies with personal details removed.

Depending on the size of your provision, a sample will normally be around 10 to 15 plans representing a cross-section, for example, from different school year groups; from different residential properties. The consultant may ask for you to send more plans following the initial sample.

You may also provide the consultant with summative qualitative and quantitative data that shows outcomes achieved by the school or service in relationship to autistic people; for example, reduction in the use of physical interventions, summary of survey results conducted with autistic people etc.

Safeguarding autistic people

Consultants and moderators have professional expertise in the field of autism and are DBS checked. However, they should not be asked to carry out regulated activities as defined by the Disclosure and Barring Service, should not be left alone with a child or vulnerable adult or asked to give specific, detailed advice on how to support an individual.

Accreditation is not a safeguarding authority and will not investigate a safeguarding concern or an allegation against a member of staff as this could jeopardise a subsequent investigation by the local authority or the police.

If abusive practice is directly observed by a representative of Accreditation during an assessment, it will be referenced in the assessment report. It will also be reported to the designated safeguarding lead and, when considered necessary, directly referred to the appropriate authorities.

In keeping with our framework of best practice, we expect provisions to employ behaviour support methods which are proactive, preventative and non-restrictive. We would only expect to see restrictive physical intervention used in emergency circumstances and under strict controls. Where this is not the case, restrictive interventions may be considered a safeguarding concern.

Whilst the focus of our assessments is on autistic specific approaches, we expect that such approaches are delivered within the context of a service meeting statutory expectations regarding the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. For this reason, the assessment findings are triangulated with survey results and the outcome of the most recent statutory inspection. You can find out more about this here.

Section four

The Autism Accreditation assessment

Social communication, interactions and relationships

Functional skills and self-reliance

Sensory experiences

Emotional wellbeing

Feedback from autistic people

Feedback from families, carers and/or advocates

Summary of the assessment

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Willow Dene is a special day school with 303 children and young people 'with severe and complex needs' across two sites. There are 199 autistic young people on roll, 'with the majority having severe learning difficulties (SLD)'. The majority have limited or no speech and the children and young people mostly use visuals to communicate with a few having access to hi-tech AAC devices to communicate. When children and young people initially transition into the school, staff gather comprehensive information about their communication from families and previous settings as well as their Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) to establish a robust baseline. Observations are conducted by the class team and Speech and Language therapists (SALT) to ensure an accurate understanding of the communication differences experienced by the children and young people.

Communication passports are meticulously detailed with each child's or young person's personal preferences in communication, offering specific examples to guide staff in their support efforts. This thorough documentation ensures that all staff members are well-informed and equipped to engage with children and young people effectively and consistently. In addition, individual challenges that each autistic young person may experience in communication and social interaction are also recorded. This comprehensive approach allows for more understanding and tailored support, fostering a positive and inclusive educational environment.

Practical strategies and approaches used to support each autistic young person in their communication and social interaction are identified and shared on the student passport. The school implements a total communication approach, allowing students to access the communication methods and strategies that best meet their individual needs. During interviews, staff mentioned that they are transitioning from the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to using core and fringe boards. The PECS folders are now being repurposed as visual timetables for each child or young person. This shift highlights the school's dedication to continuously evolving and improving their communication support systems, ensuring that they provide the most effective tools for facilitating better understanding and interaction for all children and young people.

Support provided to each autistic individual in communicating and socially interacting with others is regularly reviewed with the autistic young person and their circle of support in order that changes can be made if necessary and positive outcomes celebrated. The school uses Evidence for Learning (EFL), a capturing programme, to capture positive outcomes and progress made towards the children and young people's individualised targets which are identified in their personalised plans. These WOW moments of great achievements are on a more personalised level. Where the school has many parents with English as an additional Language (EAL), the staff have the ability to use the system for easy translation to the appropriate language.
During interviews, staff were confident in talking about how they support autistic individuals in their communication and social interaction and what progress has been made as a result of the support given. The staff explain that the process of assessment is now more dynamic with class teams identifying targets and evidencing achievement through the approaches used in class. Every term the teacher meets with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to seek advice on progress. The school has access to Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) for the equivalent of 2 full-time, fully qualified therapists and 0.7 of a therapy assistant, who not only meet the need of EHCP case load but also have time to respond dynamically to requests. The SALT team does not remove the individual from the classroom but models practice with the class team, thus ensuring knowledge is cascaded through the staff.

The staff team explained that they are proactive in the development of the school and each year several core priorities are set that feed into the school's strategic plan. Documentation provided shows that the development of communication within the school was a core priority during the academic year 23/24 and many systems and approaches were updated and implemented within the whole school.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

During the majority of observations, each autistic child and young person was supported to understand what was being communicated to them by staff modifying their spoken language. Throughout observations, staff simplified language and instructions to ensure that children and young people had a good understanding of what was being communicated. On one occasion, teaching staff had an extended conversation in front of the students, which whilst relevant to how best to support the students may have benefited from being kept more focussed and concise.

In all observations, each autistic child and young person was supported in understanding what was being communicated to them by staff using bespoke strategies and visual supports. In all lessons observed, there was excellent use of visual supports with consistent practice across the whole school. This ensured that all children and young people were supported regarding the content and learning objectives.

Opportunities for spontaneous communication need to be facilitated across all lessons. Topic, core, and fringe boards were used to augment the spoken word and relate to the topic and lesson. This was excellent practice. However, in some cases students could have benefited from access to personalised AAC tools or systems and where appropriate objects of reference to enable them to make requests or express their needs.

In all observations, autistic children and young people were supported to socially interact with staff and, where appropriate, members of the public. There were very positive interactions with social greetings, high fives, skipping, singing, and signing.

Each autistic child and young person was supported to socially interact with their peers and develop purposeful social skills. Clear circle time activities promoted participation, waiting, turn-taking, and positive engagement. Tabletop activities promoted opportunities for paired and small group work where learning was experiential and sensory based. The Attention Autism approach was used well to invoke positive responses.

Display boards throughout the school highlight socially rewarding and relaxing events enjoyed by the children and young people at the school. Particularly noteworthy are the displays celebrating the school's efforts in supporting the siblings of autistic children and young people.

Functional skills and self-reliance

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

All children and young people at Willow Dene School have severe and complex needs, with the majority being autistic. Therefore, the school has developed its own bespoke curriculum to meet the needs of each student. Individual targets are built into bespoke planning in line with EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) targets. The planning incorporates shared, small group, and individual targets that can be achieved in each session.

The students' personal preferences, skills, strengths, and challenges in functional life skills and independence are recorded in the Personal Learning Plans (PLP). These plans break down the EHCP targets into smaller 'bite-size' steps, such as 'encouraged to hang own coat with adult support' and 'begin to place contact book in the book tray.' The PLPs are shared with the families, and opportunities to meet the targets are outlined in 'how to achieve this at home.'

Practical strategies and approaches used to support each autistic individual in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills are identified and shared as part of the planning for lessons and class team daily briefings. The school's approach is to always 'consider competency' and provide meaningful challenges. Planning includes targets such as recognising their own belongings, dressing and undressing after PE and weekly swim sessions, with personalised approaches to support.

The support provided to each autistic student in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills is regularly reviewed with the individual, where appropriate, and/or their circle of support to make changes if necessary and celebrate positive outcomes. The use of EFL (Evidence for Learning) allows for dynamic changes to be made when targets are achieved.

During interviews, all staff were confident in discussing how they support autistic individuals in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills, as well as the progress that has been made. Staff evidenced how they regularly track independence levels and engagement on EFL. The targets are linked directly to the students' personal targets. Staff explained that, woven through the curriculum from the moment the student transitions into the school, they embark on a journey of self-help skills, such as eating and drinking, teeth brushing, and getting dressed and undressed, tailored to cognitive level and physical ability. The young people in secondary school continue building their skills while adding functional skills as part of their AQA award.

Case studies describe personalised approaches to support individuals in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills, and they identify outcomes achieved from this support. The school has created enterprise groups for the 6th form, such as Willow Delish Café, and has ambitions to create more to increase the breadth of skill application in different settings. The school supports the students with preparation for adulthood sessions during PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education), covering topics that keep the students safe and prevent them from being vulnerable.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

In observed practice, each child and young person was supported to understand what was going to happen and what they were required to do through activities and tasks presented within a structured framework reinforced by visual prompts. Whole class visual timetables, personalised visual or pictorial schedules, and now and next boards were seen to be fully operational. TEACCH structured teaching approaches were used consistently throughout all observations. Children and young people were seen using and referring to these in all sessions, with the structured teaching system appearing fully embedded within the school. The school has an Autism Protocol that they expect all classes to use, ensuring predictability and a consistent approach. The use of singing and songs further enhanced the visuals in most sessions, forming part of the session routines for the children and young people to follow, such as tidying up or signalling the end of a session.

In most observations, the children and young people were supported to complete each step of a task using song, physical prompts, or the embedded routines of sessions. Staff were keen to support students in all activities, and there were obviously close, nurturing relationships between them. Most lessons observed were outstanding, with exceptional practice seen in attention autism, numeracy, business enterprise, and early literacy skills. Lesson plans were clear and enabled differentiation and sensory breaks, with identified learning objectives.

The environment at Willow Dene is outstanding. In all sessions observed, there were very clear expectations and instructions, all supported by key words, signing, and visual supports. Classrooms are visually structured, and staff have created distinct areas for circle time, independent activities, workstations, and regulation appropriate to the children and young people in the class. During all observations, there appeared to be well-established systems in place in lessons, particularly around seating and transitions, which supported children and young people in carrying out tasks and transitioning independently.

Each child and young person is supported to actively express preferences, make choices, and take decisions. Within each lesson, children and young people were given choices, and participation and positive engagement were observed. In a few lessons, children and young people appeared to be prompt-dependent on an adult. Coaching for staff members could assist with this to wean the children and young people off this reliance.

Each autistic child and young person is provided with opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills. Regular trips into the community assist with the generalisation of functional skills across many different settings. Business enterprise activities offer outstanding opportunities for the sixth form students, equipping them with skills for life. The school effectively uses EFL (Evidence for Learning) to capture progress and share it with parents.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school benefits from the equivalent of 1.4 weeks of Occupational Therapy (OT) per week, and a full-time band 5 OT will be joining in the new year to build on the existing team. The service works with a caseload of children and young people to further explore their sensory preferences and prescribe a programme of support and equipment to aid in their regulation. The school also employs a senior teaching assistant trained in specific sensory needs, who works with several groups and individuals of autistic children and young people throughout the week, implementing sensory boxes, tactile groups (hair brushing, shaving, etc.), and the Fun with Food intervention. During the assessment, staff described their plans to further develop sensory regulation across the school. A pilot scheme operated in the summer term will be rolled out for those who will benefit most. This development area has been identified because the children and young people have difficulty in recognising and naming emotions. The school has developed a programme of work which they are building on to develop a personal approach for each child and young person.

Sensory experiences and activities that have a positive impact on each autistic child and young person are identified and recorded in the behaviour profiles. The challenges that each child and young person may experience in sensory processing are also identified and recorded. The autism protocol, environment, and curriculum are designed to support sensory and regulation needs, with many lessons having supporting strategies built into sessions, such as sensory circuits, outdoor work, or movement breaks that are timetabled. For those with significant needs, detailed sensory diets are provided with input from the OT team.

The support provided to each autistic child and young person to help them regulate sensory input is reviewed with the individual, where appropriate, and/or their circle of support to make changes if necessary and celebrate positive outcomes. The use of EFL (Evidence for Learning) allows for the sharing of targets so these can be worked on from home, as well as sharing the progress made in this area. Staff explained that they can celebrate these wins with the families and vice versa. Particularly notable are the successes seen with children and young people who have self-imposed restrictive diets or Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and are benefiting from the Fun with Food intervention. Staff explain that families have seen significant changes in their children and young people, allowing them to visit restaurants without fear.

Case studies shared by the staff during the assessment describe personalised approaches developed from training on trauma-informed practice (TIP) to support individuals in regulating sensory input. These case studies identify the positive outcomes achieved from this support and the developments the school has for its progression.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

The curriculum at Willow Dene is sensory-based, developmentally aligning with the children and young people's learning needs. The children and young people were able to access sensory activities that they found enjoyable or relaxing. Experiential learning was seen consistently throughout the school across all sessions on both sites. The curriculum interfaces with the environment and pedagogy so closely that the children and young people benefit from rich sensory experiences. Attention Autism is conducted very well.

In all observations, the autistic children and young people were able to tolerate a range of sensory experiences within a safe and secure context. Positive risk-taking within the forest school, such as climbing, balancing, bouncing, or sliding, were great examples of activities the school had put in place to support the needs of the children and young people. The staff were able to highlight the significant progress made by particular individuals within these sessions.

Autistic children and young people were supported to regulate sensory experiences that interfere with what they are trying to do or cause them discomfort. In all observations, there was evidence of sensory equipment in classes; ball chairs, weighted blankets, ear defenders, and tactile resources were all seen. In a few observations, some deep pressure protocols were also seen. One child was assisted in regulation while completing work at a tabletop.

The environment is maintained or adapted to support autistic children and young people in self-regulation. The displays in corridors are of a high standard and incorporate both sensory and communication needs. Within the displays, there were core boards and different textures which could be explored by the children and young people, enabling commenting. The school has a fantastic wealth of resources on-site, and children and young people are able to use the dark and light rooms to explore sensory experiences. There are immersive and interactive opportunities for children and young people across the school. Soft play rooms, several gyms, and equipment all assist with regulation and are used effectively, as described in all lesson plans.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

During interviews with staff and parents, a significant emphasis is placed on supporting the parents and carers to support their children. Evidence seen during the assessment is a testament to how the school works tirelessly to improve the lives of the children and young people and their families. Evidence shows that the school works smartly with families, instilling them with the knowledge and skills to advocate on their chiildren's behalf, for life beyond Willow Dene and Oakmere. Weekly coffee mornings are well attended, and opportunities for training, information fairs with links to local organisations, information sharing (short breaks, etc.), and specialists such as Special Educational Needs (SEN) dentists are organised.

The communication passport details the likes and dislikes of autistic children and young people. These preferences are translated into lesson planning to motivate the children and young people to engage with learning. The behaviour profile identifies factors that might cause each autistic child and young person to become anxious, stressed, or upset, with practical strategies and approaches for staff to use in support. The school benefits from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in reach for specific children and young people, as well as mental health first aiders who support in maintaining their emotional well-being, self-esteem, and safety. The recent implementation of Trauma-Informed Practice across the school further enhances the support provided to the children and young people.

The support provided to each student to help them maintain their emotional well-being and engage in a range of rewarding and meaningful activities is reviewed with the individual, where appropriate, and/or their circle of support to make changes if necessary and celebrate positive outcomes. The school reviews and reflects upon targets and shares successes with families and carers. Staff are confident in discussing how they support students to maintain their emotional well-being and self-esteem and to participate in a range of rewarding and meaningful activities, including those that develop their social inclusion. Staff explain that they are encouraged to 'think big' ffor the students to ensure they achieve their potential. Most notably is the recent 'Sibling Effort' the school engaged in to proactively include siblings in all areas of the student's lives. They undertook many activities that could be enjoyed by both the sibling and the children and young people. There is a large display board in the entrance foyer showing the successes achieved by all who took part. The school is planning a Grandparents' event next to keep the momentum.

The secondary school produces 11 Before 11 and 16 Before 16 passports that the children and young people can take with them, which include significant achievements in areas that could prove challenging for the autistic children and young people. The idea is that the children and young people take on aspects such as first aid skills, attend a school journey, support the community, or develop a hobby.

Case studies describe personalised approaches to support children and young people in maintaining their emotional well-being and self-esteem, and the impact this has had on their quality of life. The support has led to children and young people achieving AQA awards, maintaining school attendance, and securing potential internships or work placements as a result of prolonged and targeted intervention from the school.

The assessing team acknowledges the impact of the SEND Support Hub in disseminating specialist autism practices, knowledge, and expertise to the wider community of the thirteen other schools within The Compass Partnership of Schools. By enhancing the skills of staff beyond Willow Dene School, the initiative seeks to significantly improves outcomes for many autistic individuals within mainstream schools. This collaborative effort elevates the overall quality of support and education provided, ensuring that more children and young people receive the tailored assistance they need to thrive.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

In all observations, each autistic child and young person presented as feeling safe, calm, and at ease. The children and young people appeared very happy to be coming into school. As the many buses and taxis arrived on the day of observations, the children and young people were arriving with happy and smiling faces, many of them skipping into school, greeting their peers or staff members, and engaging in singing or clapping.

Proactive and preventative strategies are in place to avoid anxiety, confusion, or distress from occurring or escalating. Embedded, calm, and structured activities contribute to well-being and alleviate anxieties. Restrictive practices are only used as a last resort under the strictest controls and extreme circumstances. The staff explained that they are also looking to develop debriefs with the children and young people at the reparation stage of a crisis moment.

The autistic children and young people are supported to regulate their emotions, with structure and routine offering familiarity delivered by trusted adults. The emotional well-being of the children and young people is at the heart of the school, and they are treated with dignity and respect. The use of language by all staff was observed to be positive, peaceful, and calm.

During all observations, autistic children and young people were actively engaged in a range of activities they found fun and interesting. Positive engagement of the students is a strength of the school, and pedagogy provides fun and interesting delivery. Where particularly good practice was observed, within Attention Autism and sensory sessions, students appeared engaged by the activities and the staff's dynamic approach.

It was clear that the school 'think big' for their autistic children and young people, encouraging each one to enjoy the challenges of trying out or learning a new activity or skill. Each child and young person have weekly swimming sessions, Forest School, PE, outdoor learning, and many other creative and interactive sessions. Older students are challenged to explore transferring skills across different contexts. All the successes are shared on EFL, newsletters, or phone calls home.

In all observations, the autistic children and young people were provided with opportunities to experience a sense of completion and achievement. The staff celebrated with positive verbal feedback, high fives, thumbs up, or with person-specific language known only to the staff and children and young people. Specific motivators were used to encourage engagement.

The environment is maintained or adapted to support the well-being of autistic children and young people. Transitions are carefully planned and predictable, a practice consistent across the school. Classrooms are adapted to the specific needs of each class group, and decor in the communal areas is low arousal.

Of particular note is the parent support and training, which are areas of strength. The school benefits from a strong therapeutic team who pass on their knowledge to parents and cascade training to the staff team. The passion for the progression and development of the children and young people came through in interviews with the staff, and the knowledge and expertise of the family liaison were evident in the parent interviews that were conducted.

Feedback from autistic people

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Survey ratings

Version one

Number surveyed	Number of responses

Question	No	Sometimes	Yes
The help I get is good.			
Staff know what I find hard and what I am good at.			
Staff ask me how best they can help me.			
Staff help me to do things in my life that I want to do.			

Who filled in the form?	Number
I did by myself.	
I did with support.	
A friend or family member.	
A member of staff.	

Version two

Number surveyed	Number of responses

Question	I do not know	Poor	Ok but could be better	Good	Excellent
The support I get is:					
Question	**I do not know**	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Very often**
Staff understand my skills, challenges and what my autism means to me.					
Staff ask me about how best to support me and act on what I tell them.					
Staff help me do things that I enjoy doing and that are important to me.					
Staff help me to set and achieve important goals in my life.					

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Comments included in surveys:

Additional relevant information:
The school considered that the accreditation survey would need adapting for their cohort. They suggested that their student council and sixth form respond to some questions that they considered more accessible. The pupils were provided with visual supports to aid them in answering the questions. All students who took part said they liked school and were able to describe who helped them at school and who their friends were. In interviews, staff described how autistic children and young people where appropriate, are actively engaged in determining how they are supported, what activities they take part in and what goals they are working towards according to what is appropriate for their age and capacity.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Survey ratings

Number surveyed	Number of responses
199	91

Question	Poor	Ok but could be better	Mostly good	Always good
The support my relative is given is...	0	7	22	62
The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...	0	7	21	63
The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...	1	4	24	62
The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...	2	5	33	51

Feedback from families, carers and/or advocates

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Comments included in surveys:
- Fantastic school with supportive staffs. - Frequent checks on how to improve child's needs. Adding new learning techniques when others are not working. Regular meetings with parents face to face to understand what works best for the child at home and school so there's a deeper understanding how to help them in both environments - My child attends sixth form, both willow dene and our family are new in this age group and learning together what support is available for 16+ SEND young people - I feel my the expectations of my child are not held high enough, in particular in regard to their communication needs. I feel there is little attempt to engage parents across the year in regards to setting goals or collaborating on how to help the individual to learn at their best. I lot of assessment information is gathered across the year in terms of photos and videos and this is not shared actively with parents. - We are so grateful to all the wonderful Willowdene staff. - We only have praise for the school and the entire team that looks after our son and family, they are always attentive and helpful and provide us with the necessary support. - The communication and care are outstanding. - I am a Father of a 15 year old Autistic son. I was victimised by windrush and unable to fully support my son as I'd intended for 7 years. My son suffered severe behavioural difficulties. Throughout Willowdene supported my son unwavering. They went above and beyond. Without Willowdene my son's life chances wouldn't bare thinking about. As a result of Willowdene we turned things around and I have a forward looking son. I have so much more to say and will be writing separately to further support Willowdene
Additional relevant information:
An overwhelming majority of survey responses are complimentary of the school and the support they give to their relative. The comments are a testament to the support they receive and how they are here are a few family members that have completed the survey and graded the school as poor in how they are informed about their relative and the advice they receive, one parent has commented that expectations are not high enough and that they are not consulted on setting goals or sufficient information shared. One comment from parents relates to the unsuitability of the Oakmere site. The school may wish to consider how to address this. The responses of poor and okay but could do better are in the minority however it would be wise for the school to reflect upon how they can improve in these areas.

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Topic	What the provision does particularly well:	What the provision could develop further:
Social communication, interactions and relationships:	- Consistent use of visual support across whole school, children were supported regarding lesson content and learning objectives - Structure of lessons promoted participation - Notable positive interactions between the staff and children	Opportunities for spontaneous communication need to be facilitated across all lessons. Topic, core, and fringe boards were used to augment the spoken word and relate to the topic and lesson. This was excellent practice. However, in some cases students could have benefited from access to personalised AAC tools or systems and where appropriate objects of reference to enable them to make requests or express their needs.
Functional skills and self-reliance:	- Excellent environment - Schedules and routines are fully embedded - Transitions from circle time to working areas - Lessons of high quality - Embedding skills for life – trips to the community - Curriculum/pedagogy/staff - appropriately differentiated - Fun and engaging lessons – high participation - Effective use of assessment for learning	In a few lessons, children and young people appear to be prompt-dependent on an adult. It would be beneficial to provide coaching for staff members to help wean the children and young people off this reliance and encourage greater independence
Sensory experiences:	- Sensory based curriculum - Classrooms are set up to support the children's' learning - Facilities and resources fantastic - Environment set up interactive and immersive learning - Displays are sensory and supported by communication boards - Use of sensory equipment seen across the school - Opportunities through sensory boxes/tactile ideas	• The school should continue to explore ways for a child or young person to communicate the need for a sensory break if they find their immediate environment sensory overwhelming.
Emotional wellbeing:	- Understand motivators for each child and build this into the planning - Staff and students relationships are warm, caring and nurturing - Beginning and end of the day transitions are warm and friendly - Resources and amenities within the school - Pool (hydro therapy) - Gym - Robust tracking of progress and celebration of wins	

Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Topic	What the provision does particularly well	What the provision could develop further
Consultation with autistic people:	- Children are valued by all staff in the school - Interactions between staff and the CYP was exceptionally warm and caring	The school should continue to explore methods for obtaining and recording feedback from students and use this feedback to inform practice. This will require a range of personalised approaches, including the use of AAC tools and observational assessments, to understand each student's experiences and perspectives.
Consultation with the families, carers and/ or advocates of autistic people:	- Exceptional level of support to families - Work smart with the families to enable them to advocate for their children - Home to school and vice versa communication (communication books and E4L)	• Feedback indicates that while the majority of parents are happy with the school's communication, some parents see room for improvement. The school should conduct its own consultation exercises to identify specific actions to address this and establish constructive dialogue with parents who feel they are not adequately informed about their child's support.
Other areas:	• The school use a variety of assessment and tracking systems, supporting them to set evidence based and progressive targets and capture progress for pupils in pre, semi and formal classes. - Progress meetings occur three times per year allowing for the leadership team to support on specific CYP that the teaching team have identified. • Staff have regular opportunities to upskill their practice by accessing external CPD. - Staff have opportunities during the five inset days to develop competencies with a specific focus. • Teaching walls across school contain consistent resources. • Regulation and relaxation time was regularly planned into daily timetables, appropriate to the pupils and the classes. - Willow Dene are very open to allowing other schools into Willow Dene to observe practice and will also visit other schools to support them.	• Ensure the Autism protocol documentation is updated to reflect a neuro-affirmative paradigm. • Remove the wording 'Triad of impairment' which has been removed from clinical manuals and is based upon a deficit model of autism.

SECTION Five

- Committee decision – **to be completed by the Quality Manager**
- Next steps

Section five

Committee outcome

What happens at the end of the assessment?

At the end of the assessment, the consultant will arrange a meeting to give you verbal feedback.

The consultant will feed back on what the service does well and what it could consider developing further. The consultant will also summarise findings from the surveys.

The consultant cannot comment on whether you have met the criteria for Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced status as this is not their decision.

The consultant will complete an Assessment report which will be submitted to the Accreditation Awards committee.

Within a month of the completion of the assessment, you will be informed by email of the Committee decision - whether you have been awarded Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced. This will be based on our award criteria.

Section five

Committee decision and next steps -
Completed by the quality manager on behalf of the committee

Committee decision:

Advanced

Date of committee decision:

17/01/2025

Comment:

The Autism Accreditation Committee found clear evidence from the report that staff at Willow Dene School have a robust working knowledge of evidence-informed approaches associated with good autism practice. They can adapt these specialist approaches so that support is highly person-centred and tailored to individual abilities, interests, preferences, and challenges. Autistic children and young people benefit greatly from the dedicated support provided by the staff. Staff are keen to support students in all activities, fostering close, nurturing relationships. This contributes to a positive and supportive learning environment. Students are actively engaged in a range of purposeful and appropriately challenging activities. Staff modify their spoken language and use bespoke strategies and visual supports to ensure that children and young people understand what is being communicated, enhancing their comprehension and engagement.

The use of visual supports is consistent across the school. Autistic children and young people are supported to regulate sensory experiences through access to a sensory-rich environment and a range of sensory equipment, resources, and approaches.
Classrooms are visually structured with distinct areas for different activities, supporting children and young people in carrying out tasks and transitioning independently. Children and young people are supported to understand what is going to happen and what they are required to do through embedded structured teaching approaches. The school's Autism Protocol, along with the use of singing and songs as part of session routines, provides predictability and consistency. Children and young people are supported to actively express their preferences, make choices, and take decisions. Regular trips into the community and business enterprise activities provide opportunities for students to consolidate and develop daily functional skills, preparing them for adult life.

Considering such compelling evidence, the committee is delighted to present an Advanced award in recognition of the high-quality practice in supporting autistic young people and children. The committee encourages the school to continue its excellent work by addressing the areas of development highlighted in this report. For example, updating the terminology used, such as replacing the outdated term 'triad of impairments,' will ensure that the school remains current with the evolving understanding of autism and promotes a positive, neuro-affirmative model of autism. Additionally, while obtaining feedback from autistic children and young people with severe learning disabilities presents challenges, the school should continue to explore effective methods to capture their experiences and perspectives.

In conclusion, Willow Dene School demonstrates a strong commitment to high-quality autism practice, with dedicated staff and well-structured support systems that significantly benefit autistic children and young people. By addressing the identified areas for development, the school can further enhance its practices and continue to provide an outstanding educational environment for its students.

Section five

Next steps

Maintaining and progression

Once you have agreed terms and conditions, you can expect to receive your certificate and logo. You can continue with your current Autism Accreditation plan or amend it by increasing or reducing the number of consultation visits.

Please contact your consultant to discuss your options.

You will also be asked to complete an online survey about your experience of the process. Your feedback is very important to us so please take the time to complete it.

You can expect to receive a final version of your assessment report and the date and level achieved will be published in our directory. We do not publish the assessment report but you are welcome to share or publish it if you want to. You may wish to share or publish a sample of the report, rather than the full manuscript. We are happy for you to do so but request that this is done in a way which does not misrepresent our findings, for example, by only publishing what we found you do well without acknowledging that we may have also identified some areas of development. If you are not sure what would be acceptable, please feel free to ask.

We recommend that you undergo another assessment in three years' time to show that you have maintained standards or progressed to a level where you can be given a higher award. You can request an earlier reassessment if you don't want to wait this long.

Section five

Committee outcomes

Applying for Beacon Status

If you have achieved an Advanced Award, you can now apply for Beacon Status. This is awarded to provisions which in addition to providing consistent high quality support to autistic people, share their knowledge and understanding of good practice with families, external professionals and the local community. Application forms and guidance on applying can be found on the Accreditation membership page. Please read this guidance carefully. Completed forms should be returned to the Autism Accreditation Quality Manager at

Stephen.dedridge@nas.org.uk.

The Panel can award Beacon Status if the application form provides clear evidence that the provision carries out exceptional work that has had a significant impact on how:

- families understand and support relatives who are autistic
- other professionals understand and work with autistic people, including helping them to appreciate the personal experiences of autistic people
- the local community or members of the public understand and work with autistic people; autistic people are socially included within their community
- the provision contributes to developing knowledge and understanding of autism, for example, by contributing to research.

The application form should also explain how the provision works in partnership with autistic people. Beacon Status will be withheld if the provision requires improvement in meeting statutory requirements.

National Autistic Society

About the National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by providing support, guidance and practical advice for the 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, as well as their three million family members and carers. Since 1962, autistic people have turned to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face. We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough. There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No.1205298), registered office 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.