The Rainbow Unit 🌈

Our Specialist Autism Resource Provision

Welcome to the Rainbow Unit at Shawclough Community Primary School.

The Rainbow Unit is a specialist provision for children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). All children within Rainbow have an EHCP and are placed by the Local Authority.

We provide a safe, happy, nurturing and supportive environment where every child is valued for who they are.

We understand that every child is different and that children with autism learn, communicate and experience the world in their own individual ways. We celebrate these differences and make sure that every child has the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and achieve their full potential.

Our dedicated and caring staff get to know each child, understand their individual needs and build positive relationships based on trust, understanding and respect.

We have high hopes and expectations for all our children. We want them to feel happy, confident and proud of what they can achieve.

Our aim is to help every child become as independent as possible, develop friendships, enjoy learning and prepare for the next steps in their lives.

1. Our approach to learning

We know that children do not all learn in the same way or at the same pace. Some children may need more time to develop early communication, social and play skills, while others may be ready to access more formal learning.

At the Rainbow Unit, learning is carefully planned around each child's individual strengths, interests and needs.

We provide:

- A calm, structured and welcoming environment.
- Consistent routines to help children feel safe and confident.
- Learning activities that are adapted to suit individual abilities.
- Opportunities to develop communication, friendships and social skills.

- Support to develop independence and everyday life skills.
- High-quality teaching and opportunities to achieve academically.
- Time and space to regulate emotions and manage sensory needs.

We believe that autism should never be seen as a barrier to achievement. We celebrate every success, however big or small, and encourage children to be the best they can be.

2. Our classrooms and learning spaces

The Rainbow Unit has three specialist classrooms and a dedicated Sensory Learning Zone. Each space has been carefully organised to provide a calm, structured and supportive environment.

Children are grouped according to their individual learning and developmental needs rather than simply their age.

Sapphire Class

Reception – Year 1

Sapphire provides a nurturing environment where children can feel safe, settled and happy. Learning focuses on play, exploration, sensory experiences and developing early communication and learning skills. Children are introduced to early phonics and maths when they are ready.

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Gold Class

Years 2–3 (guide only)

Gold focuses on developing important foundation skills, including reading, writing and maths, alongside communication, friendships, emotional development and independence. Learning is adapted to each child's needs and abilities.

Ruby Class

Years 4–6 (guide only)

Ruby offers a more structured approach to learning, with opportunities to develop academic knowledge, communication and independence. Children access an adapted curriculum that builds on their individual strengths and prepares them for the next stage of their education.

Our Sensory Learning Zone

For children across the Rainbow Unit

Our Sensory Learning Zone provides opportunities for children to explore, play, relax and develop new skills. It includes soft play, sensory lighting and a safe, quiet space for children who need some time away from the classroom.

Children may move between learning environments depending on their individual needs, progress and readiness. We always aim to provide the right support at the right time.

Helping children feel safe and settled

We understand that busy environments, changes to routines and sensory experiences can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Our staff help children recognise and manage their feelings by providing reassurance, familiar routines and appropriate sensory breaks.

We also have a dedicated quiet space where children can receive additional support when they are finding things difficult. Our priority is always to keep children safe, protect their dignity and help them feel calm and supported.

3. Our curriculum and learning

We want all children in the Rainbow Unit to enjoy learning, make progress and achieve their potential.

Our curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of each child. Some children may be working towards early developmental skills, while others may be accessing more formal lessons and National Curriculum subjects.

Learning may include:

- **English and phonics:** Developing communication, listening, early reading, writing and language skills.
- **Maths:** Exploring numbers, counting, shapes, patterns and practical maths skills.
- **Communication:** Learning to express needs, share ideas and interact with others.
- **Social and emotional development:** Understanding feelings, building relationships and developing confidence.
- **Life skills:** Learning everyday skills such as dressing, eating, personal care and becoming more independent.
- **Sensory learning:** Exploring different textures, sounds, sights and movement.
- **Creative learning:** Enjoying art, music, imaginative play and practical activities.
- **Physical development:** Building coordination, balance, fine motor and gross motor skills.

We use a range of teaching approaches and resources to make learning accessible and enjoyable. These include visual timetables, practical activities, pictures, symbols, hands-on resources and assistive technology.

Children's progress is carefully monitored so that we can celebrate achievements and plan their next steps.

4. Communication and individual support

Communication is at the heart of everything we do.

We recognise that children communicate in many different ways. Some children use spoken language, while others may use gestures, pictures, symbols or communication aids.

Our staff take time to understand each child's individual communication style and help them develop ways to express themselves, make choices and share their thoughts and feelings.

We use a range of approaches and resources, including:

- **Widgit symbols and visual supports** to help children understand information and communicate.
- **Makaton signs** to support communication.
- **Clicker** and other technology to help children develop their communication and learning.
- **Attention Autism** to develop attention, engagement and shared enjoyment.
- **Lego Therapy** to encourage teamwork, turn-taking and social interaction.
- **Art Therapy** to support creativity and emotional expression.
- **Speech and language activities** to develop communication and language skills.
- **Fine and gross motor activities** to develop physical skills and coordination.
- **Motor Skills United** to support movement and physical development.

Every child has their own individual needs and targets, which are informed by their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

We work towards these targets through carefully planned activities and individual support, making sure that each child has opportunities to make meaningful progress.

5. Learning and playing together

Being part of Shawclough Community Primary School is an important part of life in the Rainbow Unit.

We believe that children should have opportunities to learn, play and build friendships with other children across the school wherever possible.

We support children to take part in mainstream lessons, activities and school events when this is right for them. The level of support is carefully considered so that children can enjoy these experiences and feel successful.

We want our children to feel that they are an important part of the whole school community.

Throughout the year, children have opportunities to share experiences with their mainstream peers, including:

- School trips and visits.
- Cinema trips and pantomimes.
- Visits to the seaside.
- Putt-and-play activities.
- Residential visits.
- Special school events and sleepovers.

These experiences help children develop friendships, confidence, communication and independence while making happy memories together.

6. Exploring our local community

Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom!

We provide opportunities for children to explore the world around them and develop skills that they can use in everyday life.

Our community visits and experiences include:

- Exploring local parks and outdoor spaces.
- Visiting farms and learning about animals.
- Visiting local shops and the town centre.
- Learning about road safety.
- Taking part in community events, including the borough-wide Citadel Remembrance Service.
- Working alongside local environmental rangers.

These experiences help children develop confidence, independence and an understanding of the wider world.

7. Working together with families

We know that parents and carers are the experts on their own children. Building positive relationships with families is therefore very important to us.

We value your knowledge, experiences and views and believe that working together helps us provide the best possible support for your child.

We aim to:

- Get to know your child as an individual.
- Listen to your views, questions and concerns.
- Keep you informed about your child's learning and achievements.
- Celebrate progress and successes together.
- Work with you and other professionals to support your child's needs.
- Make sure your child feels happy, safe, valued and included.

We want families to feel welcomed, listened to and involved in their child's journey through the Rainbow Unit.

Every child is unique. Every achievement matters.

At the Rainbow Unit, we believe that every child deserves to feel valued, understood and supported.

We celebrate individuality, recognise strengths and encourage children to take pride in their achievements.

Whether it is learning a new word, making a friend, trying something new, developing independence or achieving an academic goal, every step forward matters.

Quote from parent

‘He is so settled and regulated, and the difference in him is enormous. I’m bringing him into school and collecting this happy little human who is full of joy, and it is such a wonderful thing to see.

He absolutely loves his school. He is proud of his school and, most importantly, he absolutely adores his teachers. He talks about them with such warmth, and I think that says an awful lot about the relationships they have built with him.’