



Longdon Park
School



WELCOME TO LONGDON PARK

Thank you so much for your interest in our school. I'm Nyree, the Head of School here, and I lead a fabulous team of teachers, therapists and assistants who have specific expertise and experience of working with children who have autism.

Our aim is very simple: we want to help your child reach his or her full potential.

As specialists in our field, we recognise that children with autism need to be taught in a different way; a way that is individual and relevant to them. We love the fact that every child at our school is unique and with very small classes we're able to give children the personalised level of support they need.

We also recognise that as parents and carers, your journey through the education system so far may have been both painful and difficult. We want you to know that we are here to support you and involve you in your child's education too, so together we can help your child to achieve their full potential.

If you'd like to come and visit us and see what goes on at Longdon Park on a day-to-day basis, then we'd be delighted to welcome you.

Nyree Parker
Head of School, Longdon Park

OUR FACILITIES

A BEAUTIFUL AND SAFE LOCATION

The first thing that strikes many people about Longdon Park is just how beautiful it is here.

Set within acres of lush gardens and surrounded by fields, the school has the dual advantage of being in a peaceful, rural location and having great transport links to urban centres throughout Derbyshire.

It's a safe space where our children can explore, play, enjoy sports and take part in a wide variety of outdoor learning opportunities – which are an important element of the curriculum here at Longdon Park. We also love to take our children off site to experience a wide range of activities and get involved in community life.

PURPOSE BUILT CLASSROOMS

The very first step to engage children in learning is simply creating a space in which they feel happy and safe. Our spacious, uncluttered classrooms have been designed with the very specific needs of our children in mind. Many rooms have "chill out" zones, where children can go when they need a break. We use individual desks that can be moved together for group work or separated to help children focus and even the temperature and light levels can be altered if children have particular sensitivities.

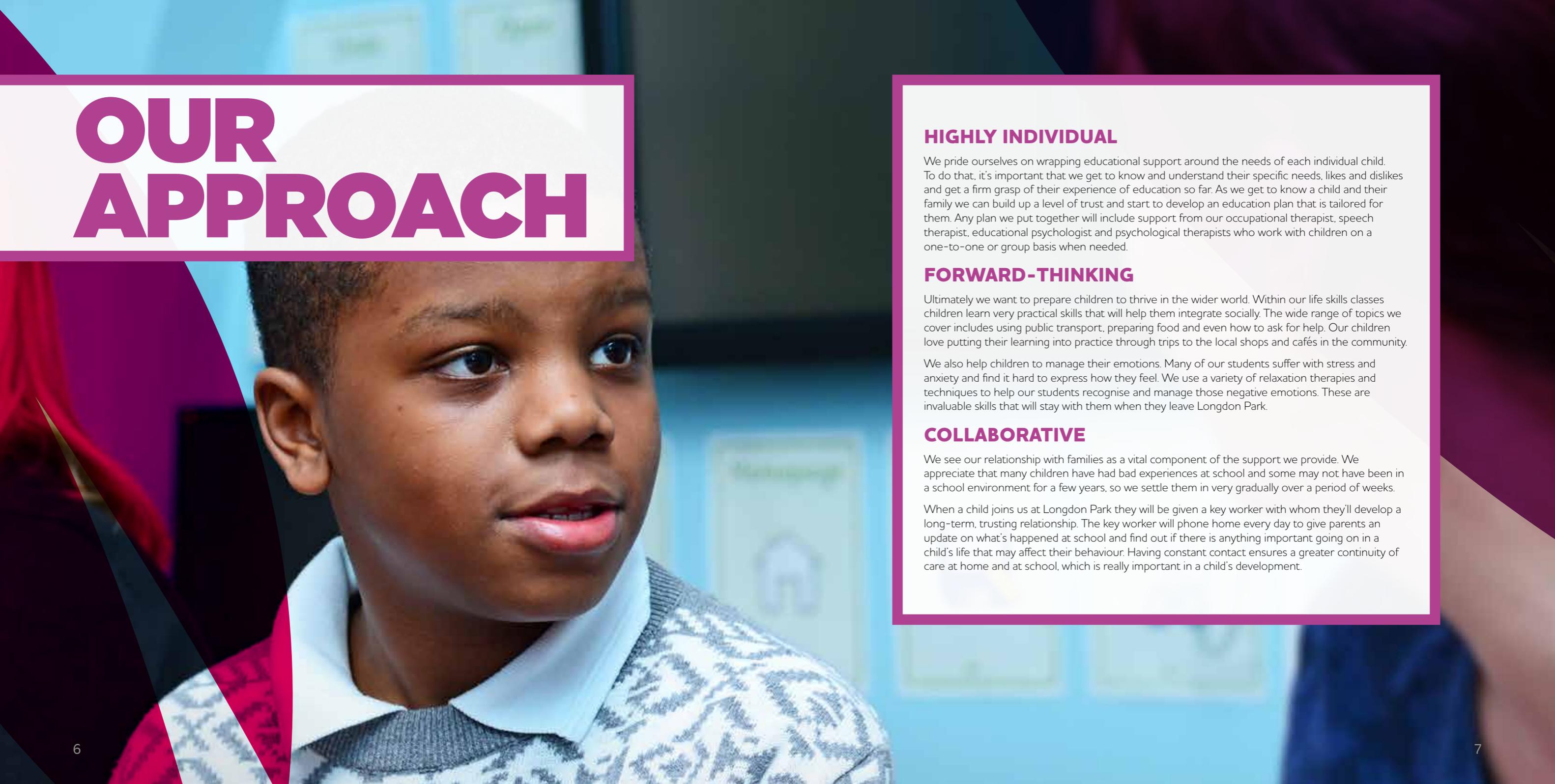
We are also really proud of our purpose built science, home technology, art, computer and music classrooms. These subjects are typically harder for children with autism to access so we've created open, accessible work areas where children can safely roll their sleeves up and get practically involved. It's wonderful to see children develop interests and curiosity as they are given new opportunities.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

We are very much a family here at Longdon Park, supporting and encouraging each other every step of our journey. At lunchtime, you'll find teachers, therapists and pupils sitting alongside one another in the dinner hall. It's always filled with laughter and demonstrates the great relationship that our staff and pupils have.

That community extends to include parents and carers too. The link between home life and school is vital, so we're in contact with families on a daily basis. There are plenty of opportunities for parents to join us for open days, sports days and whole school celebrations. By working together, we can ensure continuity of care for children and provide the individualised support that we know makes such a difference.

OUR APPROACH

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a white collared shirt and a grey and white patterned sweater, is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred classroom setting with posters on the wall.

HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL

We pride ourselves on wrapping educational support around the needs of each individual child. To do that, it's important that we get to know and understand their specific needs, likes and dislikes and get a firm grasp of their experience of education so far. As we get to know a child and their family we can build up a level of trust and start to develop an education plan that is tailored for them. Any plan we put together will include support from our occupational therapist, speech therapist, educational psychologist and psychological therapists who work with children on a one-to-one or group basis when needed.

FORWARD-THINKING

Ultimately we want to prepare children to thrive in the wider world. Within our life skills classes children learn very practical skills that will help them integrate socially. The wide range of topics we cover includes using public transport, preparing food and even how to ask for help. Our children love putting their learning into practice through trips to the local shops and cafés in the community.

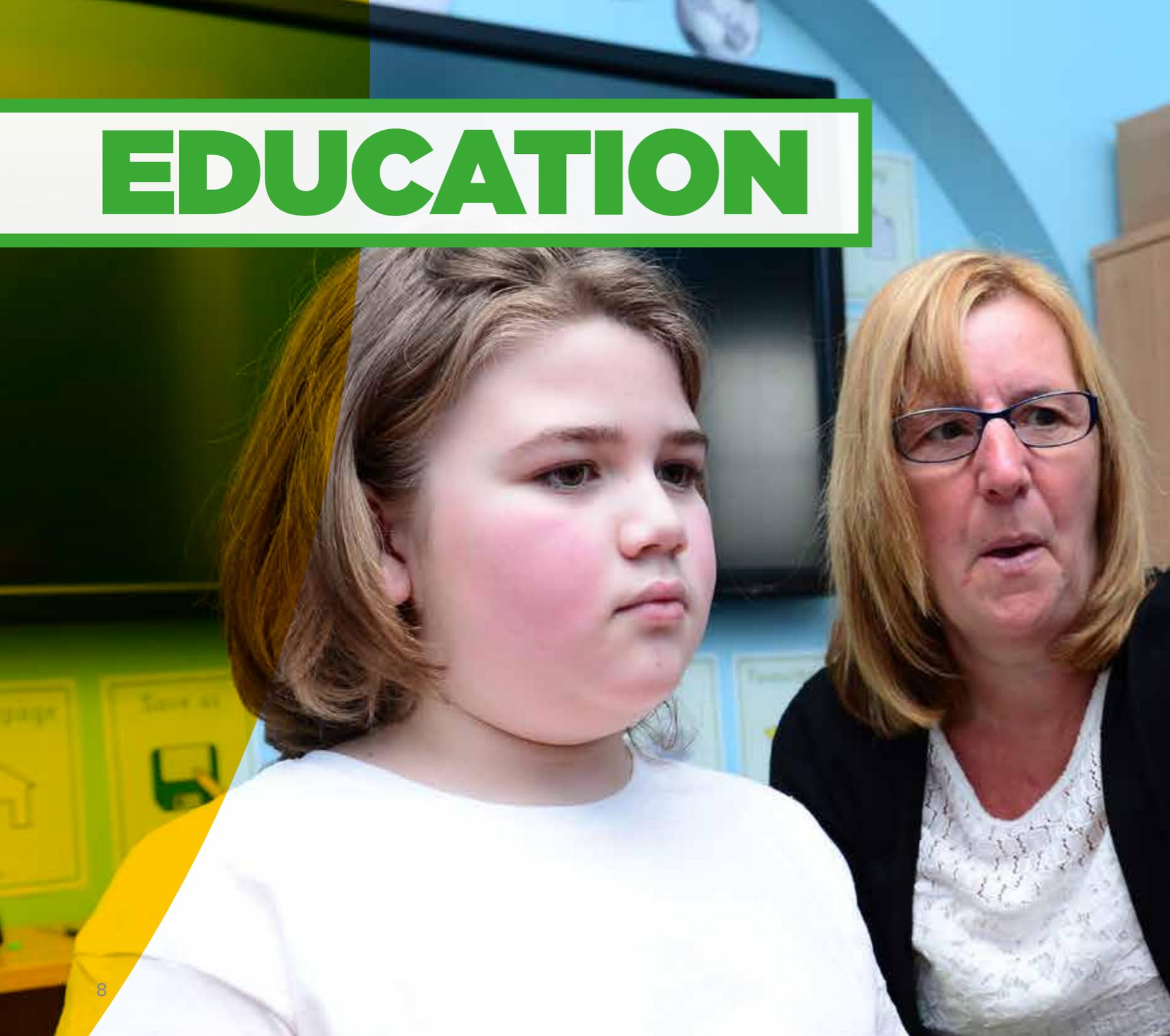
We also help children to manage their emotions. Many of our students suffer with stress and anxiety and find it hard to express how they feel. We use a variety of relaxation therapies and techniques to help our students recognise and manage those negative emotions. These are invaluable skills that will stay with them when they leave Longdon Park.

COLLABORATIVE

We see our relationship with families as a vital component of the support we provide. We appreciate that many children have had bad experiences at school and some may not have been in a school environment for a few years, so we settle them in very gradually over a period of weeks.

When a child joins us at Longdon Park they will be given a key worker with whom they'll develop a long-term, trusting relationship. The key worker will phone home every day to give parents an update on what's happened at school and find out if there is anything important going on in a child's life that may affect their behaviour. Having constant contact ensures a greater continuity of care at home and at school, which is really important in a child's development.

EDUCATION



CLASS SIZES

Each class is home to a maximum of seven children supported by a teacher and teaching assistant, so children get very individual care. We encourage individual learning, group work and plenty of outdoor education to help children gain a whole variety of skills as they progress academically. Some of our students really struggle to focus within a classroom and we have a number of individual learning areas where these children can get focused one-to-one support.

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

For Key Stage 2, we set very individual educational plans for each child, using the National Curriculum for maths, science, design and technology, art, computing and modern languages. Every child's plan will be completely unique and we'll set targets and review progress on a half-termly basis. Alongside the National Curriculum subjects, we'll also schedule periods of sensory play, life skills, relaxation and plenty of outdoor learning.

SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

As children move up the school, they'll continue to work through the core curriculum whilst pursuing their individual talents and interests. We also introduce enterprise studies at this level, to give our students a broad base of options and opportunities. Alongside their academic studies, our students will still take part in PE, life skills, outdoor learning, relaxation and personal, social and health education (PSHE). We also help all our students to take responsibility for their own work, so they develop good learning habits for the future.

QUALIFICATION OPTIONS

During Year 9, as part of their PSHE classes, children will be encouraged to start thinking about what they'd like to do in the future. We always start by asking children what their ultimate dream is and then working back to see what qualifications or experience they need to achieve it. We want our children to dream big and offer a wide range of GCSE and BTEC qualifications. Children are supported through their exams by teachers in school and in some cases support from an online tutor.

FURTHER EDUCATION

At Longdon Park we will do whatever we can to help our children succeed. Some children stay with us to complete their GCSEs and potentially A levels in order to prepare for university and others who move to study for other qualifications at further education colleges in the area. Whichever route our children choose, we ensure they are prepared emotionally, socially and academically.

THERAPY



HOLISTIC APPROACH

When children are happy, confident and well equipped to manage the day-to-day challenges of life, they thrive academically. Many children who come to Longdon Park have low self-esteem as a result of negative experiences they've had within the education system in the past. Through the holistic, therapeutic approach we take to learning, we help children to integrate into school and make positive progress in every aspect of their development.

ONSITE THERAPISTS

We truly believe that any child, with the right support, can achieve their potential, so we have dedicated occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and psychological therapists who work with children, depending on their needs. The specialist team visit the school on a weekly basis and put together clear development plans for each child, which they then follow. Therapists work closely with families too, helping parents and carers to develop strategies to support their child's development and tackle specific issues that may arise at home.

COPING DURING THE DAY

We build periods of relaxation into our weekly timetable for every child. Through activities like yoga, we help children to understand what it feels like to be relaxed, so they start to recognise when they get stressed and develop techniques to cope. Our younger children can access the chill out zones within their classrooms whenever they need them and we also build times of sensory play into their schedule. Our older students continue to have access to the full range of therapy resources as and when they need them. We are also fortunate to have beautiful grounds that provide a natural space for children to relax in.

BRAMBLE

Our therapy dog, Bramble, is a very popular asset to the school. Children love taking Bramble for a walk if they just need a little time away from the classroom or are feeling anxious or nervous. She's also a great listener and many children love chatting to Bramble and reading her a book. It's been wonderful to see the children actively caring for Bramble too – they help book her vets appointments, make sure she gets fed and even take her to the hairdressers!

BEHAVIOUR



INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

As with all areas of education and care at Longdon Park, we take an individualised approach to behaviour management. Our staff know our children really, really well, so they can anticipate when a child may be feeling anxious or upset. Recognising the signs early means we can help our students to find mechanisms to cope and de-escalate the tension.

ALERT PROGRAM®

Throughout the school we follow the Alert Program® which is a system used to help children with autism to choose sensory supports to manage their emotions. The Alert Program® guides children through the vocabulary they need and the steps they should take to cope with stress and anxiety. It's a system our team are really familiar with too, so we can help children make choices that will keep them on top form.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is absolutely key in managing our children's behaviour. If children make poor choices, we will come alongside them and help them understand why their behaviour was inappropriate, unacceptable or unexpected and what they could have done differently. It's vital we draw a line under an incident when it has been dealt with, so the child can move on and we can maintain their trust. We work on a basis of educating for change rather than punishing children.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Often there are underlying concerns or issues that lead children to feel frustrated at school, so we work closely with parents and carers to understand what else is going on in a child's life. We also make sure parents know what's going on at school and how that might impact a child's behaviour at home too. We encourage parents to use the same techniques that we use at school to ensure there is continuity of care.

HEAD OF SCHOOL - NYREE PARKER

Nyree joined the team at Longdon Park in 2015 and brings with her a wealth of experience from within mainstream and special educational settings. In addition to her undergraduate degree, Nyree holds a masters in Autism Studies.

Prior to leading the team at Longdon Park, Nyree was Head of Sixth Form at another specialist school and previously worked to develop subject language for children with SEN in a mainstream school. Nyree has always enjoyed working with children with SEN and became passionate about pursuing the best educational opportunities for children with autism after her nephew was diagnosed at the age of 3.

The calm welcoming atmosphere at Longdon Park is really driven by Nyree's organised and individual approach to education. In order to maintain such high levels of personalisation for each child, it's vital there is good communication within the school and with families too. Nyree really leads by example, taking time to get to know the families and children here at Longdon Park and walking with them on their journey.

Nyree also has a brilliant sense of fun. Her love for crazy socks seems to have taken off across the school and you'll often find children mimicking their Head's rather wacky choice of footwear. Nyree is never short of praise for the brilliant students and is always planning a party or celebration to acknowledge the hard work of the children and young people here.



MEET KONNA

When you meet 15-year-old Konna, you get a sense that this capable young man is an integral member of the community here at Longdon Park. As part of the school band Konna performs at school open days and is even helping to write the Longdon Park school song. However, Konna's previous educational experiences haven't all been this positive.

"This is the seventh school that Konna has been to. His education had been so disjointed and unsettled. He's had a horrible time until now," explains Lynn, Konna's mum. Konna was diagnosed with autism, obsessive compulsive disorder and severe anxiety when he was just seven years old. Since then his family have struggled to find a school where he has been happy and able to learn.

As a very capable young man, Konna's needs were often dismissed within mainstream schools. "People thought he was just anxious and that it was all an act," continues Lynn. "He would then lash out and I often used to get phone calls from the school to say that he had been physically restrained. It put so much pressure on us as a family."

What impressed Lynn most about Longdon Park, was the fact that the school has a completely different approach to working with children who have been diagnosed with autism. "They really connect with the children and find strategies of working with them. Konna is massively into his music, so that's how they work with him," explains Lynn.

To see Konna not only in full-time education, but engaged in learning and studying for a BTEC in music is an incredible achievement. "He's now settled, he's happy and he wants to go to school. The school support him in everything and when they make promises, they act on them," says Lynn. "I don't think there's a better school in Derbyshire."

LONGDON PARK AT A GLANCE

How old are the children at Longdon Park?

We support children from 7-18 years of age.

How long is the school year?

The school year follows the same timetable as mainstream schools within the area.

What special needs do children at Longdon Park have?

We support children who have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum, have ADHD, ADD or are undiagnosed, but demonstrate behaviours associated with autism.

How far do children travel to attend the school?

Children at Longdon Park come from across Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Birmingham and Stoke on Trent, most are referred to us by local authorities in the area.

How do the children get to school?

Most children arrive by taxi to school and are dropped off and picked up at the door.

What extra support is provided?

Our multi-disciplinary team consists of teachers, teaching assistants, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and psycho therapists. We also have pastoral support staff working with us to support students and families.

What facilities are available onsite?

Longdon Park is set in peaceful countryside less than 15 minutes from Derby. We have purpose built classrooms, including science, home technology, art and computer rooms that are designed specifically to support children with autism.

If you are interested in visiting Longdon Park, or finding out more about the support we provide, please call **01283 733 195** or e-mail longdonparkschool@acorncare.co.uk



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