



Provision for Autism



A specialist Multi Academy Trust catering for children and young people across the Tees Valley.

“Providing infinite opportunities”

Ensuring the best education for our children and young people.

Introduction

We firmly believe that all children are entitled to an education that enables them to achieve the best possible educational and social outcomes. For that reason, **Horizons Specialist Academy Trust** are working in partnership with **Middlesbrough Local Education Authority** to deliver an innovative approach to providing the education for children and young people with autism.

Horizons Specialist Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust that comprises of *Abbey Hill Academy*, a special school that caters for students aged 11-19, *Westlands Academy*, *Hollis Academy*, both special schools that cater for students aged 11-16, and *Green Gates Academy*, a primary special school that caters for students aged 5-11. *Mo Mowlam Academy* was recently sponsored by the Trust and caters for students aged 5-16.

Recent consultations with both parents and carers, as well as local authorities across the Tees Valley, indicate that there is a specific need for a substantial increase in requests for placements for children and young people with autism, to support a wide spectrum of need.

Horizons Specialist Academy Trust believes it is in a strong position to create a very successful alternative provision for students with autism. The Executive Leadership Team have good experience in meeting the needs of young people with autism and extended its current autism provision in 2007, creating a specific base for students with autism on the Abbey Hill site. Three years ago, leaders also set up a satellite base for students with moderate learning difficulties in a mainstream setting, to ensure that the Trust's moral purpose "To do more and to do it better" is realised.

Abbey Hill Academy, Horizon's largest Special School, caters for over 300 children and young people with a range of special educational needs. Abbey Hill Academy has the expertise and proven track of educating pupils with MLD, SLD, PMLD, CLD and autism and is well placed to support the development of a co-located provision. The School and Sixth Form provision has a strong history of good and outstanding outcomes.



OUR VISION • *An academy, where amazing children do amazing things!*

OUR VITALS • Every child will receive a high quality education and level of care through a culture of positive attitudes, high expectation and aspiration.

OUR VALUES •

Responsive - Responding to changing contexts, the needs of individuals, families and communities

Inclusive - Supporting the individual needs of our children and young people and developing our staff.

Successful - Being ambitious for our children and young people and enabling our professionals to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Empowering - Having the confidence to do more and to do it better

Our vision and values will be realised through an innovative curriculum, which is tried and tested. The curriculum framework has been developed through in-depth evidence based research and collaborative work between other specialist education providers as well as the Trust's teachers, teaching assistants, families and students.

In addition, the school has a strong track record of:

- partnership and inclusion with mainstream and specialist settings
- providing support to mainstream schools in the Tees Valley through training, advice and guidance consistently over many years
- Leadership capacity with internal expertise, the Principal is NPQEL qualified, Senior Leaders NPQSL as well as Specialist Leaders in Education, two experienced Ofsted Inspectors
- Proven track record for working collaboratively with a Local Authority; the Principal and Chief Executive worked successfully in partnership with the LA to establish a separate Primary SEMH provision that had previously been part of a Secondary SEMH provision; working in partnership to increase school placements
- Strong partnership working with schools outside of the MAT. The Principal chairs the local area Special Heads Group and senior leaders represent the Trust at various strategic forums. The School is also a key player in the local Teaching Alliance.

Horizons recognise that partnerships will be critical to the new provision and we will aim to strengthen existing relationships with local Special Schools as well as form new relationships with other mainstream and specialist provisions, as well as health and care providers to ensure that the new provision is recognised and valued as a key part of the community. The Trust is well established in the Tees Valley, with a strong reputation for collaborative practice.



Staff Team

Horizons will recruit internally and deploy expert teaching and support practitioners from Abbey Hill Academy. We will build on the staff development model at our existing schools which offers effective progression routes that retain skilled staff, prioritises good succession planning and supports high quality teaching and learning across the Trust. The provision will be overseen by Abbey Hill's Vice Principal and lead for supporting children with autism, someone who has successfully gained the NAS Accreditation for Effective Practice for Abbey Hill and is now training to be an assessor for the National Autistic Society.

The provision will be overseen by Abbey Hill's current leadership team to ensure the excellent practice offered in our Stockton school, is mirrored in our new provision.

We use a range of widely recognized approaches to support students' needs including TEACCH, SCERTS and Zones of Regulation.

The timetable will be bespoke to the individual students to ensure both their educational, health and social skills are met.

Class sizes will be small with a maximum of 8 students in a class supported by 3 staff. Students and families will also have access to the specialist support of the Trust's Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist and Parent Support Advisor. We will also purchase the support of Alliance Psychological Services and an Occupational Therapist as required.

The provision has been planned to ensure all spaces are Autism friendly, including separate entranceway, individual workstations which are distraction free, a timeout space, a sensory room and a separate playground.



The curriculum will be delivered by staff experienced in working with students with autism and learning difficulties who were part of the team who successfully gained our autism accreditation from the National Autistic Society.

Curriculum Framework

Our curriculum framework was developed through in-depth evidence based research and collaborative work between other special schools and our own teachers, assistants, families and students. The academy wanted a framework that could show how each student at the school benefits from Person Centered Planning (PCP). We believe that this model enables Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) outcomes to be embedded and central to our everyday work with each individual student at our school, whilst also ensuring that students have a broad and balanced experience.

Our curriculum framework is based on 3 key principles:



The 'Head' of our curriculum - empowering knowledge so our young people can join in and contribute.



The 'Heart' of our curriculum - experiences and situations focusing on developing young people who will enter the adult world as respectful, tolerant, valued, confident and independent young people with resilience and ambition.



The 'Hand' of our curriculum - promoting creativity and problem solving to ensure students play an active part.

	Self	Physical	Communication	Cognition	World	Creativity
Formal	PSHE Food Tutor	PE Sensory Physio	English Reading	Maths Enterprise	Science ICT Humanities	Art Music DT
Semi formal	My Care and Independence	My Body	Communication Literacy	Problem Solving Numeracy	Understanding My World	My Creativity
Pre-formal			My communication	My cognition	Me and My World	

- My communication
- My cognition
- My care and independence
- My body
- Me and my world
- My creativity

Semi-formal Level

Students accessing our Semi-formal curriculum benefit from a more specialist, experiential and process-based approach focusing on developing young people who will enter the adult world as respectful, tolerant, valued, confident and independent young people with resilience and ambition. The knowledge they are exposed to helps them make sense of the world around them and builds an important sense of curiosity.

- Communication and Literacy
- Problem solving and numeracy
- My care and independence
- My body
- Understanding my world
- My creativity

Formal Level

Our formal curriculum has been designed to ensure that the knowledge being taught in Key Stage 3 prepares our students, not only for Key Stage 4 and accreditation, but for adulthood. We see the importance of a purely subject specific academic approach for our most able learners so that the complexities of a subject can be explored. We also value the need for a more thematic approach for some students at this level to ensure that knowledge can be experienced as a narrative.

- English
- Maths
- Science
- ICT
- Art
- PE
- Humanities
- PSHE
- Enterprise
- Music
- Technology
- Reading



Key curricular components

Communication

This learning area focuses on the development of independent communication skills. Students are supported in all stages of their development in both academic and social communication. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with our Speech and Language Therapist to set outcomes for students utilising the SCERTS framework.

Communication can be spoken, signed, written and through the use of body language and expression, technologies, symbols and picture exchange (PECS).

The following are some of the programmes that students may follow:

- PECS
- Makaton and BSL signing
- Boardmaker to build up signing, verbal and written communication
- Social communication-to develop turn taking, friendships, making conversations...
- Social Stories- used with individuals or small groups to teach appropriate responses to everyday or unusual events
- Speaking and listening programmes of study from National Curriculum, Entry Level programmes and Functional Skills English.
- The teaching of writing through the English Curriculum, and spelling and reading through the Academy's Reading Programme.
- Outdoor and social learning experiences
- Enterprise
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)



Cognition

Students at all stages are taught the skills needed to be independent thinkers through a range of activities that include making choices, working independently, co-operating within a pair or group, understanding of self and learning to concentrate and focus in a group setting.

The following are some of the programmes that students may follow:

- Comprehension-at all levels including inference of texts or pictures through the English Curriculum
- Problem solving in Mathematics-includes a wide range of practical and mental strategies
- Enterprise
- PPU, Entry Level and Functional Skills Mathematic qualifications
- Generation of ideas through technology, art and Key Stage 4 options
- Opportunities to work and play together throughout the day
- A knowledge rich curriculum that drives curiosity

Creativity

Students are taught a range of techniques to develop skills and are given opportunities to enjoy the arts through creating music, song, dance and also using a wide range of art and construction materials. Students have opportunities to perform and celebrate their creativity at school and in the community.

The following are some of the creative programmes and enrichment opportunities for students:

- The Key stage 4 option structures include a variety of creative courses
- Music and singing is embedded in daily life
- Students regularly perform or share their creative work in assemblies
- Visiting authors, story tellers, poets running interactive workshops
- Workshop experiences in design technology
- Craft activities
- Tinkering
- Play



Self

This area of learning focuses on taking care of yourself and keeping safe and healthy. It includes keeping fit and learning to relax, making healthy and safe choices about food and lifestyle.

The following are some of the programmes and enrichment opportunities for students:

- Toileting and personal care programmes advised by appropriate health care professionals
- Cooking and nutrition
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Relaxation and mindfulness sessions form part of the day for some classes and techniques to aid positive wellbeing are taught
- Group and individual sessions for students covering a wide range of topics, including puberty, self-care, friendships and relationship work.
- Access to staff trained in counselling
- Interventions for anger management and managing anxiety
- E-safety is taught through computing sessions as well as whole school assemblies and themed weeks such as E-Safety week.

World

This area of learning may refer to the school community as well as the local area where the school is situated and the home communities of our students. Much learning takes place off the school site and classes make frequent use of the school's minibuses and local public transport to learn in the community. British values of democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith are embedded into learning about "Understanding My World". Where ever possible subjects are taught functionally and through real life experiences.

Other opportunities to learn and understand the world include:

- Theme days
- Active learning programmes
- Residential visits
- Local visits out of schools for most groups on a weekly basis
- CEIAG and options event
- Citizenship
- Activities with other schools
- Student voice through tutor sessions, school council and leadership roles within school such as Anti-Bullying Ambassador
- Science curriculum
- ICT curriculum
- Humanities through topics based on historic, geographic and religious themes
- Special assemblies and participation in events such as Comic Relief & Relief, UNICEF Day for Change and World Book Day
- Picture News shared weekly in assemblies and tutor sessions
- Topics and themes to coincide with national and international events



Physical

Our physical education curriculum aims to inspire all pupils to succeed and excel in activities that help our students to learn by being active. This helps our students to gain confidence, develop their coordination and movement. Students are supported to make healthy choices about the food they eat in and out of school.

We provide opportunities for pupils to become physically confident in a way which supports their health and fitness. Students are given the opportunity to compete in sport and other activities. The aim is to build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect.

Opportunities to improve physical health and wellbeing include:

- Physical Education is taught throughout the school and includes games, athletics, swimming as well as rebound and hydro therapies
- Motor skills programmes and access to specialist resources and equipment as advised by Occupational and Physio therapists
- Our annual sports day
- Local sporting events
- Fundraising activities and charity events
- Sensory curriculum, resources and personalised plans
- The Key stage 4 option structure includes a variety of active courses
- Outdoor learning experiences
- The MOVE programme

Essential Enrichment and Preparing for Adulthood

All students access enrichment activities as part of TGIW as well as two tutor and sessions per week and our amazing Abbey Hill assemblies.

TGIW (Thank Goodness It's Wednesday) is an afternoon each week valued by all students and staff. Delivered by our dedicated teaching assistant team, students access enrichment activities driven by student voice that take account of individual needs and parent aspiration. Examples of activities we have offered in the past include:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Learn to ride a bike | • Ice skating | • Active learning |
| • Swimming lessons | • Bushcraft | • Pottery |
| • Instrument tuition | • Jewellery making and crafts | • Judo |
| • Academy bistro management | • Play therapy | • Football |
| • Dance | • Community life | |

Tutor sessions each week provide opportunities for planning and reflection. Our students benefit from time each Monday to look at the week ahead as a whole school and then in more a more focused tutor group setting. Equally as important is time each Friday to review and absorb all the learning that has happened and celebrate success together as a community.

Preparing for adulthood in a very practical way becomes a focus in Key Stage 4 as students access the academy option structure and take part in meaningful vocational experiences.

Students access up to 4 vocational option subjects in Key Stage 4. We offer our students the very best suite of qualifications to prepare them for adulthood, taking account of their dreams and aspirations. Student voice dictates the subject offer each year.

Vocational option choices together with our personalised PSHE and careers curriculum credit our students with the **Diploma in Skills for Further Learning and Employment; Preparing for Adulthood**. Options we have offered include:

- Adventure
- Animal care
- Art, Craft and Design
- Digital Media (Photography)
- Hair and Beauty
- Music
- Performing Arts
- Retail
- Resistant Materials
- Sport, Health and Fitness
- Food, Drink and Hospitality
- Horticulture and Floristry
- Computing
- Textiles



In Key Stage 3 and 4 all planning begins with our curriculum framework key principles:

- The Head of our curriculum - What knowledge will empower our children?
- The Heart of our curriculum - What do we want our young people to become?
- The Hand of our curriculum - How can we ignite every child's unconscious mind through enrichment and opportunity?

For our students with Autism it is equally important that we include as many opportunities as possible to develop students:

- Social communication
- Social interaction
- Social imagination / flexibility
- Sensory processing
- Emotional understand and self-awareness
- Learning
- Independence and community participation

These are interwoven into everything we do and assessed using the SCERTS framework.

All students with Autism and sensory processing difficulties undergo additional assessments to understand their needs, from which the curriculum is adapted and resources are purchased accordingly to ensure all students have access to a curriculum bespoke to their needs.

Assessing the impact of our curriculum at Abbey Hill Academy

As part of our commitment to ensuring that each child makes exceptional progress from their own starting points we have implemented a robust target and tracking system, so that a student's progress can be mapped out over time and each term teachers will be able to report on how far each student has progressed in terms of meeting specific targets. At Abbey Hill Academy this is a vital tool that ensures consistent high expectation which leads to stronger outcomes.

Students arrive at Abbey Hill Academy with KS2 data in core subject areas. We use this information to dictate a progress factor for each individual student.

On arrival in year 7 we baseline students. Students complete assessments in October (Autumn) of year 7 and this gives us a place to begin targeted and focused teaching. Occasionally this baseline assessment shows regression from the end of KS2. If necessary, we spend the first term addressing students' gaps in knowledge to ensure by December they are working at or beyond their KS2 level.

We then use our February (Spring) data to formulate our academic targets. A student's spring data becomes their KS3 starting point and their progress factor ensures we always aim high.

So, in Key Stage 3 we begin each student's teaching and learning journey from their own starting point. We assess using National Curriculum Year Expectations. Students working within the Year Expectations framework are assessed using our Academy Key Skills. Our Academy Key Skills can be explained by the following example: "Student X is working within Year 2 expectations, we report that they are working within Key Skill 2 (K2)". For each Key Skill, there are a series of objectives that are to be mastered before a student can progress onto the next Key Skill.

Students working below the Year Expectations framework are assessed using an ipsative approach. Ipsative assessment is based on each student's previous achievements rather than based on performance against external criteria and standards. Our students work towards personal goals, 'Next Steps' that are pertinent to them as individuals and their families.

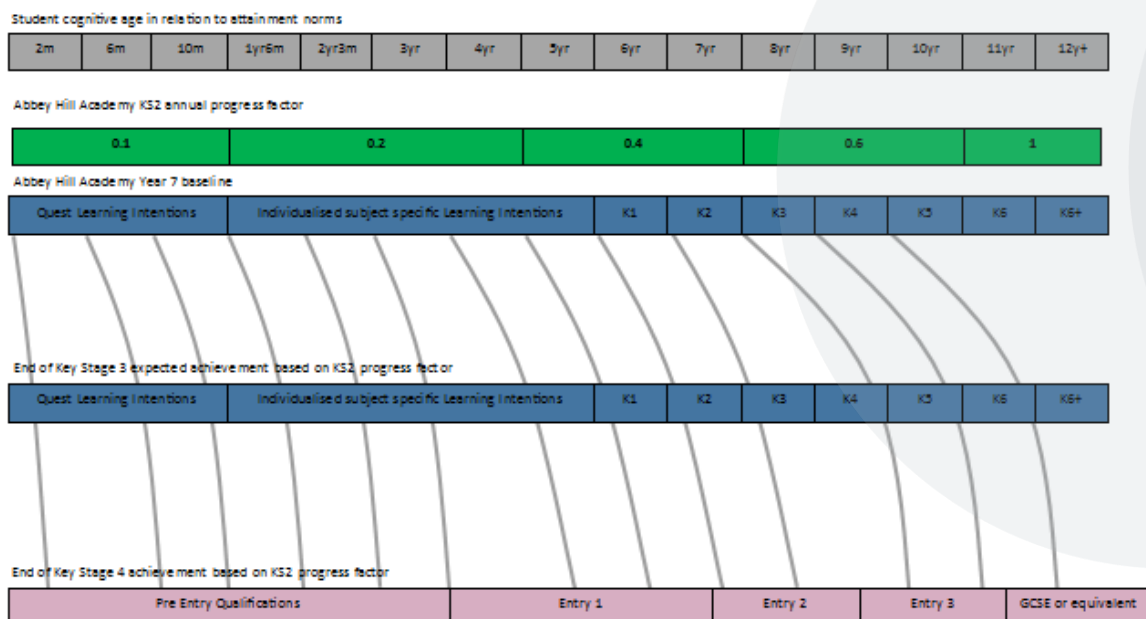
In Key Stage 4, the majority of assessment carried out is against Entry Level criteria. A student's Entry Level pathway is determined by the progress they make in Key Stage 3.

Some students may be working above Entry Level 3, which is the highest Entry Level qualification and so we begin preparation for GCSE.

Our Key Stage 4 accreditation map outlines all the externally, RQF recognised qualifications we deliver at the Academy, ensuring we prepare our students for life in the real world.

Strong progress at Abbey Hill Academy

Abbey Hill Academy knows that a key stage target setting system that projects where a child could be, is important to ensure expectation is always high. This helps teachers, students and parents understand what we work towards for our students to ensure a minimum expectation of strong progress. The aim being for 100% of our students to reach or exceed their potential projected expectations.



We discuss each student's learning journey with them and celebrate every step of progress made. Each member of the staff team follows our **Marking, Assessment and Feedback guidelines**.

We value both external and internal feedback on our Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 assessments and hold termly moderation events to ensure our judgments on attainment and progress are accurate. We use all feedback constructively to help inform future planning, as all that matters to us is student success.

Qualifications offered

As part of our commitment to ensuring that each child makes exceptional progress from their own starting points we have implemented a robust target and tracking system, so that a student's progress can be mapped out over time and each term teachers will be able to report on how far each student has progressed in terms of meeting specific targets. At Abbey Hill Academy this is a vital tool that ensures consistent high expectation which leads to stronger outcomes.

Horizons ASD Provision will offer a full range of qualifications that would be available to secondary students. For students functioning at a lower ability PPU and other similar accredited courses will be offered, including Entry Level (Open Awards) if and when appropriate. Some students will access Level 1 and 2 Functional Skills qualifications, which are GCSE equivalent.

Equality

Horizons Trust ensures equality for all is embedded into everything we do for all of our students, staff and parents. Our Head, Heart, Hand curriculum is testament to this with differentiation as required upon any basis as well as our approach to inclusion, themes for PSHE and tutor time activities, anti-bullying policy and groups such as 'Team Happy' who ensure everyone feels valued and happy to be part of our school community.

Our Trust approach to equality is based on the following 7 key principles:

1. All learners are of equal value. Whether or not they are disabled, whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and whatever their sexual orientation.
2. We recognise, respect and value difference and understand that diversity is strength. We take account of differences and strive to remove barriers and disadvantages which people may face, in relation to disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, belief or faith and sexual orientation. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit a Trust academy.
3. We foster positive attitudes and relationships. We actively promote positive attitudes and mutual respect between groups and communities different from each other.
4. We foster a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We want all members of the Trust to feel a sense of belonging within the academies and the wider community and to feel that they are respected and able to participate fully in Trust life.
5. We observe good equalities practice for our staff. We ensure that policies and procedures benefit all employees and potential employees in all aspects of their work, including in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development.
6. We have the highest expectations of all our young people. We expect all students to achieve to their highest potential.
7. We work to raise standards for all students. We believe that improving the quality of education for all groups of students raises standards across the whole Trust.

External Recognition

The Academy holds the following Awards and External recognition:

- Leading Parent Partnership Award
- Rights Respecting Schools Silver Status
- National Autism Society Accreditation
- Anti-Bullying Award
- Inclusion Quality Mark
- Investors in People Gold Award
- Recognised as a MOVE School (Mobility Opportunities Via Education)

The Academy has recently won an **SSAT SEND Exceptional Outcomes Award**.

What People Say About Us

"Abbey Hill Academy is a kind and welcoming place. Pupils are safe and happy and enjoy coming to school." (Ofsted Jan 2020)

"Staff know the pupils well. Relationships are positive. Pupils know there are trusted adults who will support them to learn and keep them safe." (Ofsted Jan 2020)

"Students are confident and happy in a school environment which celebrates uniqueness. The Academy takes every opportunity to celebrate success and students in turn routinely celebrate their own success and that of others". (IQM Feb 2016)

"Targets are aspirational and used formatively by teachers and teaching assistants in planning, delivery and assessment to develop next steps in learning." (IQM Feb 2016)

"Staff are highly skilled in maintaining a positive atmosphere at all times. This is because they use skilled techniques to ensure students are calm and stress free. Comments from parents, staff and students are positive about the good standard of behaviour they see in the academy." (NAS 2017)

"Students with speech and language difficulties make good progress as a result of the successful integrated therapy that improves their access to learning." (NAS 2017)

"Staff were seen to interact in a positive, encouraging and person-centered way, with lessons showing a great level of differentiation and personalisation. It was clear that staff know the students they work with very well, and that they cared about the students' wellbeing. Students presented as relaxed and engaged in meaningful activities throughout all observations." (NAS 2017)

"A high-quality programme of continuous Professional Development is in place. It ensures that staff have a robust specialist knowledge of autism specific best practice methods and approaches. Systems are in place to ensure that practice is highly personalised and maintained at a consistent high level throughout the provision." (NAS 2017)

Feedback from parents (Annual Survey 2019)

- *100% of parents and carers report that their child is well looked after at Abbey Hill.*
- *100% of parents and carers report that their child makes good progress at Abbey Hill.*
- *"An all-round excellent school, I couldn't wish for a better setting for my child".*
- *"This school is one of the best schools in the North East!"*
- *"My child has made excellent progress this year so far, she has really taken to her current teacher."*

Feedback from parents of children and young people with autism

- *Not just academic, but also emotional needs are met, as well as how the child's autism affects the rest of the family.*
- *Communication with the school is really easy and I can always speak to someone.*
- *They have a very good understanding of individual children.*
- *There is good team work (school and family working together).*
- *I feel listened to and have great input into what happens at school. Staff take on board what I say. I know what is going on at school and I feel involved.*
- *Staff are amazing. My son is on the autistic spectrum. They continually support him and myself.*
- *Abbey Hill is a fantastic school.*
- *Abbey Hill Academy has been a God send for my family. My son was in mainstream primary school, he was miserable! He had complete meltdowns daily where he was physically abusive. When he started at Abbey Hill the change in him was almost instantaneous! I have my son back and I believe that to be a direct result of Abbey Hill's teaching methods*

Feedback from autistic students

- *It's amazing. I am happy with it. I really like the lessons.*
- *The staff are friendly.*
- *It's awesome.*
- *It's hard to pinpoint what I like best, because everything's really good.*
- *It's really, really good. Staff and children are really nice and friendly.*
- *When there is a problem, it gets sorted out the same day. The teachers always say: "talk to us".*
- *It's good that we learn to do independent things, even things like crossing the road.*
- *There's always lots of options to choose, and staff always make sure you are happy.*

Feedback from lead Professionals

- *As a member of the Disabled Children's Social Work Team I can honestly say that the working relationship we have with Abbey Hill is excellent. Regular meetings and contact via e mail ensures that we are all working together with the interests of the young people as a priority. Staff at Abbey Hill have a "can do" approach to working with their students.*
- *In my opinion there has always been good communication between Abbey Hill and social care. The school works closely with LD CAMHS regarding behaviours. They have a good understanding of young people who are diagnosed with Autism and provide excellent support.*