



# Abbey Hill Academy

*Where amazing children do amazing things*

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

At Abbey Hill Academy, 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** work in partnership with **Stockton Local Education Authority** to deliver an innovative approach to providing the education for children and young people with special educational needs.

Abbey Hill is part of Horizons Specialist Academy Trust, a multi-academy trust that comprises of *Abbey Hill Academy, Archway Academy, Green Gates Academy, Hollis Academy, The Meadows Academy, Mo Mowlam Academy, Westlands Academy and Woodlands Academy.*

Our Trust's key phrase is **"To do more and to do it better"**. A phrase we live by in everything we do.



Abbey Hill Academy is Horizon's largest Special School, catering for over 350 children and young people with a range of special educational needs including those with MLD, SLD, CLD, PMLD and autism. We have two co-located provisions, one for MLD pupils based within a local secondary school and one for ASD and moderate learning difficulties in Middlesbrough. The School and Sixth Form provision has a strong history of good and outstanding outcomes.



## Our Vision

“Providing Infinite Opportunities –  
Ensuring the best education for our children and young people”

## Our Aim

“To do more and to do it better”

## Our Values

Opportunities for all

### Inclusion:

We provide a caring environment where we champion all children and young people, as well as the staff that support them.

### Equality:

We are firm in our belief that a child’s future should be defined by their talents and aspirations, not limited by the challenges they may face.

### Opportunities to care

### Dignity and respect:

We create an environment where all people are accepted, respected, engaged and supported. We are committed to supporting others to ensure the best education and life chances.

### Safety and Wellbeing:

We are dedicated to our young people and staff; their physical and emotional well-being as well as their education. We understand that when people feel safe in their environment, their chance of success is greatly increased.

### Opportunities together

### Working in partnership:

We work in collaboration and partnership with staff, stakeholders and the wider professional and local community. We are proactive and flexible, sharing best practice with others.

### Supportive:

We work together, as a family of schools, to achieve the best for our children and young people.

### Opportunities for life

### Aspirational:

We have high aspirations for ourselves and others. We have a shared vision of improving the life chances of our children and young people and their families.

### Personalisation:

We recognise people as individuals and have developed a personalised approach to all aspects of school life so that our children and young people are fully prepared for adult life. We are committed to the training and development of our staff to ensure they are highly skilled.

## Our Provision

Abbey Hill Academy benefits in having a widely skilled staff team with a range of complementary skills. Our staff are trained in a range of strategies that support our young people to access a broad education with a wide range of independence skills built into everything we do.

Each class is sized between 5 and 15 students dependent upon the needs of the individual students. Each group is supported by their tutor team, comprising of a class teacher and at least one teaching assistant.

Our Trust employs a Speech and Language Therapist, Education Psychologist and Occupational Therapy services. We also purchase the support of Alliance Psychological Services as required as well as a dance teacher, sports coach and judo instructor to broaden our curriculum.

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



## Our Facilities

Abbey Hill Academy is made up of two buildings (Waker and Stephenson) for students aged 11-16 and a provision for students with Complex and Additional Needs for 11-18 year olds. Our third building (Sheraton) is home to our Post-16 provision.

The Walker building is our provision for students with autism and consists of 6 classes of students with ASD and complex needs and 6 classes of students with ASD and moderate learning difficulties.





The Stephenson building is our provision for students with Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Complex and Additional Needs., including Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. The majority of our students with SLD and MLD follow a traditional secondary school model of moving around school into specialist classrooms with subject specialist teachers. Some of our groups benefit from a more static, routine-based model with them being based in one classroom with one teacher for the majority of their lessons.

A fully accessible area within the Stephenson Building is designed to provide informal learning opportunities for our PMLD learners with access to a soft-play room, hydrotherapy pool, a sensory and physiotherapy space, a large teaching space designed for exploratory learning and a separate playground with resources to explore.

**All of our students also have access to:**

- ◆ A sports hall
- ◆ Bistro
- ◆ Poly tunnel
- ◆ Raised plant beds
- ◆ Multi-use Games Area
- ◆ Play areas with equipment such as a roundabout and gazebo
- ◆ Sensory garden
- ◆ Large school field
- ◆ Woodland area for bush craft/ forest school activities



We also have two satellite provisions, one for students with Moderate Learning Difficulties based in Northshore Academy, Stockton. The other, a provision for students with autism and moderate learning difficulties based in the building previously used as Middlesbrough's CLC in the grounds of Acklam Grange School.

## Curriculum Intent

Our curriculum intent is based on 3 key principles enabling it to be a community where amazing children do amazing things.

Provide empowering and life enriching knowledge, so our young people can join in and fully contribute to create a fulfilling, healthy and safe future for themselves and others.

### To achieve this we will...

- ◆ Provide a wide, varied and sequenced curriculum that meets the needs of all of our students and enables them to participate in everyday activities' leading to a fulfilling life.
- ◆ Provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills so they are able to lead physically and emotionally healthy lifestyles.
- ◆ Provide students with a good understanding of physical, online and relationship safety for now as well as in the future
- ◆ Provide students with subject specific knowledge and skills that will prepare them for their next stage of education and adulthood

### The impact of this will be

- ◆ Students make good progress throughout all curriculum areas.
- ◆ Students are able to demonstrate their progress through the external qualifications that they achieve.
- ◆ Students demonstrate that they are able to be safe and seek extra support and guidance when needed.
- ◆ Students will be equipped with knowledge that will help them with life outside of school.
- ◆ Students have a clear route to their next stage of education and have the necessary requirements to achieve this.

Provide a range of experiences, situations and guidance that are focused on preparing our students to enter the adult world as respectful, tolerant, confident and independent young people with resilience, ambition and compassion.

### To achieve this we will...

- ◆ Provide a curriculum that enables and challenges students to be knowledgeable, respectful and tolerant citizens
- ◆ Provide a curriculum that enables students to explore and understand the many different aspects involved in being a British citizen
- ◆ Provide a curriculum where students are able to develop their understanding of healthy and safe relationships
- ◆ Provide a curriculum that supports preparation for adulthood and transition to the next stage

### **The impact of this will be...**

- ◆ Students have a respectful and tolerant attitude towards others
- ◆ Students behave well towards their peers and adults both in and out of school
- ◆ Students have an awareness and understanding of the importance of different cultures, beliefs and identities
- ◆ Students are equipped to have healthy and positive relationships
- ◆ Students have a strong understanding about what being a British citizen involves
- ◆ Students are ready and able to move on to their next stage of education or training

Promote creativity, exercise, problem solving and practical skills to ensure students can play an active part in shaping and enhancing their own life experiences as well as that of others.

### **To achieve this we will...**

- ◆ Provide a curriculum where physical activity and wellbeing is supported and promoted
- ◆ Provide a curriculum that enables students to develop their experiences, understanding and skills of a wide range activities that they will encounter in their adult life and potential employment
- ◆ Provide a curriculum that encourages students to use creativity and develop their use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- ◆ Provide a curriculum where students experience a range of education, training and workplace experiences to encourage them to be ambitious thinkers about their future

### **The impact of this will be**

- ◆ Students have the confidence, resilience and skills to participate in a wide and varied range of activities both in and out of the school setting that will prepare them for their future life
- ◆ Students are able to participate in suitable physical activities that meet their needs
- ◆ Students will receive and participate in a wide range of cultural enrichment activities that will increase their understanding and enjoyment of the world around them
- ◆ Students will have a greater understanding of the employment, education and training opportunities available to them in the future and have a variety of skills that can be built upon

## Informal Curriculum

The informal curriculum (based on research from the Pre-formal EQUALS by Peter Imray) 'will not tell us what to teach now and what to teach next. It will not give us a body of knowledge that it is essential for learners to know because there is no such thing. It is the learners who will decide the direction learning will take; our staff can only help to build routines, facilitate change, offer alternatives, observe and guide. We understand that this then is a curriculum of ideas that we choose to use in the moment and the success will depend upon our children.' (Imray 2023)



Informal learning happens through engagement and experience. Teams build trust and a strong sense of belonging. When we have established solid connections, engagement happens. Planning is focused on multi-sensory learning experiences and use of people/environments/resources that lead to learning.

Informal teams are:

- ♦ attentive
- ♦ encourage initiatives
- ♦ receive initiatives
- ♦ attune to all interaction
- ♦ guide,

to then mediate learning.

Following the same pattern and rhythm each day creates a sense of safety and security therefore maximising learning potential. Anchoring the day through a well-planned, strongly signalled, purposeful routine is key to promoting each child's appropriate level of independence, allowing them to build knowledge of the world around them.

Anchoring each day allows student engagement to flourish:

- ♦ awareness
- ♦ discovery
- ♦ curiosity
- ♦ investigation
- ♦ anticipation
- ♦ persistence
- ♦ initiation

The engagement model is based on the idea that 'engagement is necessary for students to learn' (Carpenter 2019).



Staff plan in learning opportunities across the day when optimum learning time presents itself for each individual student (in the moment planning). Creating as many opportunities for optimum learning for each child is the aim of the full staff team via the carefully pre-planned learning experiences, environments, resources and routines.



## Semi-formal Curriculum

**Our semi-formal curriculum allows us to focus on learning to learn:**

- ◆ realising actions have an effect on the world
- ◆ planning and thinking ahead
- ◆ making independent choices
- ◆ valuing and following interests
- ◆ responding to new experiences
- ◆ actively participating in routines
- ◆ beginning to predict
- ◆ working towards goals
- ◆ correcting mistakes
- ◆ persevering when things are difficult
- ◆ using imagination
- ◆ sorting and organising
- ◆ understanding another perspective
- ◆ coming up with ideas
- ◆ making links
- ◆ concentrating on something important
- ◆ solving problems



Semi-formal learning opportunities are built from a secure base of trust, belonging and connection. Everyday interactions and agreements strengthen relationships and promote a calm, supportive learning environment.

Anchoring the day around strongly signalled routines provides a consistent, predictable and reliable structure where independence can flourish.

Semi-formal learning at Abbey Hill Academy offers experiences and opportunities that build knowledge across 10 subject areas in preparation for adulthood:

- ◆ PSHE
- ◆ Communication and literacy
- ◆ Maths
- ◆ Science
- ◆ ICT
- ◆ Physical development
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Music and drama
- ◆ Cookery
- ◆ Humanities



Using a process-based, multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning and a range of learning environments and resources we deliver the planned curriculum through embedded routines and in the moment planning as well as precision teaching and explicit instruction.

## Formal Curriculum

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 & Literacy

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
- ◆ Phonics
- ◆ Makaton
- ◆ Widgit 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 and Functional Skills programmes
- ◆ 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) including Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ +3 \\ \hline 5 \end{pmatrix}$$

## Maths

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
- ◆ 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



## Art & Design

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
- ◆ Play
- ◆ Thank Goodness It's Wednesday (TGIW)
- ◆ School choir
- ◆ Music club
- ◆ A range of after school activities and clubs





## PSHE

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:

- ◆ Intimate and personal care programmes advised by appropriate health care professionals
- ◆ *Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)*
- ◆ After school clubs
- ◆ 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
- ◆ Cooking and nutrition
- ◆ E-safety is taught through computing sessions as well as whole school assemblies and themed weeks such as E-Safety week.



## The world about me

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 vocational learning
- ◆ 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 & Sport 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





## PE

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, gymnastics
- ◆ Motor skills programmes and access to specialist resources and equipment as advised by Occupational and Physio therapists
- ◆ 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
- ◆ TGIW programme offers a range of sporting and active opportunities including swimming lessons, ice skating, dance and Judo.
- ◆ Access to rebound and hydro therapies for students as required

## 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 offer include:

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



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 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 offer include:

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



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.

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.

## 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 goals. At Abbey Hill Academy this is a vital tool that ensures consistent high expectation which leads to stronger outcomes.

Abbey Hill Academy offer a range of qualifications from Entry Level to Level 2 Functional Skills

## External Recognition

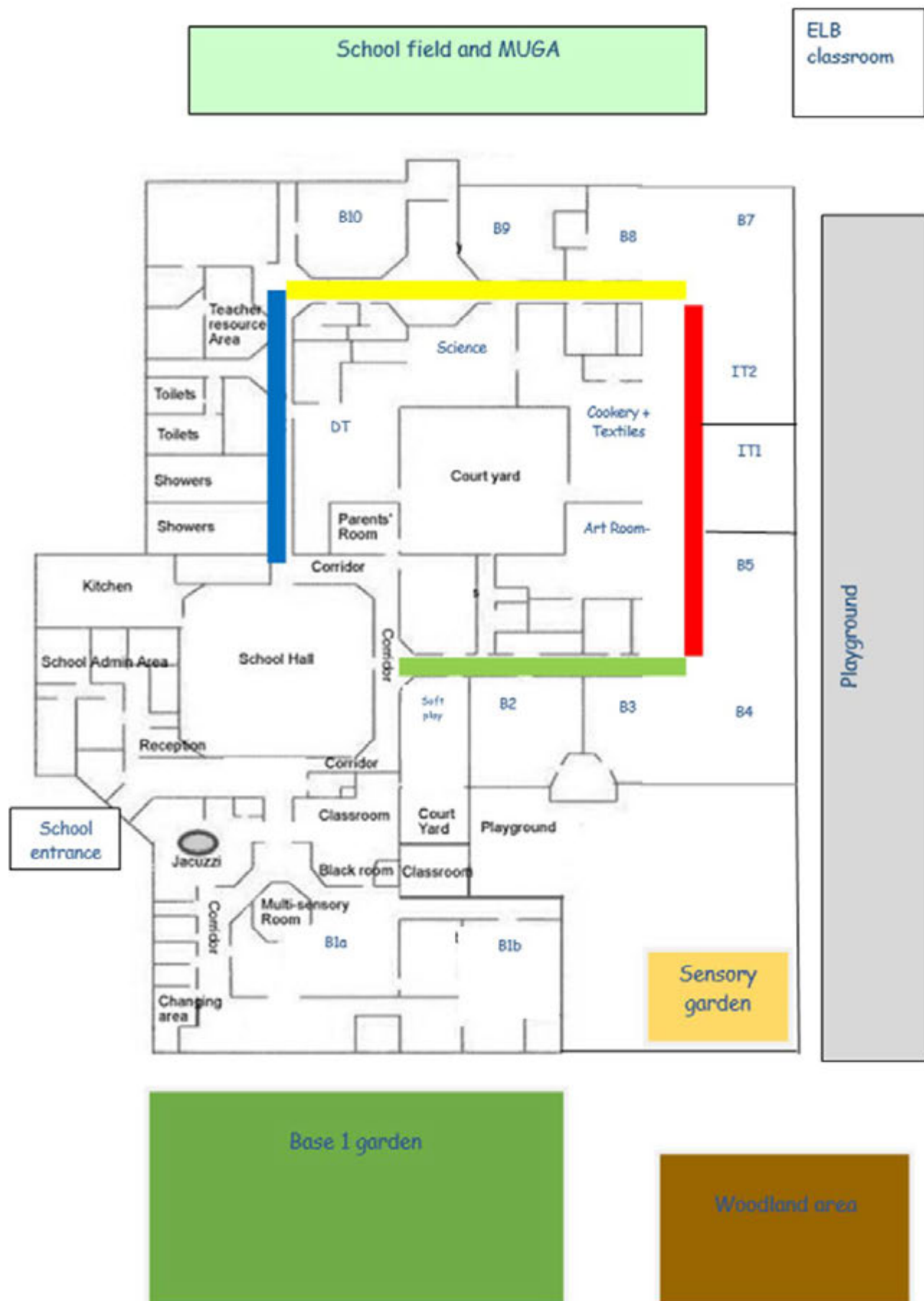
The Academy holds the following Awards and External recognition:

- ◆ Leading Parent Partnership Award
- ◆ Rights Respecting Schools Gold Status
- ◆ National Autistic Society Accreditation
- ◆ Anti-Bullying Award
- ◆ Inclusion Quality Mark
- ◆ Investors in People Gold Award
- ◆ Recognised as a MOVE School (**M**obility **O**pportunities **V**ia **E**ducation)
- ◆ ARC Silver Award

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



The Stephenson Building: provision for students with PMLD, SLD and MLD





The Walker Building: specialist provision for students with ASD

