

my AFK

working with disability



Creating a new model of 16-19 education for students with SEND

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Web

1 Introduction

This document has been prepared by my AFK as the basis for discussions with local authorities and other stakeholders in the education of disabled students.

my AFK¹ is a charity with a successful track record of preparing disabled young people for work. We work with 14-19 year olds to raise their aspirations and improve their work skills. Our employment brokers/job coaches have an excellent record of placing 19-25 year old students into paid employment. We take students from schools and colleges across North London.

Based on our experience, we believe that a new paradigm of post-16 education for disabled young people is urgently needed in order to close the “disability employment gap” and to enable them to thrive in later life.

my AFK has developed a radical new model of a special school (called here “New School”) for students aged 16-19, focused on preparing students, ***primarily those with learning disabilities, autism and/or communication/interaction difficulties***, for work and for living as independently as possible.

Why is it needed?

According to the Department for Education’s (‘DfE’) Employer Perspectives Survey 2016²:

“Work experience is an important facilitator for young people entering, and succeeding, in the workplace.”

The DfE’s guidance on 16-19 study programmes³ says:

“The overwhelming majority of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are capable of sustained employment with the right preparation and support. All professionals working with them should share that presumption. As such, the study programme principles apply equally to learners with SEND.”

The SEND Code of Practice, 2015⁴ reinforces the point:

*“For students who are not taking qualifications, their study programme should focus on **high quality work experience**, and on non-qualification*

¹ my AFK is the trading name of Action For Kids Charitable Trust.

² DfE. 2017a. *Employer Perspectives Survey 2016*. p13

³ DfE. 2018a. *16-19 Study Programmes: Departmental advice for education providers*. p7

⁴ DfE. 2015. *Special Educational Needs and Disability. Code of Practice: 0-25*. Para 8.30

activity which prepares them well for employment, independent living, being healthy adults and participating in society.”

Despite this clear policy direction, disabled young people, especially those with autism and/or a learning disability, are often poorly served in education. Ofsted reported in March 2016⁵:

“Provision [is] not focused sufficiently well on preparing learners with high needs for adult life”;

“... too much provision lack[s] meaningful work experience.”

As a direct consequence, only 32% of adults with autism are in paid work (full or part-time) and only 5.7% of supported adults with a learning disability are in employment, compared to nearly 80% for non-disabled adults.

A key Ofsted recommendation is that those educating high needs learners should:

“...focus on enabling learners to develop the necessary personal, social, employability and independence skills so they can achieve their goals, ambitions and aspirations, and progress on to positive destinations including into employment.”⁶

Due to population growth and greatly improved life expectancy⁷, the number of young people with a learning disability is forecast to increase by 32% by 2030.

Mainstream schools are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the individual needs of young people with EHCPs.^{8; 9; 10} In addition, many 6th forms require all applicants, even those from their own secondary school, to apply in competition with pupils coming from elsewhere. Furthermore, admission authorities are allowed to set academic criteria for admission to 6th forms.¹¹ These factors will have the effect of making it harder for students with SEND to stay within the mainstream system between the ages of 16-18 and, if they do, to get the preparation they need for adult life.

⁵ Ofsted. 2016. *Moving forward? How well the further education and skills sector is preparing young people with high needs for adult life.* p5

⁶ Ofsted. 2016. *Moving forward?* p8

⁷ For example, the life expectancy of a person with Down’s Syndrome has risen from 25 years in 1983 to over 60 years today.

⁸ Webster, R, & Blatchford, P. 2017. The Special Educational Needs in Secondary Education (SENSE) study. p6

⁹ All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism. 2017. *Autism and education in England.*

¹⁰ National Autistic Society. 2016a. *School Report 2016.*

¹¹ Council for Disabled Children. *School admissions, children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs.*

New School would address these needs by adopting a specially developed curriculum which has “Preparation for Life & Work” at its core, with learning divided into two interrelated components: ‘Getting a Job’ and ‘Getting a Life’.

Commitment from local education authorities

This document describes the New School model and outlines how it can deliver exceptional, life-changing, benefits to disabled young people. It can deliver these benefits at a cost comparable to, or in some cases less than, other 16-19 provision.

It is expected that the DfE will launch a new ‘wave’ of applications for 30 new special free schools and/or Alternative Provision free schools in summer 2018. The process is expected to be initiated by a call for ‘Expressions of Interest’ from Local Authorities followed, for approved projects, by individual competitions to select organisations to establish and run the schools.¹²

This process provides an excellent opportunity to create the New School, directly addressing the needs of this severely underserved group of students and promising to give them hugely enhanced life chances.

¹² DfE. 2018b. *How to apply to set up a mainstream free school*. p10

2 About my AFK

my AFK's mission is to give as many disabled young people as possible the opportunity to work or volunteer in their community.

We are a well-established provider of services to young people with SEND, aged 14-25, including short breaks (school holiday) programmes, education and training services and our employment support programme known as 'Life & Work'.

We have acquired an excellent reputation in North London for delivering high quality services. We have partnerships with a growing number of schools and colleges from across 9 boroughs (see Appendix 1), working closely with teachers and students to provide individualised work experience placements and to teach employability skills in our London office and community café.

Our Life & Work Programme works with young disabled people aged 19-25 to undertake work related training and work placements leading to paid work. We have a team of specialist Employment Brokers/Job Coaches who have experience in finding and supporting work placements by matching candidates with suitable employers. They provide ongoing support to employers and regularly deliver disability awareness and "reasonable adjustments" training. We use the Supported Employment model for finding work placements and paid work for disabled young people and we are a member of the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE).

We currently work with nearly 50 employers (see Appendix 2), both locally and across London, and we consider our employer partners to be a key part of our success.

88% of our young people placed into paid work during 2014-16 remained in work at least one year after finding employment.

We have a strong focus on self-advocacy and employ an experienced Advocacy Manager who co-produces programmes of support with young people so that they can speak up for themselves, become more confident, empowered and self-reliant. This, in turn, improves their resilience in both employment and independent living. We recently won an Impact Award for our self-advocacy work from the DM Thomas Foundation for Young People through their #IamABLE programme.

3 “New School” curriculum

Our vision is of a new type of post-16 school for disabled students, providing them with essential skills, attitudes, and opportunities to radically increase their personal aspirations and life chances so they can lead fulfilled, healthy and stimulating lives they choose for themselves until they retire – and beyond.

This vision is underpinned by core principles and values, to:

- create a challenging, supportive and stimulating environment which engenders aspiration and achievement;
- prioritise students’ voices so students can affect real changes in their lives;
- promote respect and tolerance amongst all members of the school;
- develop students into effective, responsible and active citizens who expect to earn their own living, live independently and have the tools to do so.

Choice

New School would provide an alternative pathway for a segment of SEND students from mainstream and special provisions. New School would be appropriate for the significant number of students who struggle to find a meaningful post-16 placement that falls between a purely academic route and more generic special school/college SEND provision.

Crucially, New School would provide choice to students and parents seeking an education that makes possible a future that includes paid work and living as independently as possible.

Length of programme

Students would enter in Year 12 and stay until Year 14.

How would New School be different?

New School would offer a focussed, personalised, accredited, bespoke, specialist two ‘component’ curriculum: “*Getting a Job*” and “*Getting a Life*” with employability, literacy, numeracy, personal and independence skills at its core. At the same time, it would give students the unique opportunity to build relationships with a much larger number of peers than is usually experienced in special schools and yet would provide a more supportive environment than can typically be delivered within large Further Education colleges.

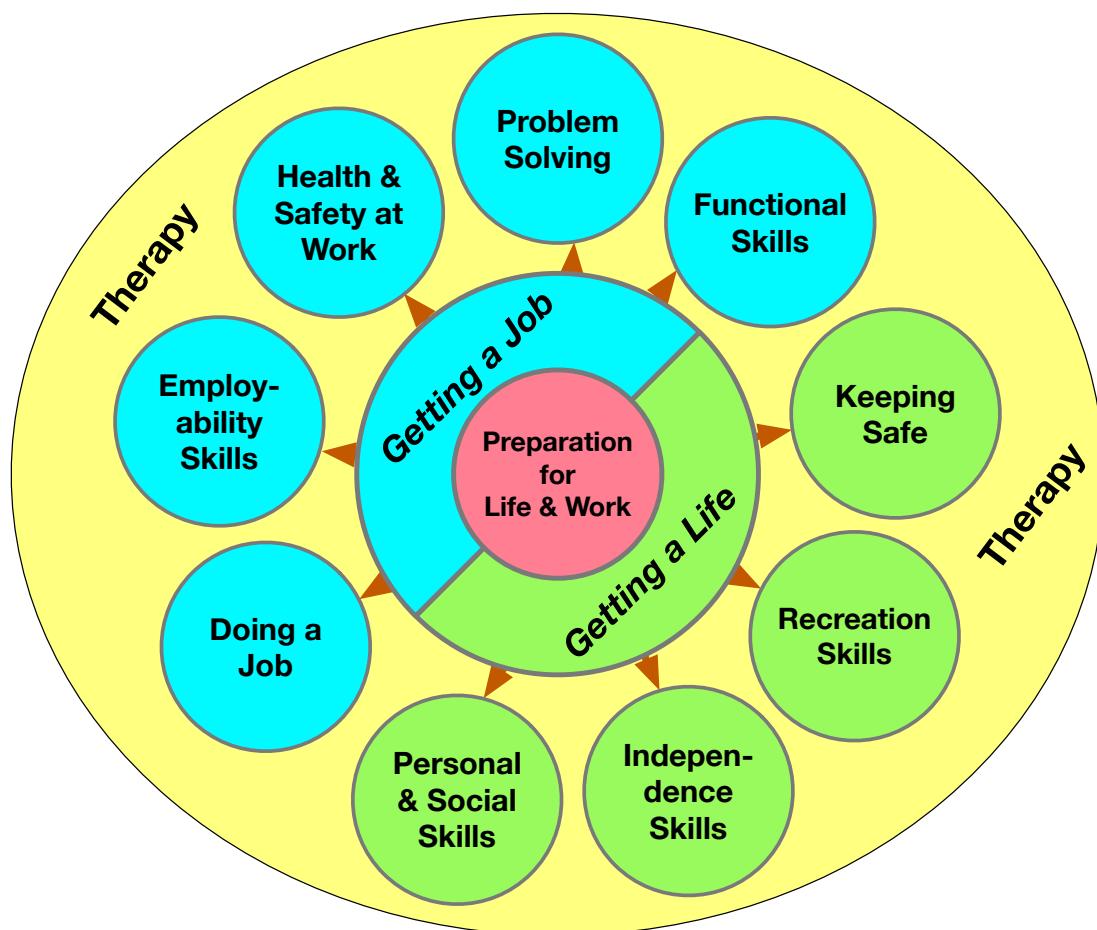
The specially developed New School curriculum reflects Ofsted's recommendation, highlighted above, that those educating high needs learners should:

“...focus on enabling learners to develop the necessary personal, social, employability and independence skills so they can achieve their goals, ambitions and aspirations, and progress on to positive destinations including into employment.”

Accordingly, the curriculum has Preparation for Life & Work at its core, with learning needs divided into two interrelated components: ‘Getting a Job’ and ‘Getting a Life’. (See diagram below)

For example, when visiting a sports centre as part of Recreation Skills, students would also develop their communication skills through talking to centre staff, making choices and reading signs. They would also be developing numeracy skills by identifying bus numbers, handling money for entrance fees and buying snacks. These are key employability skills needed in the workplace.

Self-advocacy, community engagement and work placements would be central elements of New School’s programme. Students would also study English and Maths.



Critical to our conception of New School is that *all* aspects of provision would be channelled into providing students with the necessary skills to both obtain, *and sustain*, employment: teaching students *how* to work in a variety of sectors rather than teaching them a specific job. This would increase their employability, self-advocacy skills, self-confidence and self-esteem and would equip them to either take up employment when they leave or progress to further *vocational* education ('FE'). New School would also foster independence, travel competency and personal autonomy so students will be able to enjoy an active leisure and social life outside work. The ability to sustain as great a degree of independent living as possible would also be a focus of the curriculum.

From my AFK's considerable experience of working with disabled young people, we know that sustained, experiential learning in the workplace is a core requirement for students to transfer their skills successfully from classroom to the work environment. This means that **good quality** work experience is an essential component of the New School curriculum, with work tasters and business enterprises being undertaken in the first year; rotations in the second year leading to sustained placements with external providers in the third year. There needs to be a choice of placements available so that the preferences and needs of each young person can be taken into account. As a result, it is essential that New School have excellent partnerships with a large *number*, and *variety*, of local and national firms keen to provide employment opportunities for young people with SEND. Without these partnerships it would be impossible to deliver the core element of the curriculum.

Curriculum – key differences

- Timetable

The timetable would be structured to facilitate several specific features:

- the New School teaching day would extend from 9.15am until 5.00pm. The extended school day would help students build up their stamina to be able to apply themselves productively for a whole working day and provide opportunities for enrichment activities and projects;
- The timetable would allow for extended learning periods (up to 3½ hours) to allow more intensive cross-curricular work to take place;
- The development of self-advocacy skills and self-confidence would be a core aspect of the students' work;¹³

¹³ This prepares students to, for example, be able to exercise their rights under the DfE's SEND Code of Practice 2015, Para 8.13-14

- Specific work placements would be developed over the three years the student attends New School. Work placement rotations and extended work placements would be undertaken.

- Functional Skills

Functional Skills are an essential component of the curriculum offer and therefore each Year group would have designated sessions to build their skills.

- Employability and work experience

Year 12	Weekly employability skills and Transition Planning sessions would be delivered by Core Tutors in conjunction with the employment brokers. Throughout the year, the students would be given a minimum of 6 work tasters in a variety of sectors, e.g. retail, care, hospitality . The students would take part in a Business Enterprise, divided into distinct components i.e. marketing, supply, production, finance.
Year 13	This cohort would take part in work experience rotations with local employers. Each student would have work placements for approximately 10% of their curriculum . These rotations would allow students to experience real work in real situations and to transfer the skills learnt in Year 12 to the workplace.
Year 14	Groupings would remain as for Year 13 but with more emphasis on individualised programmes and interventions where difficulties are identified. Students would attend a placement one day a week for the academic year (20% of their curriculum) . The placement would reflect the student's skills and interests developed during previous work experience activities. This placement would provide the student with a reference, an enhanced CV and, in some cases, the possibility of employment within that company.

During Years 13 and 14, students would have at least 50 days of high quality work experience at external employers.

- Arts and Culture

Incorporating creativity within the curriculum would encourage students' self-expression and self-creation, promote their personal well-being, stimulate their imagination and provide them with the ability to respond sensitively and respectfully to the world and people around them. We also believe it would encourage them to take up a hobby in their leisure time. One afternoon a week would be set aside for all students in all Year groups to be involved in creative art.

The communal nature of these sessions would ensure that students mix and work alongside peers from different classes and from different Year groups, providing further opportunities to develop team working skills.

- Travel training

In Year 12 students would learn to use a variety of forms of public transport (where practicable) on a graduated programme accounting for 2-3 hours per week. In all three years, travel training would be a component of work experience placements.

- Transition Planning

Transition Planning is a fundamental aspect of the curriculum as students, and their families, need to be able to make informed choices about their future lives including:

- implications of the move to adult services;
- issues surrounding health, housing and social care;
- mental health;
- financial benefits.

Student voice

New School would specifically prioritise students' voices through a Student Forum. The Forum would give students the power to bring about genuine, but realistic, change within their own environment and to replicate proceedings in forums / staff councils / staff meetings that students are likely to experience in the world of work.

4 Students

Who is New School for?

New School would be for students:

- aged 16-19;
- with an Education, Health & Care Plan ('EHCP');
- typically, with "Cognition & Learning" (MLD and SLD) or "Communication & Interaction" (ASD and SLCN) needs as their 'primary' or 'secondary' need;
- with the desire and potential to obtain, and sustain, paid employment immediately after leaving New School or after a period of vocational training.

We recognise that the New School would not suit every student. The key is that they would all want to get a job and would benefit from this form of targeted education and support.

Where would the students come from?

We anticipate that students would be drawn primarily from Haringey and surrounding boroughs - Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest.

Although many students would have previously attended special schools, we expect that a significant minority would come from mainstream schools which are finding it harder to offer a high quality education that meets the needs of these students.

Number of pupils

The New School operational and financial model has been developed for a total cohort of 99 students when full (three Years of 33 students each).

Progression routes

The expected progression after completing the 3 year New School programme would be to paid employment, an apprenticeship or *vocational* training. For a few students, the appropriate outcome would be placement in a long term volunteering role.

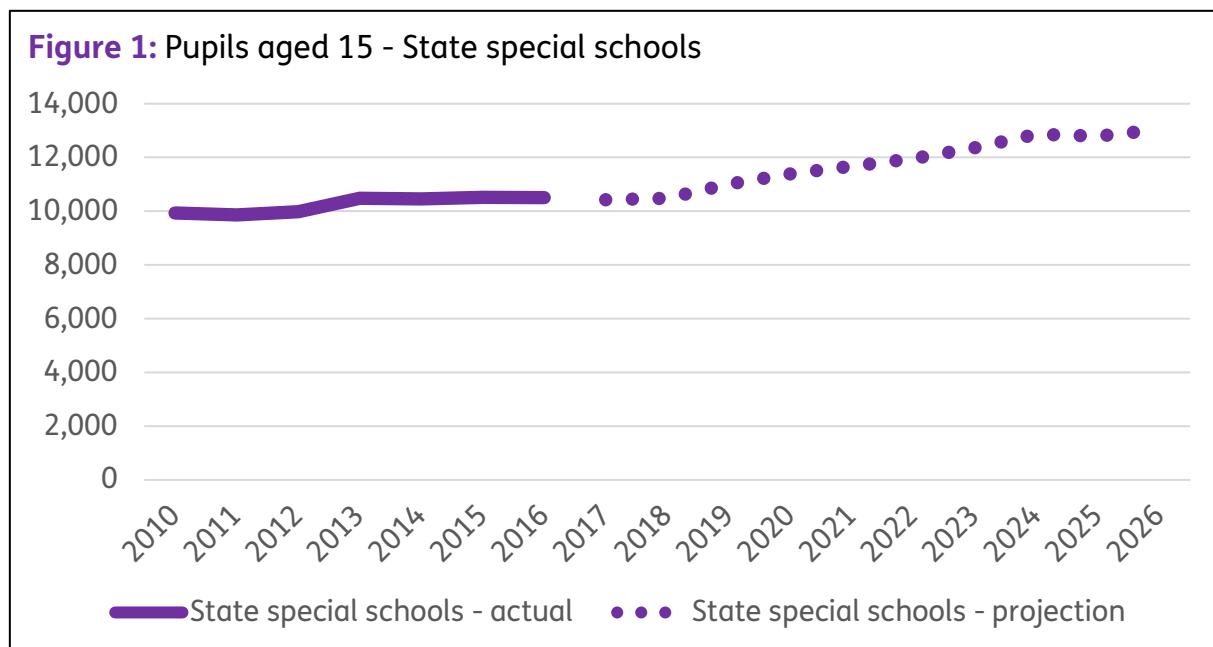
5 Evidence of need

National demographic trends

A number of notable demographic trends are pointing to a significant increase in the demand for special school provision for 16-19 year olds:

- in England, the number of statements/EHCPs naming autism as the primary need has increased by 55% between 2010 and 2017 to nearly 61,000. In addition, there are a further 13,000 statements/EHCPs where autism is listed as the secondary need.^{14;15} This is in the context of the total number of statements/EHCPs rising by ‘only’ 8% in the same period;
- research carried out for the Department of Health projected a 32% increase, between 2010 and 2030, in the number of young people with a learning disability in England.^{16,17}

These trends are reflected in the DfE’s latest National Pupil Projections¹⁸ which indicate a 24% increase in the number of 15 year olds in state *special* schools between 2016 and 2026 (Figure 1).



¹⁴ DfE. 2010. *Special Educational Needs in England*, January 2010.

¹⁵ DfE. 2017b. *Special Educational Needs in England*, January 2017.

¹⁶ Economics of Social and Health Care Research Unit. 2011. *Projections of Demand for Social Care and Disability Benefits for Younger Adults in England*.

¹⁷ This is partly the result of increased life expectancy. As noted above, the life expectancy of a person with Down’s Syndrome has risen very sharply since 1983.

¹⁸ DfE. 2017c. *National Pupil Projections*, July 2017.

North London

(For the purpose of this document, North London covers Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest.

The most recent GLA forecast¹⁹ concludes that “the secondary system in London is poised to see significant growth in demand in the coming years”.

At a macro level, growth in demand for specialist educational provision is driven, in part, by growth in the wider school sector. Hence, in the absence of a significant change in inclusion rates in mainstream schools, a rise in the mainstream school population points towards increased demand for places in special provision.

The growth rate in North London’s secondary (11-15) school population between 2016/17 and 2021/22 is expected to be 12.9% (see Table 1 below). This increase in the secondary population will then flow through to the 16-19 age range and to demand for special school places.

Table 1: Projected demand for state-funded secondary places 2016/17 to 2021/22²⁰

Secondary pupils	On roll 2016/17	Growth to 2021/22	% increase
Barnet	18,230	3,160	17.3%
Waltham Forest	14,070	2,190	15.6%
Enfield	19,010	2,700	14.2%
Islington	7,290	920	12.6%
Hackney	11,360	1,160	10.2%
Camden	7,440	700	9.4%
Haringey	12,120	730	6.0%
Total	89,520	11,560	12.9%

Changing pattern of need

All boroughs have had to deal with a very rapidly changing profile of SEND pupils and the consequent requirements for dedicated provision. For example, Figure 2 below shows significant changes in the characteristics of pupils with SEND in Haringey over the last eight years.²¹ As a result of the changing pattern of need in Haringey:

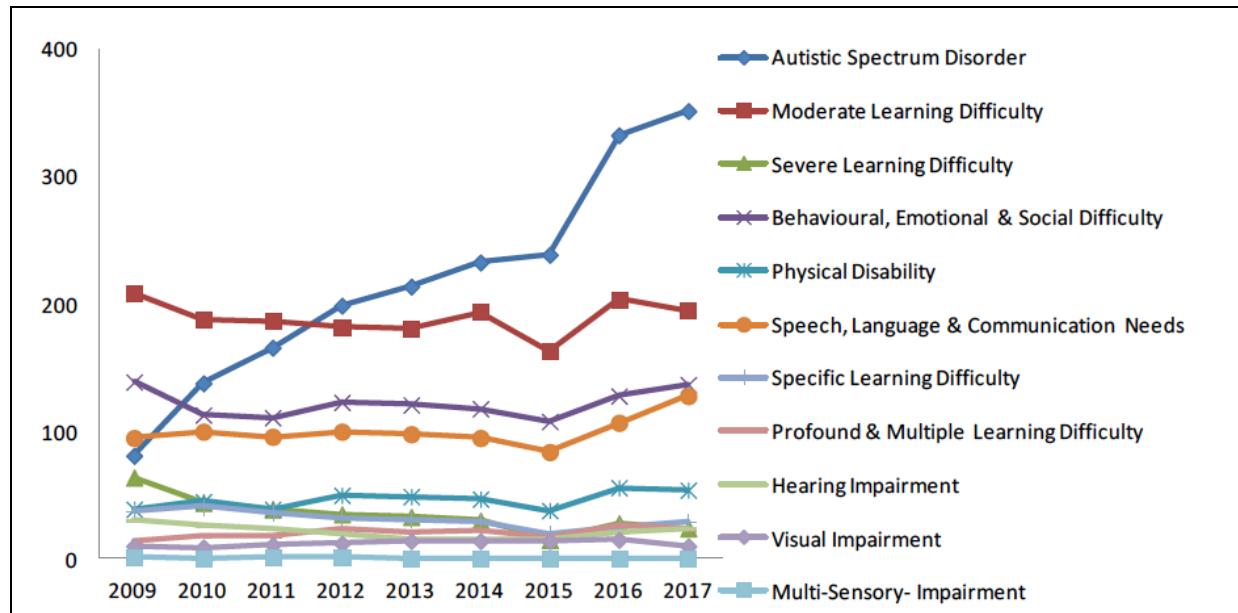
“Demand for specialist in-borough provision for ASD is close to capacity [This] must be seen alongside the recent trend for increasing ASD place demand”

¹⁹ Greater London Authority. 2018. *School Place Demand Projections*. p19

²⁰ Greater London Authority. 2018. *School Place Demand Projections*. Table 2

²¹ London Borough of Haringey. 2017. *School Place Planning Report*. p14

Figure 2: Haringey pupils (Years 7 – 14) with statements/EHCPs by need, 2009-17²²



New School would be perfectly suited to address these requirements in two ways - indirectly by freeing up capacity within other in-borough autism provision and directly by providing greater post-16 capacity and choice.

Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training

Disabled young people are significantly less likely to be in employment and their education or training typically ends at 21-22 years of age. The statistics are clear:

- only 50% of disabled adults are in paid work compared to nearly 80% of non-disabled adults;
- only 32% of autistic adults are in paid work, falling to 16% for full-time work²³;
- only 5.7% of adults with a learning disability in England are in paid work, a figure which has been falling for the last 3 years²⁴. Borough data (Table 4) shows that most of the boroughs in North London have employment rates below the London average.

These statistics sadly demonstrate that the current models of 16-19 education are failing to prepare disabled young people for work and independent living.

New School's curriculum, with its focus on employment, personal independence and resilience, is designed to tackle this issue directly. It is a focused intervention that

²² London Borough of Haringey. 2017. *School Place Planning Report*.

²³ National Autistic Society. 2016b. *Government must tackle the autism employment gap*.

²⁴ NHS. 2017. *Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, England – 2016-17*.

would significantly improve the ability of its students to obtain, *and sustain*, paid work over the long term.

Table 4: Adults with learning disabilities in paid employment²⁵

2016-17	Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment
Barnet	10.1%
Enfield	8.3%
London	7.2%
Camden	6.5%
Islington	5.2%
Haringey	4.5%
Hackney	4.2%
Waltham Forest	1.7%

Choice

Although many schools and colleges offer some form of employability and independent living support, few build their entire curriculum around it. Offering significant amounts of work experience is rare, as is emphasising the development of effective self-advocacy skills.

The development of the New School model has been done with the close involvement of young people, parents and professionals over an extended period, including:

- a survey of teaching staff in 17 local schools and colleges – 100% said work experience was essential to their students getting work in the future, 100% said that attending employability training had improved their students' employability skills, raised aspirations and increased self-confidence
- a survey of 50 my AFK students with moderate to severe learning disabilities – 85% indicated a strong interest in work experience, 64% wanted paid work;
- a survey of 66 school aged students with autism and moderate to severe learning disabilities – 89% were interested in working;
- a survey of parents of 40 disabled young people with learning disabilities – 90% wanted their child to have paid work in the future;
- a consultation with 40 local parents of AFK students who commented on and supported our proposals.

To date we have had 80 expressions of interest from parents and no objections. We have also consulted with Haringey Involve, the Parent/Carer Forum in Haringey.

²⁵ NHS. 2017. *Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, England – 2016-17*.

6 Summary

By establishing a new approach to 16-19 education for disabled young people, the New School model is responding to:

- the need for more special school places, especially places suitable for students on the autistic spectrum;
- students' personal aspirations for their future;
- the Government's challenge to remove the barriers to employment for young people with SEND;
- the growing demand from parents for more bespoke provision.

New School would:

- specifically meet the needs of high-needs students in respect of work-related learning and better preparation for more independent living;
- raise the aspirations, ambitions and achievement of young people with SEND²⁶;
- become a national flagship, an exemplar demonstrating the effectiveness of a model that can be adopted elsewhere.

New School would have clear priorities, aimed at narrowing the employment gap for its students and would draw on well-regarded and proven work practices to:

- deliver an outstanding accredited curriculum that would provide academic, social, emotional and vocational education;
- provide a respectful, safe but stimulating and challenging environment for all its students;
- promote independence, personal autonomy, self-determination, self-advocacy, resilience and a healthy lifestyle through seminar style tuition, practical tasks and off-site experiential learning opportunities;
- provide meaningful work placements with local employers under the supervision of experienced employment brokers.

Students would leave New School with a clear life plan and with practical, functional and social skills that would enable them to fulfil their ambitions and be agents of change in their own lives. They would have had sustained work placements with external providers and would be ready either to take up paid employment or to move into further education to pursue vocational qualifications as successful and independent young people.

Crucially, New School would give disabled young people a real choice of provision, enabling those who wish to work to do so.

²⁶DfE. 2015. *Special Educational Needs and Disability. Code of Practice: 0-25*. Para 8.28

Appendix 1: Schools & Colleges working with my AFK

Haringey

Blanche Nevile School
CONEL
Greig City Academy
Haringey 6th Form
Heartlands High School
Highgate Wood School
Hornsey School for Girls
Park View Academy
Riverside School
Thomas More School
Treehouse School

Barnet

Bishop Douglass School
Jewish Community Secondary School
Kisharon School
Oak Lodge School
Mapledown School

Camden

Acland Burghley School
Alexandra Centre
City & Islington College
Regent High School
Swiss Cottage School

Enfield

Barnet & Southgate College
East Barnet School
Oaktree School
West Lea School

Hackney

The Brenner Centre
BSix College
The City Academy
The Garden School
Hackney Community College
Mossbourne Academy

Islington

The Bridge School
City & Islington College
Richard Cloudsley School
Samuel Rhodes School
Stoke Newington School

Tower Hamlets

Langdon Park School
Mulberry School for Girls

Waltham Forest

Joseph Clarke School
Whitefield Academy
William Morris School

City of Westminster

Harris Academy St. John's Wood
Kennet West Skills Centre
St. Marylebone CE Bridge School
Westminster Kingsway College

Appendix 2: Employer partners working with my AFK

1to3 café	MTO Nursery
Arcadis	Muswell Hill Library
Arsenal FC	Nando's
ArtHouse	Organiclea
Banc Brasserie	Picturehouse
Bikes for Good Causes	Post Office
Broadwater Children's Centre	Redemption Brewery
Co-op Retail	Regus
Crisis Charity Shop	RS Architects
Crouch End Picturehouse	Sainsbury's (multiple branches)
Cutting Bay	St James Church Café
Decathlon	St Marys Primary School
Edgware Hospital	Sanctuary Care
Edmonton Green ITC	SAS UK
Flashback Records	Savers
Green Rooms Hotel	Schroders
HAIL Admin	Shelter Offices
Haringey Hub	Slaughter and May
Imperial War Museum	Total Boxer
Jackson's Lane	TRAID
JD Wetherspoon	Waitrose
Kentish Town City Farm	Waterside Café
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	William Hill
McDonald's	Wood Green Library
	YO! Sushi

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