

An Introduction to
AVALON 
SCHOOL



Welcome to Avalon School

This leaflet aims to provide a brief introduction for parents/carers and others who may be interested in finding out about Avalon School.

We cater for pupils with learning disability aged 11 to 19 years. Our school community includes a wide range: pupils with a moderate learning disability as well as those with more complex learning needs, some also have physical and medical needs.

We have a thriving school community of enthusiastic learners who support and encourage each other to achieve as highly as they are able. We all enjoy celebrating, together with our parents and carers, the steps of progress each pupil makes. Our partnership with parents is key to enabling our pupils to achieve as highly as they do.

Our Ofsted inspection in July 2011 provides a clear reflection of the good progress our range of students make and the quality of the education we provide at Avalon School. Just as importantly, our parents also tell us what they appreciate and value the most about Avalon School:

'I'm sure my child spends her days in a caring, safe environment and learns a lot from a wide range of hands on activities adapted to suit her abilities.'

'My son has made such good progress which I didn't know he could!'

'The way students are taught to be as independent as they can be and that each student's curriculum is developed individually according to their needs and abilities.'

'The committed staff team,' 'The friendly environment and the good communication between home and school.' 'The welcoming and caring atmosphere.'

Visitors are always welcome to visit. We are proud of our school and proud of all of our pupils' achievements so do come and see for yourselves!

Alison Murkin
Headteacher



AIMS

Learning environment

- ◆ High challenge and high achievement
- ◆ Learning opportunities which are fun and engaging
- ◆ Pupils inspired to learn
- ◆ Partnership working, with pupils and parents in particular, maximising each pupil's opportunities for success.

Pupils

We aim for all our pupils

- ◆ to learn skills for life, work and leisure
- ◆ to learn to communicate effectively, express emotions appropriately and interact positively
- ◆ to learn to make positive choices for themselves

We aim for all our pupils

- ◆ to develop strategies for problem solving and become increasingly independent
- ◆ to develop spiritually, becoming reflective, creative individuals
- ◆ to develop their participation as citizens of a local, national, global community

We aim for all our pupils

- ◆ to become motivated, enthusiastic life long learners who achieve highly
- ◆ to become confident, sociable, well rounded individuals who are considerate and respectful towards others regardless of difference

Main findings from Ofsted Report July 2011

Avalon is a good and improving school where all pupils, irrespective of their individual learning difficulties, are able to make good progress and maximise their potential. The school has developed outstanding links with parents and carers, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the outcomes it provides for their children. When necessary, the school acts as advocate on their behalf with other agencies and service providers. Very effective self-evaluation, a clear focus on school improvement and the commitment of staff to ensuring the success of the school provide a good capacity to sustain this improvement.

The very effective leadership of the headteacher, well supported by her deputy, has been a key factor in increasing effectiveness and raising pupils' achievement. The whole leadership team is focused on school improvement and since the last inspection there is an increased drive to ensure that all pupils do as well as possible. Much has been achieved since the arrival of the headteacher. The curriculum has expanded and there is now a greater range of external accreditation available for pupils although not all subject leaders have yet been appointed. The sixth form provision is currently limited to pupils with complex needs and is meeting them effectively. The well-advanced plans to expand it to provide a greater range of accreditation and opportunities for two-way inclusion in conjunction with the local college have already resulted in increasing numbers being accepted for places. The curriculum is supported by a range of effective partnerships. Whether these are provided by colleagues such as physiotherapists or speech therapists, or by the good sporting, artistic and musical links, they all enhance pupils' learning experiences. Pupils really enjoy school and their behaviour is outstanding. They and their parents and carers feel that they are very safe and able to develop skills that will support them into adulthood. As a result of the success they achieve their self-esteem grows, and this is supported by the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive.

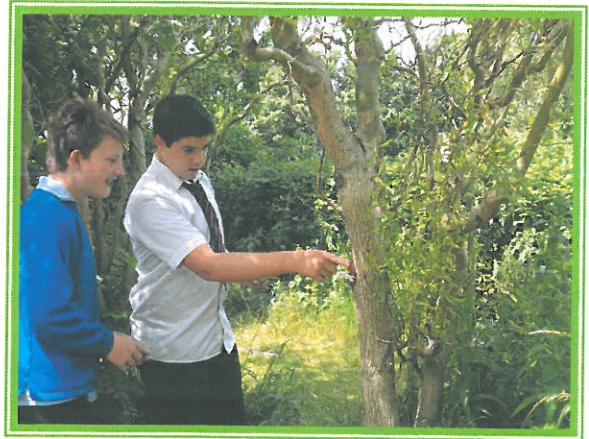
Enhanced use of a range of data has been a key area of improvement since the last inspection, and has developed the school's ability to track the progress of individual pupils. This is now being done to very good effect, and demonstrates that pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Data analysis also shows that different groups of pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. A large majority of the teaching is good or better and when it is not yet reaching this standard, effective support is already improving the quality. In every class, excellent teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants enables pupils to make very good progress from their varied starting points because work is pitched at just the right level to provide effective challenge and they are given excellent support. Work is assessed regularly and evidence of progress is gathered from a range of sources, including photographs. Within the limits of their understanding, pupils are aware of their targets and the progress they are making towards meeting them. A very effective feature is the involvement of pupils in the assessment of their own work and that of their classmates.

Outreach

Our educational psychologists lead a programme of outreach opportunities which is rooted in what our local schools, parents of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools and these pupils themselves have told us they need. The outreach offer continues to be responsive.

Currently the programme includes:

- ◆ Self Esteem and Confidence Workshops for KS2 and KS3 pupils from mainstream
- ◆ Language and Communication Groups — pupils from different schools working on a six week programme with our Speech and Language Therapist. They are supported by teaching assistants from their own school. The Speech and Language Therapist provides Continual Professional Development to those mainstream staff and their observers, then leading these programmes in their own schools and provides developmental feedback
- ◆ After School Club for pupils from local schools
- ◆ Parental support from one of our Educational Psychotherapists.



Families value the friendships their child is making, their gaining confidence and increased independence in our setting as well as progress being made in their child's communication and comprehension.

Hydrotherapy and Sensory Intergration

We are currently fund raising for our own hydrotherapy and dedicated space for sensory integration. We have raised £286,000 to date. This initiative is also about providing a much needed community resource for other children and adults locally and we appreciate the donations to support our fundraising campaign which have come from a variety of individuals and community groups.

Working Together

Parents are highly valued partners in working together to secure the best possible outcomes for our pupils.

The school team includes the following professionals , who are commissioned to provide additional services, working in partnership with pupils and families from week to week:

- ◆ Parent and Family Support Worker
- ◆ Speech and Language Therapist
- ◆ Educational Psychologist
- ◆ Music Therapist
- ◆ Occupational Therapist
- ◆ Physiotherapists

Clubs

Weekly clubs vary to reflect the interests of our pupils over time.

Currently these include:

- ◆ After School Club with a programme of on and sometimes off site activities determined by the pupils.
- ◆ Dance Club with a visiting dance specialist
- ◆ Music Club in partnership with Drake Music.
- ◆ Sports with a visiting Sports coach.



Yue Yang Special School, China



We believe it is important for our young people to develop an awareness and appreciation of other cultures and the wider world.

Through this link, the Yue Yang Head Teacher has visited Avalon, pupils have developed a keen curiosity and interest in what they have learned as well as developing some verbal greetings in Chinese and Chinese sign language.

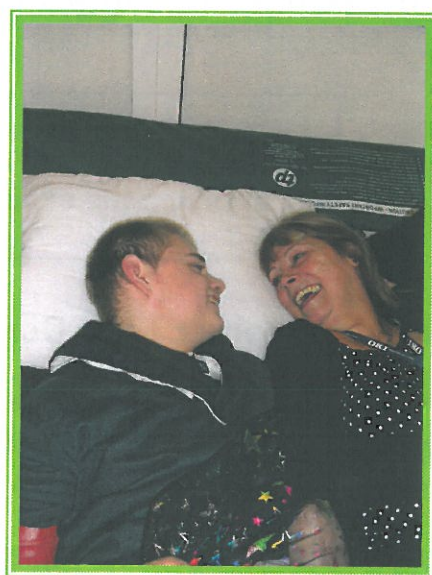
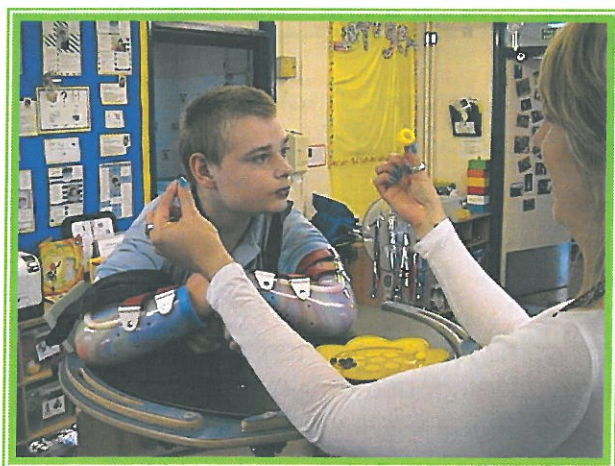
As part of our outreach offer, our Deputy Head has visited Yue Yang to support the teaching of children with learning difficulties by invitation.

Communication

At Avalon we understand that pupils have very different levels of ability and that communication is a fundamental human right. We use a wide range of strategies to promote and teach communication skills in a variety of settings through one to one sessions and group work. The Speech and Language Therapists produce a communication profile of all pupils for whom this is relevant on admission and then facilitate the development of individual and group communication programmes which are also delivered by school staff.



Early communication is about accepting or rejecting experiences.



Next we learn to make choices, often with technology. Pupils here are using voice recordable switches (called Big Macs) and exchanging pictures to make requests.

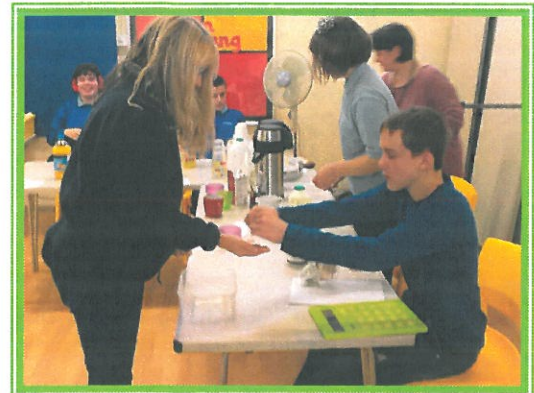
PECS – Picture Exchange Communication Sys-



Here a pupil finds the picture symbol she wants, gives it to an adult, and is given what she asked for.

This can either support emerging speech, or replace it for those who do not yet have speech.

Following a series of group sessions led by the Speech and Language Therapist, focussing on social communication skills in a variety of settings, pupils then apply these in real life contexts.



Here a pupil is ordering his own drink and food. Another pupil is applying his skills in initiating and maintaining conversation.

STC – Somerset Total Communication

A total communication environment aims to provide as many opportunities as possible for pupils to gain information from communication; signing, use of symbols to support text, photographs and multi-sensory cues are some of the ways we do this.

Some classes use the same piece of music to mark routine parts of the school day eg time for maths, lunchtime, time to finish PE etc.

The majority of classes use individual visual timetables to support pupils' understanding of what to expect next and to minimise potential anxiety arising from uncertainty. Most pupils find this a valuable strategy and take clear ownership of their own timetables.

Transition

- Transition processes for each pupil are determined through partnership working with the family, pupil and the sending or receiving establishment.
- They are tailored to individual needs in order to ensure a smooth and successful transition.
- **Person Centred Reviews**
These annual reviews ensure that long term goals and the next steps towards them are at the heart of the process and are facilitated through planning for individual pupils.
- **Moving On for Key Stage 4 or Sixth Form**
Transition from Key Stage 4 or Sixth Form and preparing students for their next steps: mainstream college, a specialist college or transition into adult services is planned in partnership with students, their families and other professionals to ensure a successful outcome.
- As appropriate, groups of students have learning opportunities in a range of further education settings. These include accessing accredited learning courses at Strode College and accredited or certificated learning courses at Bridgwater and Lufton Colleges.
- Some students also experience a residential work experience at the Foxes Acedemy Hotel, Minehead which is run by young adults with learning difficulties. Other students have individual arrangements to enable them to experience other local colleges such as Yeovil or specialist colleges such as Star College or the adult care providers linked to individual transition plans.



Our Sixth Form students at Foxes Academy Hotel. Their range of work experience days there include hospitality, catering and cleaning.

Key Stage 3

Pupils in Key Stage 3 have a diverse range of needs and typically work from the lower P levels up to lower National Curriculum levels. They follow the National Curriculum and study all subjects, and, where appropriate, this is supplemented with a range of therapeutic and multi-sensory approaches to learning.

In recent years several pupils in different year groups in Key Stage 3 have gained Entry Level accreditation in ICT and further accreditation in Key Stage 4.

Learning takes place in the classroom and other specialist rooms, but some pupils will also use individual workstations in quiet areas at certain times of day. The area is organised to promote structured teaching strategies which are acknowledged to be particularly valuable for teaching pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Curriculum Enrichment and Learning in the Community

Throughout the year enrichment activities at school as well as within the community are enjoyed by the pupils with positive learning outcomes for all. Here are a few examples:



Pupils in the 'Colourscape' tent exploring rhythm and music making.



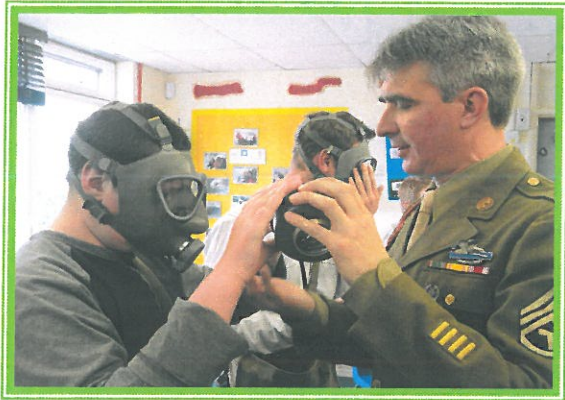
Key Stage 3 pupils participate in the Horse Power programme at Millfield School weekly over a term each year. It is lead by pupils and staff there to promote problem solving and organisational skills through the medium of animal care.

Key Stage 3 pupils have a short residential activity each year, often based on the school site, sleeping over in the school building or camping in tents. The days are spent on a range of fun activities off site. It is an opportunity for pupils to spend a night or two away from home in a supportive, structured environment. Pupils help prepare their breakfast and evening meals and join in with the chores in a 'family type' environment.

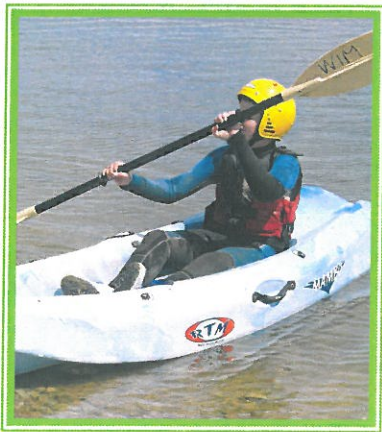


Pupils visiting Bristol Zoo

Pupils singing songs they have chosen at a concert in Wells Cathedral.



A visitor from Yeovil Museum leads a World War 2 day where pupils tried on uniforms and gas masks and did some role play around this curriculum topic.



Pupils visiting Wimbleball Lake to try a day's canoeing with abilities ranging from wheelchair users floating on airbed rafts to individuals paddling their own kayaks.

Comments from Parents:

“His social development is really progressing. He is very happy and calm, his talking has improved he has made a major step forward.”

“He is doing really well since starting at Avalon. He talks more than he used to about what he is doing and about his feelings. He is happy to go to school.”

“It has been amazing! What she does in school is lovely, it’s wonderful. She is really enjoying school and so happy!”

Comments from Pupils:

“This year has been fantastic. I feel proud of myself, I really enjoyed citizenship because we had to ask people questions.”

“Learning is fun and I know when I get it right”.

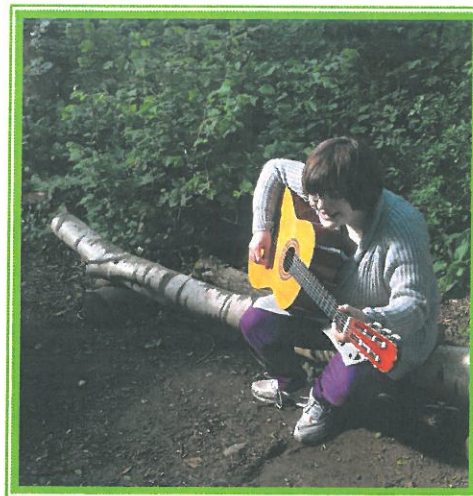
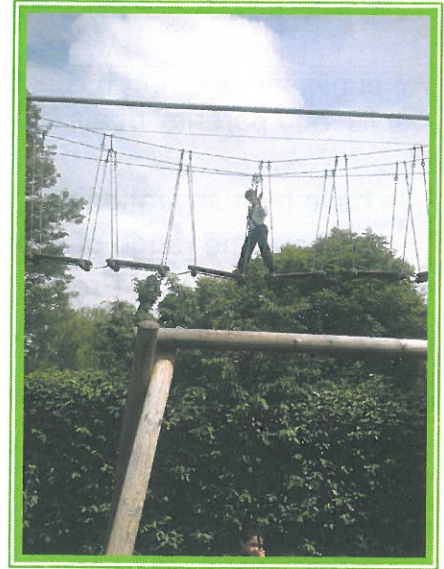
“I think I learnt lots this year”.

Residential

All pupils have opportunities for residential experiences which promote increasing independence, provide enriching experiences and much fun and enjoyment for all who participate.

Residential opportunities have included the following, for example:

- Sleepovers with activity breaks
- Foxes Hotel, Minehead (participating in the work experience programme and engaging with ex-pupils)



KEY STAGE 4 AND SIXTH FORM

As pupils move through Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form we are particularly highly focussed on pupils' and parents' goals for life, leisure and work.

We have high aspirations for our pupils in terms of the level of accreditations they can achieve and the range of subjects we offer. We are highly focussed on pupils' individual needs and interests. Broadening pupils' experiences and providing learning opportunities in real life contexts and settings are key for all pupils.

College

We work with a range of local colleges:- Strode, Bridgwater and Lufton and seek to provide opportunities to learn at more than one local college during their time at Avalon. For pupils who are ready and able to join a local college full time at the end of Year 11, these students have an individual transition plan which enables them to become familiar with and confident in the college environment in order to facilitate a successful transition. All pupils who are able to benefit from learning at college in KS4 access a one day accredited course. The accreditation varies from one year to the next dependent on pupils' needs and interests and the college offer. Often it is an opportunity for pupils to access specialist facilities.

National Open College network qualification at Strode College. This programme is tailored to the needs of the group and this year it is focussed around independence and life skills.

Lessons are supported by a teacher and teaching assistants from Avalon School to ensure appropriate levels of challenge for the pupil range and to facilitate increasing independence as appropriate for individuals eg. during lunch break in the college cafeteria.

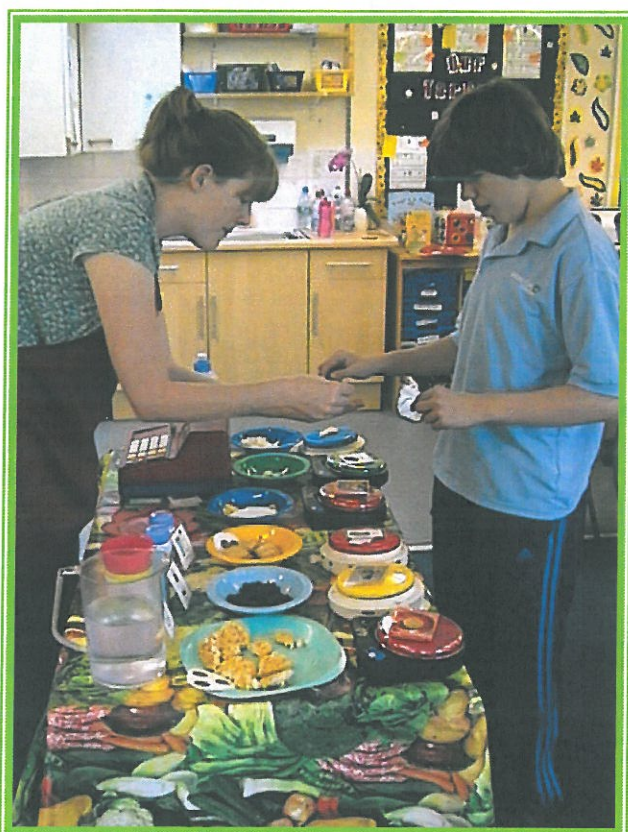
Pupils at Bridgwater College, Cannington, working towards work related learning accreditation.



Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form Curriculum for Students with Profound and Complex Needs

Some of our pupils access accreditation at 'P' levels through the Equals 'Moving On' curriculum. This covers the full curriculum in an age appropriate way with many community based activities. For those who are achieving at P levels and benefit from a multisensory approach to learning, the following priorities are key: using switches to control their environment, responding to sensory stimuli, individual communication programmes, making independent choices, physiotherapy and speech and language programmes.

The Equals Moving On sensory curriculum includes regular community learning activities.



Students practise skills in the classroom and then use them in the community



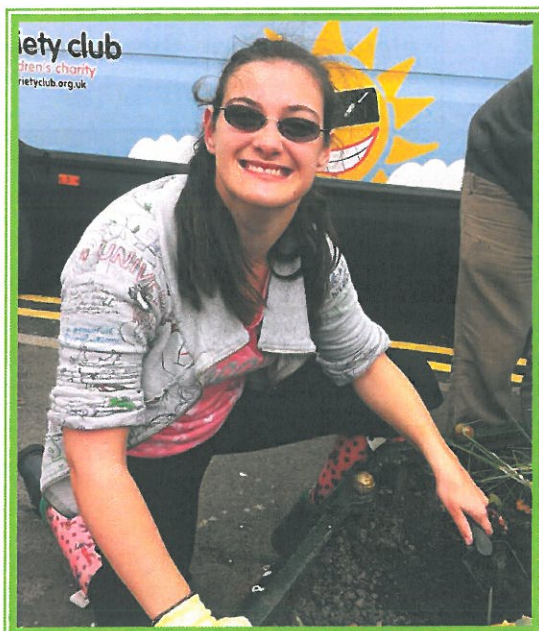
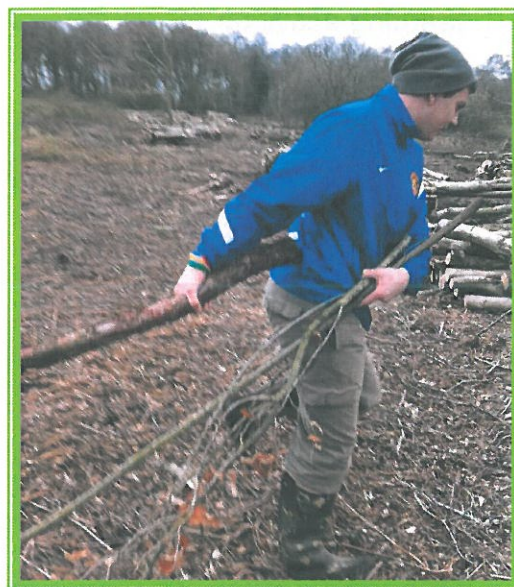
Key Stage 4

Pupils work towards accreditations in maths, English, science, ICT, art, PE and DT. These qualifications are at Entry Level 1, 2, 3. Level 3 is the highest level and is one step down from GCSE. Entry level accreditations are based on classwork and assessments rather than examinations. Two pupils gained GCSE equivalent accreditation in ICT this year.

Accreditation routes are personalised with vocational learning opportunities selected on the basis of pupils strengths, interests and aspirations.

Work Related Learning and Community Activities form an important part of our curriculum in Key Stage 4.

At Avalon marshes pupils carry out environmental conservation work as part of their citizenship curriculum



Maintaining a community garden

Work related learning in the community



Sixth Form

Our Sixth Form building, completed in Summer 2012, enabled us to continue to extend our Sixth Form provision, which now caters for students from 16-19 years.

Sixth Form is more grown up, moving away from school in a physical sense, as well as through the opportunities and experiences it provides. Sixth Form operates as a distinct group with a separate entrance, separate lunch and break times and students choose what they want to wear.

At the heart of the Sixth Form curriculum is increasing independence and preparation for life, work and leisure in the community. Programmes are planned alongside professionals, parents and students, to enable a smooth transition to the next stage in their educational or life journey.

Sixth Form builds on the Key Stage 4 personalised learning pathways. The accreditation route is via the National Open College Network ranging from P levels, including Entry Level accreditation and up to Level 1 (GCSE level D-G equivalent) of Foundation Learning.

Core Curriculum Areas:

Independence

Learning for Life

Work related learning and enterprise incorporating design technology

Community learning

Horticulture

Catering

Social Communication

Problem Solving

Mathematics and literacy in real life contexts

Relationships

Responsible Citizenship

Emotional Literacy

Sport

Swimming and hydrotherapy

Music

ICT

Art

Science, RE, history and geography are delivered through cross curricular learning activities.

Transition from Sixth Form and preparing students for their next steps: mainstream college, a specialist college or transition into adult services is planned in partnership with students, their families and other professionals to ensure a successful outcome.

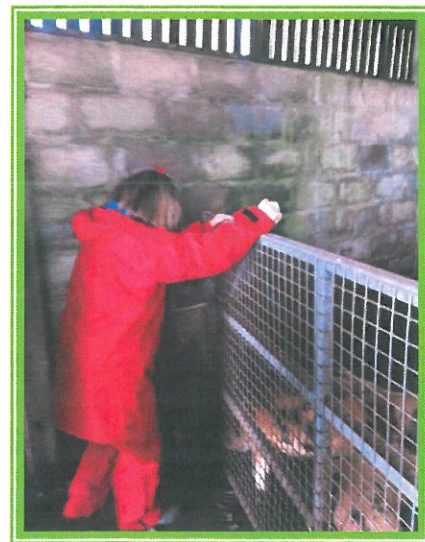
The curriculum is delivered largely through purposeful, practical learning experiences in a range of contexts. For example Sixth Form students make cakes and light meals for meetings held at the school.

Learning activities for this focussed on writing a menu and a shopping list, finding items in a shop, buying the items, following recipes, researching which recipe was most popular, health and safety, preparing and serving the food, receiving feedback, taking further bookings.

Sixth Form

The Farm

All students who are able to benefit from work experience at the farm do so for one day a week. Students are given a list of jobs which need to be done that farm day. The tasks could range from feeding the animals, providing water, changing bedding to really messy jobs like mucking out the barn or the pig pens. All of this learning is accredited at appropriate levels for individuals. Students often also cook their own meal whilst at the building learning independence and daily living skills.



**Students carry out jobs on the farm
looking after feeding the animals**





Sixth form students at the disco



Food produced by Sixth Form students

Comments from Parents:

He is really enjoying Sixth Form.
He is enjoying cooking and gardening.
He likes the outdoors, jobs and practical activities.

Comments from students:

I like jobs.
I miss Sixth Form.
I like making scones.
College is great fun!

Vocational learning involves wearing appropriate clothing for



Students enjoyed their hospitality projects

