

Niall's Story



Underley Garden

Name:	Niall
Date of Birth:	October 2002
School start date:	April 2013
Local Authority:	Cumbria
SEA:	ASD with associated learning difficulties
Previous Provision:	Mainstream Primary School
Type of Provision:	Day pupil

Parents should feel heartened that when a young person comes here and succeeds, it's often because parents have done a lot of the initial work prior to Underley.

What we're aiming for is that every individual who comes to UG can fulfil their potential and be as independent as possible. That's a good outcome for them in terms of their life fulfilment and it's a good outcome for society. Ideally, I'd like each one of our students to be a contributor to society and not just a recipient of what society does for them.

Independence and a full adult life would be the outcome we strive for.

"He's come on in leaps and bounds at Underley: it's the best thing ever. I'm really proud of him."

Niall's Mum

When Niall moved to Underley Garden School at the age of ten, it only took a matter of weeks for his parents to realise they had made the right choice.

His father, Gary, says, "We had reached a stage where Niall needed to be in a special school and we had the choice of Underley Garden and about four others."

His parents were impressed by the school's teaching emphasis towards life skills as well as academic achievements and Mum Carol was keen that as a day pupil, family life could continue as it had before.

"He leaves home by taxi at half past eight each morning and is home at about ten to four, so it's a similar school day for Niall which is important."

Like all parents and carers, the biggest worry for Niall's Mum and Dad was how he would cope with the upheaval to a new school, a new environment and how he would fit in to his class here.

"I also worried about how he would cope with the curriculum here and how he would cope with all the choices they have here. I was worried about subjects like gardening and the design and technology where they make benches.

He fitted in fabulously right from the start and I had nothing to worry about," Carol said laughing.

"He's a lot more confident here and that happened in a matter of three or four months," said Gary.

"Underley Garden has surpassed our expectations."

Mum Carol said: "He's like a different child since he has been here. It all happened in a very short space of time. His attendance record has improved because Niall wants to go to school now.

He quickly settled down into a good routine and he's not struggling any more. He's happy and his self esteem has built up which is the best thing ever. It's all we could ask for."

"The reports we receive from school are above and beyond anything we could have hoped for.

In reading and writing classes, which he would never do at his previous school, he's quite happy to conform now. When you know the struggle we have been through, he is reading new words every week and learning because he is so much more confident at Underley Garden.

It's lovely to know he has friends and to see him playing with other pupils. He's so happy and as parents, that is all you ever want for your children.

He's more settled at home. Niall isn't known for being the best sleeper but now he's settled at night and in the morning he wants to go to school and he wants to join in more things.

He used to hurt himself but he is so much happier now, he doesn't do that any more. That's really big progress because before Underley Garden, that was happening on a daily basis.

He's just come on in leaps and bounds: it's the best thing ever. I'm really proud of him."



Niall came to UGS from year 5 at a mainstream primary school where he was struggling and showing aggression in the classroom. One of his statement objectives was about his behaviour, and as soon as he started with us at Underley, there were no issues with his behaviour at all. I think the setting and the environment here helped him.

April Boyd, Class Teacher

We are able to have much smaller class sizes and no one here is going to intimidate him. When you're in a mainstream class with about thirty other pupils and they're all ready to do their Year 6 SATS, it can be very intimidating for an autistic child, and can prompt displays of very negative behaviours.

When Niall arrived in our class, where the pupils are all still learning to read, we are able to learn together. Automatically, Niall's anxiety levels were reduced and he feels a sense of safety and belonging here.

We have very structured classes and very set routines. We can make individual initiatives for

each pupil: when Niall's parents identified to us that he has difficult times through the winter months of October to January, we can plan for that and pre-empt it successfully.

Already, Niall has formed his own social group of friends and they all like some of the same things, such as football. When he started here, he couldn't cope with groups of people and he didn't like any games with rules.

We've really got to know and understand Niall, so that he can access and enjoy his education.



School Progress

Accessing the Curriculum

2011
Niall had a very low attendance record at his previous school. He disliked Literacy and had made little progress. Niall has sensory issues with general class noise and suffered an inability to concentrate. Niall's willingness to participate and engage in 6 lessons a day happened quickly after starting at UG and has continued. His change in attitude towards school impacted on life in class and at home.

Social Skills

Initially, Niall was reluctant to socialise and was unable to attend social gatherings, including assembly and lunch time at school. He sometimes needed reminding to think about other peoples' feelings before making comments. Niall would sometimes tell people that he didn't want them to play. With support strategies including social stories, role play and discussion Niall has been able to accept anyone in to a game. Niall struggled with decision making and for asking for what he wanted.
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Health

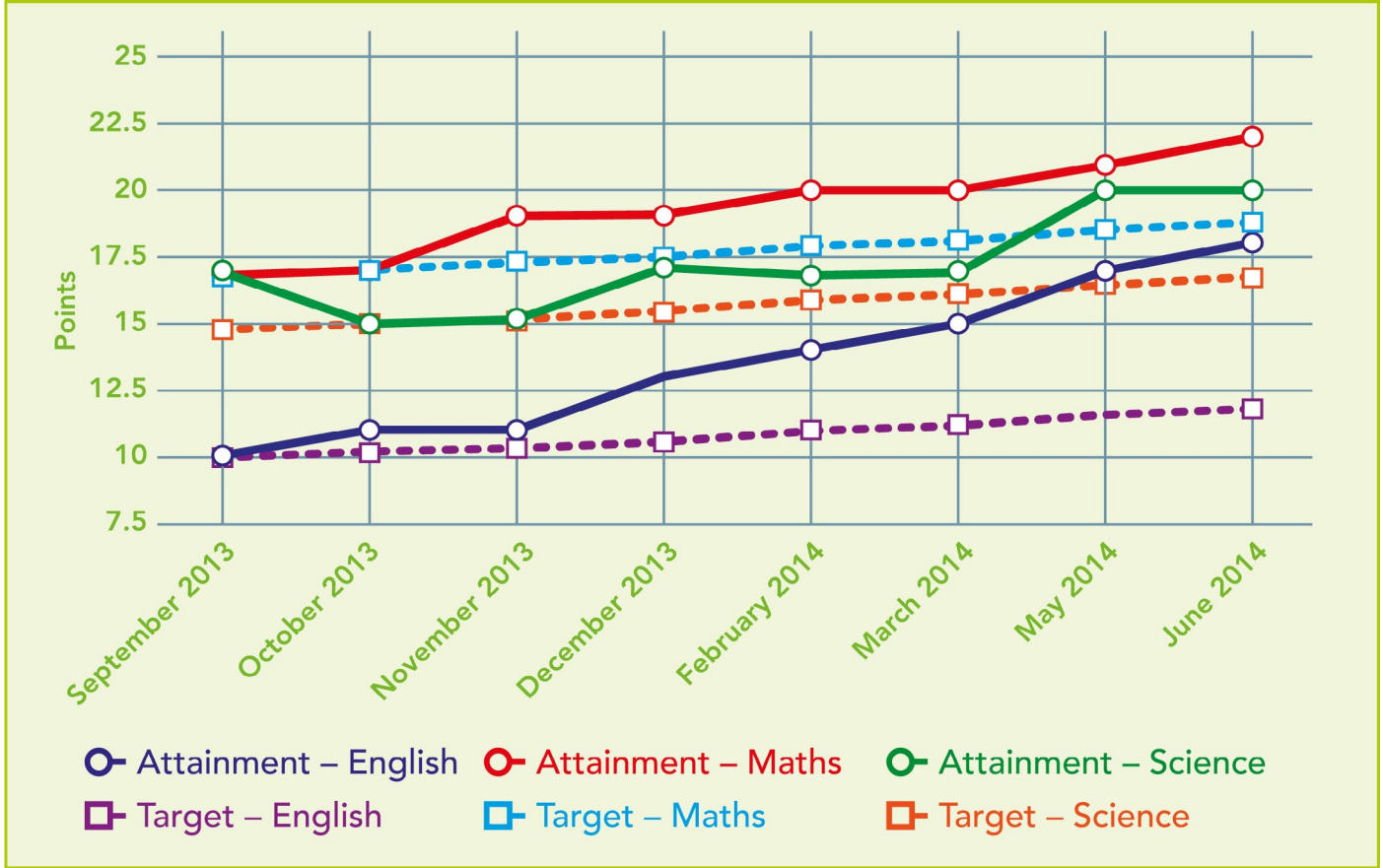
Niall found it very difficult to deal with illness and injury and would become very agitated if he was ill or hurt himself. Prior to Underley Garden, Niall would become very upset which would lead to him self-harming. His anxiety led to non attendance.
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2014
Very quickly we witnessed a drastic change in Niall's attitude towards school. He has made outstanding progress accessing the curriculum. He is working well in academic and practical areas. He attends all lessons with enthusiasm and will try his best to complete his work to a high standard. Niall is showing much more tolerance of the general class noise, and although he prefers to work independently he will accept staff support when he needs it. He is overcoming his fear of maths with help and support. Niall enjoys class routine but also accepts change when it occurs. Key staff have worked with him to develop strategies when he is beginning to feel anxious or upset. Early identification and intervention has been a massive benefit to keeping him focused.

With consistent support and encouragement Niall continues to make good progress in social interaction and social understanding skills. He is happy and growing in confidence in school. The work has helped in school and on trips in the community where Niall uses good manners, and can shop and pay for items confidently. He has developed excellent friendships with other pupils in his class group which has boosted his self-esteem. Niall now take turns and shares with others. He has learnt to make appropriate requests to other people rather than need other people to ask for him. Niall has made a number of friends at Underley Garden not only peers in his class, but also some of the older students He enjoys playing football & basketball with friends at lunch time.
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Niall attendance has improved greatly. He enjoys school and the number of friends he has made at Underley Garden. He has learned to discuss issues with staff without getting upset and agitated. Niall is able to tell staff when he is ill or hurt and now allows them to help him in a calm manner.

Core Subject Progress Graph



Niall has exceeded all our initial expectations and I think he will continue to do so here.

Niall was able to find a new interest here as soon as he arrived at Underley Garden. For Niall, the subject he became passionate about was in our horticulture department and he took to gardening straightaway. Already, he has ambition and tells us that he wants to be a gardener when he leaves school. For a young person of Niall's age, to have formulated an ambition, is amazing. It helps to guide him and show him a purpose to his education as well as offer him a real interest.

He has grown in confidence in so many ways. I was delighted the other day to see him walk into assembly - a huge room full of people - when his taxi was, unavoidably, a few minutes late arriving. He came in, sat down, and it didn't bother him at all. That is amazing for a pupil of Niall's age. It's been wonderful for us to see his confidence and trust developing. When problems arise, as inevitably they do, in the past they have been massive issues for him, whereas now he knows that we will help him to sort out the problems. He has learnt to trust us to do that.

When he arrived here, we were advised about his various phobias, but very gradually he has learnt that he can trust us and gradually he has been able to develop his skills to learn. Previously, that was impossible for him. I really do think Niall has a great future ahead of him now, and we'll support and encourage him to achieve that. Niall has the potential to secure himself a job and be self sufficient, and hopefully, have a happy and satisfying life. [Head of Education](#)