

# Holly Trees at Underley Garden School



## Underley Garden

Holly Trees is a new specialist provision providing education for children of 5 and above who have an autistic spectrum condition or a learning difficulty. We also have capacity to admit children who have additional health needs.

# What we offer



A highly personalised programme developed in response to individual assessment of needs. We believe that every child has the potential to make huge progress if the conditions are right. It is our purpose to provide the optimum conditions, to enable us to meet the specific and changing needs with individualised strategies and unique approaches.

An autism friendly learning environment. All our classes which are based on the ground floor have small numbers, usually 6 or under with one member of staff for every two pupils, to get the very best outcomes for our children. Inside, the school is spacious and quiet. Outside, we have large and very attractive grounds with many opportunities for environmental learning.

A dedicated staff team who are experienced, enthusiastic and innovative, who are focussed on making sure our children do their very best and achieve great progress in their education and personal development.

A multidisciplinary team onsite made up of Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and Learning Disability Nurses. The therapists and health team regularly visit every class to work with individual children and lead group activities. The therapists also advise the education staff on imbedding therapeutic approaches in all aspects of school life.

A curriculum, based on the Independent School Regulations but also informed by National Curriculum, gives us great flexibility to deliver the most appropriate and meaningful learning opportunities which include a great emphasis on social and communication skills.

## A Typical Day

A typical day at Holly Trees might start with a 'Getting Going' session, designed to prepare children to get the most out of their day. English & Maths are delivered in a variety of ways including formal lessons, individual tutoring and are also embedded within many other subjects across the week.

A highlight of every morning is Snack Time which is specifically planned as an opportunity for sharing healthy refreshments and a time to develop communication and social skills such as turn taking. We also feel it's important for children to be comfortable, confident and intrigued with their

immediate and wider surroundings. With this in mind we provide specific sessions on 'Understanding the world around us' and 'International studies' – fun filled sessions which really broaden young people's understanding. We also use a thematic approach which has included topics such as 'It's all Greek to me', 'May the force be with you', 'Green Fingers', 'Come and join the celebrations' This enables us to entwine aspects of the broader curriculum in a very enjoyable and meaningful way. There is a lively programme of Sporting and Enrichment activities spread throughout the week and year including theme days, charity events and residential experiences.

*"We strive to enable children to meet their potential and build a positive attitude to school and learning. Due to very high level of resources we are able to provide a unique environment that enables every young person to quickly experience success and make rapid progress."*

**April Boyd Holly Trees Class Teacher**



## Q&A with April Boyd, Teacher in Charge of Primary Department

### **Q: WHAT SORT OF PROGRESS DO YOU EXPECT MY DAUGHTER TO MAKE?**

"Each child's progress is different, and happens at a different pace for each pupil.

The strategies that we put in to a child's learning can sometimes have a very quick impact. As soon as we get them established on our programmes, you can see the rapid progress they make.

More importantly the impact our success has for their families is wonderful: we're making home life better too.

For some young people, it's possible to move on to a mainstream secondary setting. For other pupils, they will be best served by continuing their education with us.

There are children who will go on to make a significant degree of progress. The potential is enormous. For other children, success will be to have a purposeful and meaningful and adult life that is as independent as it can possibly be."

### **Q: HOW MUCH CONTACT WILL YOU HAVE WITH ME AS A PARENT?**

"We work very closely with all our parents, particularly those with pupils of a primary age, because what happens at school impacts on the whole family at home, in terms of communication, sensory needs, behaviour, and coping strategies.

Daily diaries go home with each pupil so that parents know what sort of a day they have had. We are always honest, and include all the positives, as well as any issues there might have been.

We have a parents' evening each term, as well as other social events so that parents can meet each other with the pupils. We always welcome siblings so that they have a chance to see where their brother or sister is going to school.

School reports are compiled each term to ensure parents are aware of the progress and achievements.

For many parents, mainstream school parents' evenings can be a bit intimidating, particularly if they are the only one's with a child with special needs, whereas here everyone can share tips and experiences and it works very well for everyone.

Often, children's family's have reached a point of despair before they come to Underley; perhaps their child couldn't cope in a mainstream environment. For children with more severe learning difficulties, or profound autism, or a complexity of needs, we work with an individualised curriculum to ensure they make progress."

*"There has been a massive improvement in his behaviour, he now wants to come to school"*

## Parent

### **Q: HOW WILL YOU COPE WITH OUR SON'S ANXIETIES, WHICH OFTEN PRODUCE NEGATIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR?**

"Very often we don't see the child's behaviour that has been seen in other schools because the school environment here works for them straightaway.

We have a routine which is consistent and we have firm boundaries.

Our staff are highly trained and extremely experienced: we can unpick a child's needs and ensure we match the best strategies that will work for each one of them. It means that a child's progress can be rapid.

We have days where each one of our children will have problems, or become agitated, but here our teams of staff are able to help them to cope with it. It's never a problem; it's why we're here: to provide specialist help for our pupils."

### **Q: WOULD IT BE BEST FOR MY CHILD TO GO TO A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL FIRST TO SEE IF THEY CAN COPE?**

"We have many children who come to Underley from mainstream schools, having had a very negative experience. We want our children to enjoy coming to school, so that they're happy here.

It's far better for the child to avoid the negative school experience and to find the right school environment. It needs to be somewhere where they won't feel different to other pupils, where they can be taught in a classroom with other children, instead of out in a corridor on their own.

Here, all our children are gaining knowledge, experiences and progressing. An environment like Holly Trees is building their self esteem and their confidence is flourishing: some of the biggest things I witness. Does it matter if it's not in a mainstream school? It certainly doesn't matter to the children because they love it here.

We want our pupils to have friends and to build proper relationships with their classmates and with their teachers.

You don't get your childhood years back - and just because someone has autism or ADHD or other more complex needs, why shouldn't they have the same enjoyable, positive experience as other children who don't have their difficulties?

One of our tasks is to help these children have more confidence in themselves: it helps them socialise in school, but also helps their social skills outside school too.

If we are able to intervene at a younger age, before too many negative attitudes and behaviours have been learned, we can see excellent results."

### **Q: I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT MY CHILD TO GO TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL WHILST THEY'RE SO YOUNG. WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH?**

"If a child with complex needs misses out on the right specialist education during these formative years it can have a massive significance on their future - in terms of secondary education as well as their adult lives.

It is so important to invest in children with specialist needs as early as possible. Without the right environment for learning, school can become such a negative experience for children with specialist needs. Their behaviour can worsen, they become withdrawn and too often, they're identified as 'different' by their peer groups. It's more difficult to work with a teenager who has experienced so many problems.

With the success we have with our children in our primary provision, it will be possible for some of them to go to a mainstream secondary school. It will have to be the right setting, but some of them will be able to take GCSEs and succeed academically too.

Early intervention is crucial for our pupils. It gives them the best chance of success in life."



*"His teacher really knows and understands him, she gets him"*  
**Parent**



*"Our staff are highly trained and extremely experienced: we can unpick a child's needs and ensure we match the best strategies that will work for each one of them. It means that a child's progress can be rapid."*

*"To be able to come home after school and talk about his friend's has really changed his world."*

**Parent**



To find out more  
about Holly Trees,  
please contact us

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