

## Acorns Primary School

### SEN Information Report September 2022

**Name of the Special Educational Needs/Disabilities Coordinator:  
Paula Barlow**

**Contact details:**  
[head@acorns.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:head@acorns.lancs.sch.uk)  
Acorns Primary School  
Blackpool Rd  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 6AU  
Tel 01772 792681

#### The kinds of SEND we provided for.

We are a special school for children aged 2 -11. We are a GLD (Generic Learning Difficulties) Primary school – one of 5 in Lancashire. We cater for children with a range of learning difficulties for example: autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties, speech and language and communication needs, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and hearing and visual impairment. This is not an exhaustive list.

We are proud of our inclusive setting reflecting the fact that we cater for a very wide range of learning needs at a highly specialised level.

Admission to Acorns School is via an application to the local SEND office following a successful Without Prejudice Visit (WPV) – These can be arranged directly by telephoning school. Sometimes parents bring a supporter e.g. the SENCO from a mainstream school, another family member or a friend. It helps some parents to jot down questions to ask us about our school and what we offer prior to having a WPV.

All the children in our school have undergone an integrated assessment and have an EHCP (Education , Health and Care Plan )

During the process of assessment, pupils have a banding assigned to them which reflects the level of support needed in school.

## **How does the school know if children/young people need extra help and what should I do if I think my child/young person has special educational needs?**

All our pupils have an EHCP. Parents are aware of the plan because they have written part of it in conjunction with other agencies involved.

Most pupils had identified additional needs from an early age, some pupils have portage, and some pupils undergo an assessment process at nursery age because they are not making expected rates of progress. Some parents identify that their child may have a learning disability and request an assessment via their GP or nursery/school.

At Acorns many of the early assessment tools have already indicated the additional learning difficulty. We break down the learning needs into manageable steps which form a framework of targets that are achievable in the short term, building up to achieving greater progress over a longer term. These are called IEP's (individual education plans) and are the basis of much of the work throughout the school year. We report on the extent of the IEP progress at annual review meetings to which families and all other stakeholders are invited to attend.

All of our pupils follow a timetable reflecting their individual learning needs, some of this work is 1:1 with a teacher or special support assistant and some work will be as a member of a small group. Pupils at Acorns are assessed using the Early Learning Goals and Development Matters at the Early Years Foundation stage. In Key Stage 1 and 2 the pupils are assessed against IEP's Annual Targets and long-term outcomes in the EHCP.

In addition, we assess and track using Routes for Learning, MOVE, Pre-Key Stage Standards and the Communication Matrix. Progress evidence is captured via Evidence for Learning (EFL) and linked to areas of the curriculum and IEP's.

These assessments build a picture about each learner so that we can reflect and build on strengths and identify gaps. We promote individual talent and identify gifted and talented pupils. Our classes have the flexibility to group according to need and to maximise curricular delivery to guarantee challenge.

Annual reports are issued in the Summer term, however parents have access to an EFL app which is accessible whole year. Parents can see progress in real time and add their own comments/evidence to support learning. Parents are also invited to attend parents evening and discuss progress and to plan how they might consolidate learning at home.

Teachers plan all lessons, specialist HLTA's (higher level teaching assistants) also plan and deliver lessons, special support assistants deliver group sessions and 1:1. Most special support assistants also deliver early help interventions under the guidance of teachers, speech and language and other professionals e.g. Physiotherapists.

Evidence of progress is fed back to the class teacher whilst TA's also write 'next steps' statements on work and pupil recording documents. Some pupils are aware of the areas they are working on and are involved in planning for greater effectiveness.

All discussions with parents are undertaken in a positive, solution seeking, and supportive manner. Our collaboration is very important and is reflected in the extent of our communication with families.

We have an in house trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) who supports pupil's emotional, social and mental wellbeing. She runs weekly sessions with pupils who need extra support and also supports our pupils who are transitioning to secondary school. She liaises closely with parents/families to ensure continuity of approach.

We ensure "readiness to learn" by promoting sensory diets for individual pupils and also sensory integration/circuits for groups of pupils. We also teach children to learn to self-regulate to improve their independence skills.

We access support from other agencies when needed. This has included a pupil counsellor, children's social care, CAHMS and the NSPCC. Our aim to provide a tailored response to individual pupils and families.

**What arrangements does the school make for consulting with children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities about - and involving them in - their education?**

We have an active school council. We listen to pupil voice and act upon pupil feedback and requests (within reason).

We accept that choice making is an essential part of being a British citizen and that all pupils have a part to play in improving the school and having a positive impact on the world.

We give opportunities for children to share their views at their own annual review and to receive praise and reflect on progress made.

Our School Council coordinator asks each class about school, learning, resources and enjoyment (amongst other topics) and this is fed back via the school council and shared on social media and our website. The feedback gives the senior management team a valuable insight into how our pupils feel about life at school. Class teams elect each school council member and subjects are discussed during circle time. PECS symbols, communication book, objects, Makaton and spoken language ensure that information and opinion is accessible and expressed.

All of our children have a particular learning difficulty; therefore, they are all unique so it is in this way we celebrate diversity and are fully inclusive as a result of this mind-set.

At play times, we have play buddies who act as peer-to-peer support for some children. We acknowledge that some pupils are fantastic role models, some pupils are naturally caring towards less physically able children and that these pupils need opportunities to show this quality and develop nurture.

During writing a one-page profile, pupils' opinions are sought for their aspirations and goals. We keep these aspirations in sight and create opportunities to reach each long-term goal.

Pupils know they make progress through next steps, WOW boards, star of the week, special mention of the day, rewards and awards at the end of the term. Some classes have weekly reviews – looking at work and photographs to demonstrate how much has been achieved.

**What arrangements does the school make for consulting with the parents & carers of children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities and involving them in – their child's/young people's education?**

We have a parent's group who request information and training for SEND. The group is held at Acorns and is self-supporting.

Whilst parents have formal opportunities for feedback regarding progress, they are also along with families invited to stay and play events, coffee mornings, celebration assemblies and performances. Our aim is to fully immerse parents and families into all aspects of school life.

Parents group often make suggestions as to how we can develop or share ideas. Our parent governors are really active, and they contribute both to the life of the school and decision making. Parents are actively encouraged to contact school and come in to talk to us for any reason.

Pupils are engaged and enthused by our personalised and child centred curriculum.

Pupils in the early years have identified key workers who have regular contact with parents. Parents of pupils in early years are invited to initial transition visits also known as 'stay and play' so that they can begin to build relationships with staff members.

### **How will the curriculum be matched to my child/young person's needs?**

#### **Acorns Curriculum**

At Acorns we believe that every individual is entitled to a broad, balanced, relevant, coherent and progressive curriculum that is appropriately differentiated. We provide our pupils with exciting and motivating lessons which in turn makes them enthusiastic about learning.

Our curriculum has been developed to match the ages, abilities, interests and aptitudes of our special learners.

We provide our pupils with the best opportunities to enable them to be successful learners, confident and independent individuals and responsible citizens. We support and encourage our pupils to succeed at their own level and ensure they are prepared for the next step in their life. We celebrate all achievements, whether they are large or small as they are all important to us.

We place great emphasis on the areas of the ECHP: Communication, PSEMH, Cognition, Physical and Independence.

Our curriculum is thematic, designed to and enthuse and rooted in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Each pupil follows their own pathway and progress is documented regularly. We use our outdoor areas and forest school to teach important life skills.

Our curriculum is divided into Communication, Language and Literacy, Cognition (Maths), Knowledge and Understanding of the World, The Arts, Physical Skills and Independence. National Curriculum subjects sit under each of these areas. RE remains statutory and is taught discreetly. Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) is also statutory and taught discreetly and in the most appropriate manner for different cohort of children.

English and Maths remain crucial and are taught both in a discreet daily session and embedded functionally in other aspects of school life. Early reading skills are taught

through phonic work and sight-reading activities. We also use Colourful Semantics to enable pupils to structure sentences and understand comprehension

Throughout the school the 'Letters and sounds' approach is followed for teaching and assessing phonics and the Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) scheme, is used to support individuals with their reading development. Pupils also experience a breadth of books during their English lessons and are encouraged to read for pleasure.

Communication is fundamental to children's development; Communication is the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning, play and social interaction. We use a range of communication methods to support expressive communication and have a total communication approach to receptive communication.

We have developed a sensory specific curriculum to meet the needs of our learners that learn through the use of sensory stimuli. Our pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism have unique abilities and ways of learning. It is our responsibility to ensure that we provide a curriculum that is flexible and adaptable enough to meet the needs of each pupil.

Our sensory curriculum is based on our understanding of what our individual needs. They are: comfort, security, stimulation and motivation, but having a good relationship with staff is paramount to the pupils' learning experiences. Alongside sensory specific lessons the curriculum is a naturally integrated curriculum that every pupil can access through an adult: there is communication involved in everything they observe and explore (English and Science), it can involve texture, shape and varying quantities (Maths) and it requires at least two people (Social and Emotional).

All our pupils are supported by highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants that ensure that they are given time to reach, hold, develop and explore their physical surroundings as independently as possible. We have dedicated teaching rooms where we undertake individual programmes, including sensory drama, yoga, tac pac, massage and sensory integration.

The planning of the curriculum is based around the objectives taken directly from the national curriculum. Teachers differentiate these to ensure that each child can access the curriculum at a level suitable to their individual needs. At Acorns we have in place individualised programmes which reflect EHC Plans (Education, Health and Care) and Individual Education Plans (IEP'S).

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure compatibility with our pupils, government directives or to make necessary improvements. Our governing body take a great deal of interest in our curriculum, some governors are directly linked to year groups or specific curricular areas. They undertake regular scrutiny of our planning documentation. All our teaching and support staff attend regular training to ensure they are up-to-date.

At Acorns Primary School , we seek to create opportunities for all our pupils to experience and excel in a range of activities that enhance and extend the National Curriculum and their learning. Our pupils are given opportunities to learn, both inside and outside the classroom, for example going on residential trips, community visits, donkey and pat dog , therapy guinea pigs, rebound therapy, Lego, coding club and nurture play, splash therapy and a variety of sporting and musical events.

We have two dedicated minibuses that are used to facilitate visits within the community. We carefully plan our educational visits within our local community to ensure key skills are revisited in different contexts to ensure learning, transfer and embedding of relevant skills and understanding. Our curriculum provides opportunities for outdoor learning within the local community, to enable the pupils to use their valuable skills in 'real life' situations.

'Lifelong learning' opportunities have been developed from within our hidden curriculum, which are designed to develop a wide range of skills in addition to generalising communication and social skills, increase self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, self-regulation, physical and creative play skills.

### **How accessible is the school environment?**

Acorns accessibility plan can be found on our website.

All of our children require an accessible environment and care is taken when designing new spaces so that the school environment is suitable and can meet most needs.

Equipment is stored safely and maintained regularly.

School has contractors who can readily and easily undertake emergency repairs.

School takes into account the recommendations of our VI and HI specialist, occupational health advice and DFE recommendations.

### **How are the school resources allocated and matched to children/young people's special educational needs and disabilities?**

#### **How is the decision made about the type and quantity of support my child/young person receives?**

School receives a budget, some of which is calculated on weighted pupil number which reflects the nature and extent to which an individual requires support. This in turn is an indicator for staffing levels and specialist support including activities not usually found in a mainstream curriculum.

Each pupil has an EHCP which outlines how best to meet need, what barriers there are to learning and how these barriers might be overcome. In addition we have a number of early intervention strategies designed to overcome some of the barriers or to support learning in the classroom.

Each subject taught or experience provided, appears on a provision map so that we can see how each pupil benefits from each learning experience and indicates the extent of our specialist support.

The biggest aspect of school resources is our staffing structure which is equal to 2/3 pupils to every adult in school. It is in this way we can design and deliver a curriculum matched to meet the needs of pupils.

Decisions regarding need are based at SLT level, class level and via the annual review process and tracking process. We quickly identify the need for interventions and share this with staff members, the pupil and families.

Pupils identified as having a social/emotional need also have access to an ELSA on a weekly basis. This offers support around feelings and emotions, anxiety, behavioural difficulties at home and or in school and any other issues for which the pupil is referred.

**How will both you and I know how my child/young person is doing and how will you help me to support their learning?**

We have a talking tile which goes back and forth every day in which to record progress, breakthroughs, triumphs and disasters!

Families are encouraged to attend stay and play etc. to talk to staff face to face to get to know each other and to collaborate and compare notes.

There is 1 report sent home each year in addition to the annual review. Sharing these with your child, the wider family and friends reinforces how seriously parents take the hard work and effort of their child.

Evidence for learning (EFL) is shared via the parent portal (app) on a regular basis so parents can see pupil's progress all year round.

We use the website to champion pupil activities and celebrations and share information and also we have both an open and closed Facebook page for parents and families. In the closed group we share videos and photos of the pupils regularly.

**What training have the staff supporting children/young people with SEND had or may they have?**

**What specialist services or expertise are available at or accessed by the school?**

Each year all staff undertake essential training to be able to administer medication, ensure that safeguarding is robust, and ensure the safe moving and handling of children and first aid for children.

In addition, guest speakers and experts come to train us in areas such as mental health, sensory processing, behaviour, teaching children on the autistic continuum etc.

During our staff meetings we have 7 minute briefings and mini training sessions so that we keep up to date with latest techniques and current research.

We avail ourselves of the expertise of other special schools and in turn offer support to them and mainstream schools.

The LA also design courses for staff who can request a place via the portal.

Acorns prides itself on promoting the continuous professional development of all staff and in some cases offers sponsorship to be able to undertake specialist training that will benefit the school.

We buy in the services of a trained counsellor, a qualified teacher of the visually impaired and hearing impaired and the services of a sports coach who has been particularly successful at promoting SEN sport.

We have 3 staff members who have SPE status – specialist practitioner in education for: ASD & Behaviour, Art & Early Years, MFL & EAL (modern foreign languages and English as an additional language)

Many of our teaching assistants are educated to degree level or have skills that are transferrable and useful to our special pupils e.g. massage.

If a young person comes to school with a diagnosis previously unknown to us we would conduct a number of visits to their current setting including liaising with our paediatrician to gain as much prior knowledge as possible.

Our strength as a GLD school is that we have encountered several pupils with varying needs. We have to be flexible, solution orientated, innovative and imaginative in order to meet the changing needs of our children. Our parents report that pupils are happy at school, they are excited by the curricular experiences we offer and that parents feel that they are welcomed in school and that we understand their issues.

### **How will the school prepare and support my child/young person to join the school, transfer to a new school or the next stage of education and life?**

Pupils usually transfer to the local SEN high school – Sir Tom Finney High School. However, this is not always the case and all transition planning involves the same rigour.

Pupils undertake transition visits with staff members of Acorns school and eventually on their own (supported by the staff of the new school)

The one-page profile and conversations about how a pupil learns best take place followed by more formal scrutiny of work and assessments.

Parents are invited to parents' events at the new school and Acorns staff work hard to create a positive tone about leaving one school and going to another. Anxiety is reduced by familiarity and framing the whole experience as a positive rite of passage. Pupil's needs are taken in to account – this process can be slowed or speeded up depending on the individual.

Usually, transition starts at Easter before moving school in September.

### **How will my child/young person be included in activities outside the classroom, including school trips?**

We use our school minibuses to facilitate most of our visits that are linked to aspects of our curriculum. We do not charge for transport and regard this part of the activity as essential.

In some cases, we ask for a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of entry e.g. a zoo visit etc. However, most of them are free.

All activities are inclusive the exception being parental choice and medical needs that do not allow for extended travel times.

Each week there is an after-school club and a week long summer scheme in the summer holidays. Some siblings attend these schemes which charge very small sums in comparison to other establishments. This forms part of our accessibility arrangements.

Details of school trips and visits are on our website, in the form of pupil feedback and are reported on at governors meetings.

A magic breakfast is served daily at no cost to all pupils who wish to participate. This is juice or milk, cereal, toast or a bagel. Fruit is also distributed throughout school for all pupils.

Break times and lunchtimes are organised so that play equipment is available, safety of pupils is paramount and energetic activity is encouraged. This is a highly staffed time reflecting risk assessments and the need for some adult led play. We have a number of outdoor areas that are used in different weather conditions including welly walks which encourages pupils to enjoy the weather, especially as they are dressed in waterproof clothing.

Residential visits are paid for by staff money making events (*We ask parents for voluntary contributions to residential visits and sometimes events throughout school are arranged to raise money for those visits to help with the overall cost*) because we appreciate that not all families can afford the cost of these expensive but valuable activities.

Many children come to school on school transport. This has an effect on how we plan all our extracurricular activities.

### **What support will there be for my child/young person's overall well-being?**

We benefit from a children's nurse on site for 1 day per week.

Our Deputy Head is able to make home visits, help with form filling and speak to other professionals.

Social care meetings are held at school to minimise disruption to education. At these meetings Acorns staff can support families to improve outcomes. These meetings are important, they provide an opportunity for early help planning and sharing of information.

Class teachers plan PSED lessons, often incorporating a pupils IEP target into their teaching so that targets are achieved. Parents note positive changes in behaviour during our review meetings and can discuss wellbeing with teachers at these meetings or by contacting us.

The senior management team have a variety of incentives, stickers, charts, treats and experiences that can be used to promote positive outcomes and to reflect the pride we have in our pupils for achieving even the smallest of milestone.

We have an administration of medicines policy and a personal care policy ratified by our governing body and the NHS.

Our SPE – Specialist practitioners in Education- creates positive handling plans in conjunction with teachers, staff and families. This is then signed by a parent so everyone is aware of the triggers, strategies and rewards in place. We avoid excluding and can utilise our family liaison worker to work at home with pupils on rare occasions.

Our attendance policy is to follow up absence from day one so that parents understand when to keep a child off school and when to send them to school. Holiday and leave of absence requests are considered seriously before acknowledging the request.

We record incidents on CPOMS e.g. bullying and retain the case as open until we have dealt with that instance effectively. We take all incidents seriously and involve all stakeholders in restorative justice.

Pupils have roles and responsibilities that prepare them for the adult world. Some are monitors eg – register, milk, snack, whiteboard, some undertake a mini enterprise and collect orders and money, some answer the phone and take messages. Play buddies exist to promote friendship and play and there are peer to peer networks like reading pairs and Lego pairs.

Each class has a representative on the school council, elections are held and the role is highly prized.

### **How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the provision made for children and young people with special educational needs?**

We use benchmarking data published by the DFE to compare our outcomes.

IEP's (Individual Education Plan) are reviewed annually and quantified in terms of percentage so that the effectiveness of teaching and learning can be judged.

Learning journals are produced at foundation stage reflecting areas of progress.

Teacher assessment is an important part of our process, work is moderated within Acorns, as part of the GLD group of schools and as part of a county wide cohort of schools.

Parents reflect on their child's learning and give us feedback through parental questionnaires and more informal sources.

Reports regarding data are delivered to staff and governors. The curriculum and standards committee scrutinise the data, ask probing questions and are part of the school development planning process along with all other stakeholders.

Views about teaching and learning are sought from pupils wherever possible. These views are added to the interim reporting arrangements (also known as the photo report) around Easter time.

### **How do you involve other bodies, including health and social services, local authority support services and voluntary organisations, in meeting the needs of children/young people with SEND and in supporting their families?**

A link to the FIND newsletter is published and sent out to parents. FIND is a signposting publication produced by the local authority.

We work closely with Physiotherapists and Occupational therapists in order to provide support throughout the school day. Therapists are invited to annual review.

We host clinics with our paediatrician who undertakes a medical review at least once a year. Parents are invited to attend, their child is at school already so this causes minimal disruption to the school day.

SENDIAS is a service provided by the local authority who also provide support to parents and offer a sign posting service.

Social workers understand that Acorns will support meetings and host meetings with parents in order to create cooperative and collaborative working practices.

We fund additional therapy services from our budget based on criteria and need. This flexible approach is the most effective way to provide additional support.

**What arrangements do you make in relation to the treatment of complaints from children/young people and their parents/carers with special educational needs concerning your provision made?**

All concerns raised are dealt with by the head teacher, wherever possible or a member of the senior leadership team. Our approach is to listen to concerns and formulate a mutually agreeable plan to rectify, address and ultimately solve the area causing concern. The consultative process is documented, as is the resulting plan. In this way all stakeholders are aware of the aims and objectives. The plan is reviewed regularly, changes made if necessary and a meeting or telephone call is held at the end of the process to ensure that all stake holders are happy with how we have handled the initial concern.

If a pupil makes a complaint, we take the complaint seriously and undertake the procedure outlined in the previous paragraph.

Sometimes pupils raise concerns at school council meetings, these are dealt with at the meeting and if necessary, involve all staff to make changes and improve outcomes.

The head teacher and the deputy head's door are open to pupils who can create a meeting with an agenda to discuss something of importance.

Safeguarding concerns are dealt with by one of 4 designated safeguarding personnel (the head teacher, deputy head teacher, assistant headteacher and ELSA). We follow our safeguarding policy and details of this policy can be found on our website.

Parents are actively encouraged to express concerns in the initial stages of their worry rather than leaving it to become a huge burden. We are a solution seeking organisation and we are proud of our collaborative approach.

A copy of the complaints policy can be found on our website.

**Where can I find the contact details of support services for the parents of children/young people with SEND?**

We distribute information regarding support services through our newsletters, on social media and at parents events.

Sometimes parents telephone school to ask for additional support and our family liaison worker is happy to help.

A range of forms and information is held at the school office for parents who misplace original copies etc. .

**Where can I find information on where the local authority's local offer is published?**

Lancashire County Councils Local Offer - <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/send>