



**Castle Garden**  
School

**Prospectus**



## Castle Garden School is a brand-new independent specialist school for children on the autism spectrum between five and eleven years of age.

Castle Garden School strives to provide effective, specialist education and support to autistic children and their families, which will allow pupils to achieve their full potential in education and life. Located in the town centre of Guildford, the school provides primary education and offers a unique mix of education and support to pupils within a wide spectrum of needs and abilities. Personalised teaching and learning in an autism specific environment allows pupils' individual needs to be addressed completely and their capabilities fully realised.

Castle Garden School is part of Outcomes First Group. The group is a leading national provider of outcomes-led learning, life skills and therapeutic care for children and adults with autism, complex needs and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

## Welcome

### A message from our Headteacher, Rob Walton

Castle Garden School promises to be a truly special provision and we are focused on creating a supportive, happy, stimulating, and healthy environment for autistic children. It is an exciting and wonderful opportunity for myself and for staff to be involved in establishing a new school that will quickly grow into a community.

My experience both as a teacher and Headteacher in a variety of special schools, along with additional medical and mental health roles, has forged my commitment to ensuring a working partnership between the children, their families, clinicians, support staff, teachers and all external agencies. I know effective partnerships come from trust that is built through good communication and transparency.

We will always prioritise safeguarding and put the child at the centre of everything we do. It will be integral to our approach that we ask and accept the pupils' preferences whilst still developing

their ability to navigate the world around them. The school will be aspirational in our expectations with a curriculum that is appropriate for their ability and delivered using a range of strategies underpinned by an understanding of autism and any individual needs. We have a curriculum that will be enjoyable, as well as broad and balanced, that will allow pupils to flourish.

The pupils will be supported by staff who are well-trained, with a growth mindset, who strive to constantly improve their practice in a school that can evolve to consistently meet the needs of the pupils.

I hope that this prospectus gives you an understanding of our values and aims as a school and encourages you to find out more about us.

# Castle Garden School Vision





## Introduction

Castle Garden School offers a personalised curriculum so that all pupils will benefit from individualised learning underpinned by the National Curriculum. Teachers' planning will ensure that pupils take part in activities which are meaningful and interesting for them and through which they will address relevant and challenging learning outcomes. This will enable all pupils to maximise their progress. The purpose of this prospectus is to provide a comprehensive overview to share with staff, governors, other professionals, families and other interested stakeholders.

At Castle Garden School the curriculum underpins the ethos of the school and strives to provide the context within which autistic pupils are given the opportunity to achieve high standards.

In line with the National Curriculum aims, we would like all pupils who attend Castle Garden School to become:

- Successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- Confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society

## Aims

Pupils will receive and develop:

- A firm grasp of basic skills through the teaching of individualised curricula including the National Curriculum
- The stimulus of a broad and balanced curriculum that introduces new ideas and experience to all
- Respect and consideration for theirs and others individuality, particular backgrounds, cultures and religions as reflected in the inclusive ethos and multicultural nature of the school and in preparation for life in a diverse society
- A curriculum that promotes and supports development and understanding of fundamental British Values
- The confidence that comes when achievement is recognised
- The benefits of learning and growing in a calm, friendly, stable and structured environment
- An education which prepares them for successful, inclusive, enjoyable, rich and active lives
- An education which gives them high expectations for their future
- A curriculum that builds on a variety of approaches to learning and teaching
- An education that allows development and expression through creative opportunities
- An education that uses real experiences as a foundation for learning
- A curriculum that supports the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual development of the child

## Objectives

Each pupil will be encouraged to:

- Listen attentively
- Develop an enquiring mind with the confidence to explore through trial and error
- Learn to communicate effectively in verbal and written form
- Learn to acquire information from various sources and to record findings in various ways including the use of digital technology
- Understand mathematical ideas and apply numerical skills
- Understand basic scientific ideas and concepts
- Gain a basic understanding of historical and geographical skills and knowledge
- Acquire control of tools, computers and digital technology
- Appreciate the joys and benefits of physical education and experience a range of sporting activities
- Use music, drama and art/craft forms as a means of creative expression
- Learn how to spend their leisure time imaginatively, independently and cooperatively in formal and non-structured environments
- Learn self-help skills and be aware of the rewards and dangers of society in preparation for adult life

## Teaching & Learning

All teachers at Castle Garden School will ensure our pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding as they progress through a curriculum which is designed to meet their special educational needs. This practice is multisensory, language-centred and connective. Learning is the process through which pupils can develop their knowledge, skills and understanding to the point where they have retained and generalised what has been taught. Teaching and learning will be carried out in a context which is relevant and meaningful to all pupils on the autism spectrum to ensure effective learning and appropriate accreditation. All staff will work in such a way that the learning environment is one which is calm and consistent, with clear expectation, both as a group and as individuals. This will maximise information processing throughout each day allowing the pupils to realise their full potential. The curriculum design across all age ranges connects pupils with the acquisition of knowledge, skill and understanding related to minimising the effects of a diagnosis of autism and its associated learning difficulties. This design makes meaningful connections for pupils which maximises their potential for success and independence.





## Education

The National Curriculum is tailored to the individual needs of the pupil through the use of the Rising Stars Progression Framework & The Access to Education Framework. The Pupil and School Support SEN Toolkits are designed to be used in primary settings with pupils in Year One or above who are working significantly below the expected level for their age, and are not making progress towards closing the gap.

Curriculum delivery is supported through the Total Communication approach for pupils who require Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Our topic curriculum is implemented through 'The creative Learning Journey' which is a skills based curriculum focusing on personalised learning through topic. Our focused teaching procedures will ensure that each child progresses at their own individual pace and works towards achieving their potential.

## The Learning environment

Our strong emphasis on visual support and displays creates a purposeful learning environment and computer programmes such as Widget and Boardmaker support this. Every class has a visual timetable and the interactive learning board outlines the structure of each lesson, the key language and the behaviour that is expected. Pupils will have access to ipads to support learning. Structured approaches are also used which will include: Picture Exchange Communication System, Proloquo2go and Makaton.

## The Early Years Foundation Stage

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the EYFS programme. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development. Children are also supported in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

## The Semi Formal Curriculum at Key Stage 1 & 2

The semi-formal curriculum at Castle Garden School is for children and young people with severe learning difficulties. Our rationale is based on the extensive research of respected educationalists in the world of SEN including Peter Imray, Penny Lacey and Barry Carpenter, the SEND code of practice, the national curriculum and the recommendations of the Rochford review (October 2016). The term 'Semi-Formal Curriculum' was first coined by Whitefield Academy Trust (2011), our lead teaching school for Initial Teacher Training. The semi-formal curriculum recognises that many of the young people have a range of complex learning difficulties; the curriculum is designed to meet learning needs by a personalised learning approach based on:

- becoming literate communicators
- becoming mathematical thinkers
- the acquisition of early learning skills which encompasses
- the development of thinking skills
- play (emotional, cognition and social dimensions)
- creative learning
- movement

Our Semi-Formal curriculum has its own curriculum areas, which are different to, but encompass the subjects on the UK National Curriculum: My Communication, My Thinking, Myself and My Body, The World About Me, Me and My Community, My Creativity, My Play & Leisure Skills, My Personal Development, My Forest Schools and My ICT. There are overlaps between our semi-formal curriculum areas and subjects on the UK National Curriculum. However, our semi-formal curriculum areas are designed to offer something totally distinct, to directly address SLD learning need, rather than an adaptation of the national curriculum in any form.

## The Formal Curriculum at Key Stage 2

Our topic curriculum at key Stage 2 is implemented over a two-year cycle to avoid repetition and ensure appropriate coverage. Our topics are needs centred and individual skills are developed through the Creative Learning Journey. Each half termly topic has a specific subject focus which are PSHE, Geography, History, Science, Literacy and Maths. Every topic commences with a 'What do we know?' week to ascertain the children's prior understanding or misunderstanding of a particular topic which culminates in a 'Wow Starter' day to launch the Cycle.

## Therapies

### Speech and Language Therapy

The aims of Castle Garden School Speech and Language Therapy team is to work jointly within the clinical team and with the wider school community to ensure that equality of communication and opportunity is provided for all. Where appropriate pupils will have access to AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) resources and AAC teaching approaches. The school aims to provide a 'total communication' environment where all modes of communication are equally valued and pupils are given opportunities to make choices, initiate and maintain conversation, make and maintain friendships and express their own ideas and opinions. The Speech and Language Therapy Department provides a specialised pupil centred speech and language therapy service to meet the individual needs of all pupils at Castle Garden School which is delivered as an integral part of their education.

The Speech and Language service at Castle Garden School is a highly collaborative integrated model which is focused on enabling pupils to access the class based curriculum and to understand and communicate effectively in all school settings. All classes have a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) attached to a class group of between 4-10 pupils and work intensively and collaboratively with the other members of the staff team, including other members of the clinical team. The SLT team will advise on curriculum delivery and support teaching staff with differentiation of work to support receptive and expressive language ability.

Speech and language therapy time is allocated to each class. Therapy approaches and delivery are determined by the pupil's Speech and Language Therapist. This collaborative approach to working ensures that pupils benefit from a high level of input through SLT advised groups, integrated classroom strategies, a whole school approach to maximising communication opportunities and therapist led class sessions.

Castle Garden School is an environment where communication strategies are embedded throughout the school day and each pupil's communication needs are recognised and strategies then practised in each lesson and across different environments. This approach means that each pupil has the opportunity to develop and practise skills in a naturalistic environment leading to generalisation of skills.



### Occupational Therapy

Our in-house Occupational Therapy service aims to enable all pupils to "participate in the activities of everyday life".

We will ensure that the requirements of all our pupils' Education and Health & Care Plans (EHCP) are met and the Occupational Therapy offered at Castle Garden School will exceed this for the vast majority.

Every member of the school community will play a key part in the delivery of this service. This reflects our belief that engagement in meaningful activities throughout the day is what allows our pupils to develop their independence, sense of identity and well-being. We will work as part of the whole team around each child, to optimise the Person-Environment-Occupation fit.

We are part of the wider therapy team, working closely with Speech and Language Therapy, Drama Therapy, Psychology and Counselling.

### Drama and Movement Therapy

Pupils will have the opportunity to work with dramatic representation of events and worries that in real life might be too difficult or indeed frightening. In the context of a drama therapy session pupils are offered permission to explore different aspects of their personality and play with alternative ways of 'being'. This gives them a safe context whilst increasing their confidence to manage behaviours that may overwhelm them in the classroom.

Pupils will be referred for Expressive Arts Therapy when a need for this type of therapeutic support has been identified by teaching staff and discussed and agreed with parents.

### Music Therapy

Music has always been a powerful tool for expression and has the capacity to touch our emotions deeply. Music Therapy is based on the understanding that the ability to respond and experience music is an innate natural quality in human beings. Music Therapy's main goal is to improve the quality of life for people of all ages who have physical, psychological, learning or behavioural difficulties. The aims and objectives are determined by the specific needs of the individual in the areas of communication, social interactions and emotional development.

Pupils will be referred for Music Therapy when a need for this type of therapeutic support has been identified by teaching staff and discussed and agreed with parents.





## Prospective Parents

### Criteria for Admission to Castle Garden School

For Consideration for Admission to School:

- The child's needs should arise out of an autistic spectrum condition
- The child will have an Education and Health Care Plan issued by their Local Authority
- The Local Authority will accept financial responsibility for the pupil's education at Castle Garden School
- The child will have the commitment and support of their parents/carers to the educational approach used at Castle Garden School
- The school is suitable for the child's age, ability and aptitude
- The child's attendance at school would be compatible with the provision of efficient education for the pupils with whom the child would be educated
- The attendance of the child at the school would be compatible with the efficient use of school resources
- Admissions are made on the basis of availability of placements, taking into account the above factors, plus a child's level of functioning, learning difficulties and age

### Procedures for Admission of Pupils

Parents may visit the school on designated open mornings.

The most effective route for admission to the school is when parents and the Local Authority agree that Castle Garden School may be an appropriate placement for a child and a joint application is made for assessment.

This involves the Local Authority contacting the school to request an assessment to determine whether the school would be an appropriate placement for the child.

The child and parents would then attend an Initial Contact appointment at the school.

The school will then decide whether to proceed with a more detailed assessment of the child's needs and whether the school can meet them effectively.

The Local Authority and parents are notified of the outcome of assessment.

When the school decides that it could meet the child's Special Educational Needs and there is a place available, the Local Authority will be asked to confirm that it accepts financial responsibility for the placement for the admission process to continue.

Following confirmation that the Local Authority will accept financial responsibility for the placement, a Transition Plan is developed by Castle Garden School in consultation with the child's parents, current school staff and other relevant professionals. Transition Plans are tailored to the individual needs of the pupil and include social stories to prepare the child for new routines and staff.

There will be a review meeting with the child's parents within six weeks of the child's admission to discuss the placement and to develop Individualised Education Plan (IEP) targets in collaboration with parents.





## Contact Us

### Castle Garden School

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To make a referral or for more information please contact:

[schooladmissions@ofgl.co.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@ofgl.co.uk)



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\*images used from Hillingdon Manor School

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