



Bright Futures School – Prospectus

1. Context

1.1 At Bright Futures School (BFS) we have a track record of working very successfully with autistic students who:

- Have been out of school for some time (sometimes for 2-3 years or more)
- Have developed a phobia around attending school
- Have very high anxiety
- Have a PDA-type autism profile (demand avoidance, opposition, behaviour that challenges as a result of their autism), with consequent difficulties engaging in learning and social activity

1.2 This means that when students get to BFS, they are often very behind in their learning and social communication, needing intensive support to catch up. Outlined below are the steps we take to provide this intensive support.

2. Our philosophy

2.1 The philosophy that informs our autism education practice at Bright Futures School responds to research (Barnard J, 2001) published by the National Autistic Society that focused on over 200 young adults who had a diagnosis of 'Asperger's syndrome'. All had relatively high IQ's and good language skills. Some 50% of these bright individuals had gone on to higher education after secondary school. Yet, at the time of the study:

- Only 12% were employed, full or part-time.
- Only 3% could live independently
- Over 65% had almost no social contact outside of their family
- None were married or involved in a significant emotional relationship

2.2 These are disappointing outcomes for 'high functioning' pupils. They help to explain why at Bright Futures School (BFS), as well as a strong focus on preparing our young people for success in adulthood, we use a special 'guiding' approach to help children with autism master the developmental milestones that they have missed.

2.3 Our experience is that the biggest obstacle to a child's engagement in learning is their autism: a child who struggles with social understanding, who finds it difficult to understand another's perspective, is easily frustrated, sees themselves as a 'failure', has difficulties with emotional regulation, struggles to cope with uncertainty and unpredictability, has high

anxiety and finds it difficult to pay attention will have significant difficulty engaging in learning, making friends and living independently. We have found that working towards mastery of these milestones via our special 'guiding' approach significantly improves pupils' ability to engage in learning and to connect with others.

3. Our unique 'guiding' approach

3.1 Our 'guiding' approach focuses on ameliorating the core difficulties that lie at the heart of autism. It is one of a small number of approaches that meet all the criteria outlined in NICE guidelines CG170 'The Management of autism in under 19's' for approaches that address core autism difficulties.

3.2 Research (Green J, 2016) published in The Lancet has shown that if parents are supported to change their communication and interaction style with their autistic children then it is possible to decrease the severity of the child's autism. At BFS, our staff can use the 'guiding' approach to augment what parents can achieve if they use this approach themselves.

3.3 We have found that where a pupil has severe autism, they are unable to generalise most of the gains they make via guiding at school to other environments unless their parents are using a similar approach as part of their family lifestyle in the home. In cases where a child is severely impacted by their autism, unless parents have the 'guiding' framework in place in the home, our experience to date is that any challenging/distressed behaviour that the child presents with in the home will not be ameliorated, even if the same behaviour is well managed at school.

3.4 A severe presentation of autism requires intensive, co-ordinated input across all settings with all significant adults where the adult guides can reinforce and elaborate on the work done by fellow adult guides in order to make a difference to core autism features.

3.5 Parents can pay privately to put a 'guiding' programme in place at home. Where parents would like to start a guiding home programme but are unable to afford to do this, our Head of Development can support them to try to get a home programme funded via grants or other sources.

4. The school and its curriculum

4.1 Bright Futures School is a very small, special independent school that provides education for children and young people with autism and/or other developmental difficulties between the ages of 5 and 16 years. All our pupils have an EHC plan which details their special educational needs and the provision we need to make to meet those needs.

The Department for Education has indicated that in some circumstances, a pupil may also be able to stay on an extra year.

4.2 The school curriculum follows a topic based/thematic approach which ensures that the 7 broad areas of learning (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative) are experienced throughout the academic year. Literacy and numeracy are both taught to all students as individual subjects in addition to being addressed through other curriculum areas.

4.3 All staff plan and set out their own schemes of work, which take account of National Curriculum materials such as Qualifications and Curriculum Authority documents or commercial schemes, adapted for use with individual students. The schemes of work set out the range of topics to be taught over the year and how they are incorporated into individual subjects. The quality and success of the schemes of work is kept under review by the Head of Learning. Staff are supported in their day to day practice by a qualified teacher in a middle management role.

4.4 Where pupils have English as an additional language, BFS will employ teaching strategies that ensure EAL pupils meet their full potential. These may include:

- Providing as much visual support as possible in a wide variety of formats
- Using key words and key language (e.g. use short vocabulary lists of key words for each unit as well as examples of key language required)
- Offering a variety of types of dictionaries
- Planning opportunities for talk into the curriculum
- Planning for regular collaboration with peers

Our aim is to ensure that EAL pupils:

- Develop oral fluency quickly
- Immediately feel part of the school
- Develop language in context
- Experience their full curriculum entitlement

4.5 The school day is split into 5 sessions:

- An initial 'Ready to Learn' session lasting 30 minutes which gives pupils time to decompress from their journey and promotes readiness for learning by gently introducing pupils to a paired activity on a 1-1 basis with a member of staff. A range of fun and educational learning activities that have individual appeal for each pupil are used. This session lends itself particularly well to BFS's guiding approach and where a pupil's parents have a social communication 'guiding' programme in place in the home, staff work with a pupil in Ready to Learn sessions on their individual social communication guiding objectives.

- A 'Key Skills' session lasting 50 minutes where a member of staff works on a 1-1 basis with a pupil on their individualised literacy or numeracy objectives.
- 3 further sessions of 1 hour each based on the pupil's individualised timetable. These are usually small group sessions or 1-1 for pupils who are as yet unable to work in groups due to the disruption/distraction they cause to other pupils.

5. Pathways into employment and independence

5.1 All pupils at BFS follow a personalised timetable based on their own interests, abilities and needs in order to prepare them for the world outside of school post 16. As autism is a developmental disorder, this means that autistic children have missed out on key communication and thinking milestones in the early stages of their development. We know that the more successful they are in mastering these milestones, the better their life chances in the years ahead.

5.2 Some of our students are academically able but their difficulties managing their anxiety mean that the pressure of taking exams of any kind is counter-productive for them as it would be detrimental to their emotional wellbeing.

5.3 We therefore need to carefully assess our students' levels of tolerance so that we are sure that they can successfully meet appropriate challenges. We aim to balance this by also giving pupils opportunities to gain qualifications that are not exam-based. It is of the utmost importance to us that our pupils do not have experiences of failure as these are usually what have led them to withdraw from learning and have contributed significantly to poor emotional wellbeing in their previous educational settings.

5.4 Due to their developmental delay, most pupils have not acquired the academic standards expected of their chronological age when they start at Bright Futures School and this together with their reduced social and emotional development means that there is a double workload to be achieved in order to raise standards to the expected level at the end of the key stage. Frequently, pupils show low levels of attainment compared with their peers in mainstream schools, however, good progress can be seen to be made by pupils and is documented through our assessment programme, Bsquared.

5.5 We provide challenge to our pupils and take them to the edge of their competencies but this has to be done very carefully to avoid negative experiences and withdrawal. Academically we will personalise studies in line with certified programmes which support learning at the level at which the pupil is assessed. In addition, we focus on developmental areas which give pupils the opportunities to develop confidence and undertake positive experiences in relevant subjects, all increasing progress, motivation and an ability to survive in the world outside of school.

5.6 In Key Stage 3 and 4, pupils undertake several different ASDAN programmes, starting with the Bronze Personal Development Award. This leads onto the silver award and once this has been achieved, COPE Level 2 is undertaken. (This equates to a GCSE grade between D and B.) ASDAN programmes and qualifications are widely recognised by educators for providing an engaging curriculum that empowers students through personalised learning and choice.

5.7 Courses motivate and enhance learners' confidence, self-esteem and resilience. In addition, learners develop core skills in teamwork, communication, problem solving, research and self-management. Courses support learners as they transition to post-16 study, as well as helping young people develop the skills needed to progress on to higher education, training and work. Older pupils at BFS are currently embarking in Short Courses such as animal care, gardening, independent living, employability, English and Maths.

5.8 In preparation for moving on to college or apprenticeships at 16+, BFS staff will work with pupils on Functional skills in English and Maths. This gives students practical skills for the modern world and helps them get the most from life, learning and work. In English, this specification aims to ensure students have good communication skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. It assesses whether students can use these skills in everyday situations and this course can be used in preparation for GCSE.

5.9 Functional Mathematics aims to promote mathematical thinking and transferable skills that are useful in everyday situations and the world of work rather than rote learning but are comparable in size to GCSEs. The Function Junction ASDAN course supports Functional Skills in English and Maths. Function Junction has been designed to help students build and practise their functional English and Maths skills at Levels 1 and 2. The activities are relevant to everyday learning and suitable for use alongside vocational, apprenticeship, diploma, foundation learning and GCSE Maths and English programmes. Functional Skills are a mandatory element in apprenticeships as well as being stand-alone qualifications in their own right at Entry Level 1-3, Level 1 and Level 2.

5.10 Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 are broadly equivalent to National Curriculum Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Level 1 Functional Skills are equivalent to a GCSE Grade E-D, and Level 2 Functional Skills are equivalent to GCSE Grade C-A*.

5.11 Pupil destinations post-16

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| Pupil A left BFS in July 2015, aged 16 to engage in a one year Work skills course leading to a Level 1 IT course at Hopwood Hall College, both of which included functional skills in Maths and English at entry Level 3. Successfully completed. |
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| Pupil B left BFS in July 2016 to engage in a Level 1 course in Animal Care at Hopwood Hall College. Unfortunately, difficulties with independent travel at the same time as integrating into college life (as predicted and warned against by BFS at transition review,) led to drop out from college. Pupil B now attends Groundwork, a practical environment |
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| based apprenticeship scheme in Rochdale. |
| Pupil C left BFS in July 2016 to engage in Graphic Design at Oldham College at Level 2. Despite a high standard of skill and talent in graphics and art, pressure of workloads around the accompanying GCSE work in English and Maths (as predicted and warned against by BFS at transition review,) caused great anxieties and resulted in a year out at the end of year one, to focus on re-engaging into year 2, when emotional state is more settled. |
| Pupil D left BFS in July 2017. Most of her education through BFS had been home based due to severe anxieties. BFS supported this pupil's parent to secure a further literacy & numeracy skills bespoke package from an external agency to gain further skills in these areas alongside developmental work to reduce anxiety, before further education could be entered into. |
| Pupil E left BFS in July 2018. He identified that he would be unable to engage in a college course due to his autism, and so BFS supported a proposal for a bespoke package which focuses on high quality work experience, and on non-qualification activity which will prepare him well for employment, independent living, and successfully participating in society. Despite the majority of this pupil's EHC outcomes not being fully met, his local authority refused to fund the package and BFS has supported a legally aid funded judicial review. |
| Pupil F left BFS in July 2018 to engage in a Pathways vocational programme at Oldham College, focussing on Level 2 functional skills with a view to progressing to GCSE in due course. Careful transition and familiarisation supported by BFS, including independent travel training, has assisted this pupil in his successful transition to college including travelling independently by bus. This pupil came to BFS at age 11 having been home-schooled and previously unable to access a school building. |

5.12 Our Ofsted report made the following very positive comments about our pupils' progress:

- Staff very quickly help pupils to overcome their negative attitudes to formal education. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff support pupils in planning and preparing for new experiences so that pupils increase their skills and confidence in tackling unfamiliar situations.

6. Areas for development: action taken by BFS in response to issues identified by Ofsted

6.1 Our most recent Ofsted inspection took place in November 2016, when Bright Futures was evaluated as a 'good' school.

6.2 Some areas for development were identified and we have set out below how we have addressed each of these areas in response to Ofsted's comments:

| Governance of the school | |
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| Ofsted recommendation | Action taken by school |
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| <p>The school manager acknowledges that more needs to be done to keep up to date with statutory requirements.</p> | <p>The school manager's role has now been subsumed into the roles of the Head of Learning and Head of Development (Senior Management Team), who now review statutory requirements at weekly management meetings and act upon the need to update any policies and procedures in accordance with any newly emerging national guidelines.</p> <p>SMT also ensure that staff undertake appropriate training. To date, funding CPD other than to fulfil statutory requirements has been difficult due to tight funding, but SMT have now submitted a proposal for a fee uplift to Oldham Council so that this issue can be addressed.</p> |
| <p>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</p> | |
| <p>Despite pupils' strong progress, not enough time is allocated to teaching English and mathematics so that more pupils are able to achieve the expected standards by the end of each key stage.</p> | <p>Our pupils are not at the expected standard (that of their non-autistic peers) as they have lower starting points when they come to us and experience obstacles to learning such as Learning Difficulties, dyslexia, dyscalculia and (in some cases) low motivation to learn.</p> <p>Despite this, our data shows that good progress is being made but it would be unrealistic to expect pupils to be at the same levels as their mainstream peers in the same amount of learning time.</p> <p>A stronger focus on English and maths is now required in all subject areas (rather than teaching these subjects purely on a stand-alone basis, as previously) and staff have been supported via internal staff training to implement this successfully.</p> <p>Pupils now have workbooks for every subject to show what they have done, linking academic to practical work and evidencing Literacy and Numeracy strands of learning. Bsquared data (which monitors progress) shows that pupils are now making more progress in shorter periods of time.</p> <p>Training for staff to attend courses in teaching and learning, assessment and monitoring will help improve standards and BFS is currently negotiating an increase in fees to facilitate this.</p> |
| <p>Teachers manage well the competing tensions of rebuilding pupils' confidence in their academic capabilities with setting increasingly challenging work. However, teachers do not move pupils' learning on quickly</p> | <p>Lesson observations were recently undertaken by our Head of Learning following an intensive and protracted period of internal staff training. The observations show that staff practice in this area is now mainly good with some outstanding teaching. If funding is agreed by OMBC, then additional external training opportunities will give staff chances to further improve their professional practice.</p> |

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| <p>enough once they have confirmed that pupils have grasped key knowledge and skills.</p> | |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | |
| <p>Staff know pupils well and encourage their interests. Many of the pupils have skills and talents which could lead to high-value academic qualifications and successful careers. However, although pupils are given advice and guidance about their future pathways, this is not sufficiently aspirational.</p> | <p>We acknowledge that several of our students have both skills and aspirations in the fields of IT and graphic design. We are now buying in packages such as Laticzone which meet the needs of some of our pupils for IT-related development and guidance. Due to financial constraints, we have not yet been able to secure an IT professional who can work with the pupils to meet their needs in this area but we have recently formed a partnership with a local IT business, Remedian IT and we are in the initial stages of seeing what can be developed to support our pupils.</p> <p>All our older pupils are now taking part in the Idea scheme (Duke of York IT programme).</p> <p>In terms of pathways and guidance, school works closely with Positive Steps to identify next steps for pupil and involve the pupils in the next steps of their personal and academic development. Through our good links with Positive Steps we have been able to provide support for pupils including Travel training, careers guidance, careers advice in EHC reviews and in individual meetings with pupils.</p> <p>We have now introduced Employability and Independent living courses through ASDAN which will further help pupils prepare for the future.</p> |
| The outcomes for children and students | |
| <p>The school does not take into account pupils' interests, talents and ambitions sufficiently when providing work experience, careers advice and access to qualifications. As a result, pupils' pathways do not always reflect their enthusiasms and talents.</p> | <p>ASDAN short courses that reflect pupils' strengths and aspirations are now in place. We have also improved our links with Positive Steps for careers advice.</p> <p>Our current cohort of pupils have all identified that they will not be able to engage with GCSEs. This means they cannot access higher level college courses and so need to follow a more generic pathway of ASDAN short courses and practice Functional Skills papers. This will help them settle into college and prepare them for the next course at a higher level which may reflect their talents.</p> <p>Recent experiences with pupils who have graduated BFS have shown us the importance of ensuring pupils are not put under too much pressure when they transition to college/post-16 provision and that expectations of their ability to cope are realistic.</p> |

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| | <p>One of our graduates dropped out of college as she couldn't cope with the pressure of the GCSE work as well as the design course. We had advised that more time and a slower approach would be needed to enable a successful transition.</p> <p>Another BFS graduate dropped out of college because he could not cope with travel problems despite being on the right course. We had also advised that travel training and further work on social communication was required for this student to make a successful transition but our views were not taken on board by the pupil's local authority.</p> |
| <p>Whilst pupils can gain qualifications in personal development, the school does not offer pupils the opportunity to gain external accreditations in English, mathematics or any other academic subject. This limits pupils' options when they leave the school.</p> | <p>Our pupils recognise that taking GCSEs at 16 is too pressurising for them. Some of them do not want to take GCSEs at all and prefer to go down a more vocational route. We are supporting them to look at Traineeships and are already in discussions with local employers who may be able to provide placements and careers advice.</p> <p>Pupils who do want to try GCSEs are aiming towards these qualifications at a slower rate, to decrease the pressure on them and give them more time to catch up to the academic levels of their neuro-typical peers. Our pathway is to prepare them sufficiently academically and developmentally so that they will have a successful transition to college, where they will be able to undertake Functional Skills courses and then subsequently, sit GCSEs if they feel ready.</p> |

7. Social and emotional development via BFS's 'guiding' approach

7.1 BFS's Head of Development is a certified Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Consultant and BFS's 'guiding' approach to address missing developmental milestones is based on the autism intervention Relationship Development Intervention (RDI). The Head of Development works closely with an external RDI Consultant to support BFS staff in their guiding practice.

7.2 Where parents are following a home programme of guiding, BFS staff work on individual guiding objectives with pupils – filming their guiding sessions and sharing key footage with the RDI Consultants who evaluate staff use of the guiding framework and child progress in mastering key developmental milestones.

7.3 The difference that can be made to a child/young person's ability to engage in learning and connect emotionally with others can be seen in these comparative clips of two different pupils at the start of their time at BFS and after one year of 'guiding' at school.

| Lucy before guiding | Lucy after 1 year of guiding | Harry before guiding | Harry 1 year after guiding |
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| http://bit.ly/2Jex0TX | http://bit.ly/2IXup1m | http://bit.ly/2npYtmG | http://bit.ly/2JfGoql |
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| Lucy is totally 'on her own agenda' (wanting control of the page-turning) and is not connected to Jo at all. She withdraws frequently from the interaction. And is not able to be reciprocal. | Lucy is fully engaged in the interaction. Her enjoyment is clear to see. She steps into her reciprocal role fully and references Jo for information and to share experiences and emotion. | Harry is highly anxious and his feelings of incompetence make him withdraw. He is not enjoying the interaction and is not able to step into his reciprocal role. | Harry is fully engaged in the activity and emotionally connected to his partner. He clearly feels competent and is able to step into his reciprocal role, referencing his partner for information. |

8. Our staff

8.1 Alison Hughes, Head of Learning is a qualified teacher with National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). She oversees the academic curriculum and daily running of the school together with assessment and monitoring of pupil progress.

8.2 Zoe Thompson is Proprietor of the school as well as Head of Development. She is a certified Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Consultant and she oversees the implementation and monitoring of the school's 'guiding' approach.

8.3 Our Ofsted report highlighted that *'Leaders are unwavering in their endeavours to help pupils quickly acquire the key social, communication and life skills they need to be successful.'*

8.4 As well as Alison, there are a further two qualified teachers on staff and seven Learning Mentors who work with pupils as guided by teaching staff.

Lucy Andrew (NVQ Level 2 & 3 Childcare, Learning and Development and BTEC Diploma Art & Design) has, for many years, worked as a Learning Support Assistant in a mainstream school, working with children with autism on a 1:1 basis. Lucy has completed many courses which help her in her role as Learning Mentor at Bright Futures, such as Level 1&2 Working with Autism, Lego Therapy, Phonics, Time to Talk and Word Finding Difficulties. Lucy also uses her creative and artistic flair when working with pupils at Bright Futures School.

Joanna Blyden (NVQ 3 in Playwork and British Sign Language Level 2) has had experience working with children in different settings including mainstream and SEN schools. Jo has worked in a respite home for children with disabilities including autism and has also worked with adults on the spectrum. Jo makes use of her additional qualifications in psychology and performing arts in her role as a Learning Mentor for play within the Bright Futures Team. Jo has a middle management role in overseeing the delivery of the KS1 developmental curriculum to our younger pupils.

Karen Croft (T.A. Level 2) arrived at Bright Futures as a volunteer but is now an important member of our team of Learning Mentors. Karen makes a leading contribution to our PSE curriculum as well as delivering the ASDAN Cope award to our older pupils.

Rosamund Hayes (qualifications include Effective Listening Skills, PTLLS, Health Improvement) and has an extensive background of working with young people including youth volunteering, special constabulary and restorative justice panels for Children's Social Care. Her career has evolved over the years and latterly as a mentor and tutor for Rochdale Connections Trust. Ros has specialised in dealing with mental and social issues of young people and uses her nurturing, supporting and coaching skills in delivering a range of activities in her role as a Learning Mentor at Bright Futures School.

Sheree Horn (BA Hons in Theology and Religious Studies combined with Education Studies, QTS in Secondary Education) qualified as a teacher in 2007 and has taught RE/PSHE and Child development at a local secondary school ever since. She is also the Vice Chair of FACET (families and children with ASD engaging together) which is a local youth group for children with autism and associated disorders. Sheree is now using her teaching experience as a Learning Mentor within the Bright Futures team.

Karen Hutchinson (NVQ Level3 in Childcare Learning and Development) has many years' experience working in different educational settings as a Learning support worker for children with autism. Karen has a BTech qualification in caring for people enduring mental health problems and has also spent several years working as a Home Carer, supporting people with disabilities to enable them to live independent lives.

Alex Ludlam (BA Hons with QTS in Primary Education) qualified as a teacher in 2003 and has taught in primary schools in a neighbouring authority ever since. After working with many children with an autism diagnosis in a mainstream setting, Alex is now using her teaching skills and experience as a Learning Mentor within the Bright Futures team. Alex also has a middle management role, overseeing staff delivery of and monitoring pupils' progress in Key Skills.

Alex Wood (PGCE) spent 14 years teaching painting and decorating at Oldham College at pre-entry level. Prior to that, he worked for Oldham Council. Most recently, Alex has been working as a Personal Assistant for a local gentleman with autism and he's now using all his experience as a Learning Mentor within the Bright Futures team.

Lauren Tomlinson has previous experience working with children and young adults with mild, moderate and severe learning disabilities including autism. She has qualifications in health and social care, health and safety including first aid, and a level 3 award in education and training.

Christina Stocks (BA Hons Journalism) provides Administrative, PR and Marketing Support to the team at Bright Futures. With over 15 years' Public Relations, Marketing, Events and Communications experience, Christina uses her knowledge and contacts to help promote and publicise the school.

8.8 Our Ofsted report highlights that:

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have excellent relationships with the adults who work with them.
- Staff morale is high
- Staff deploy a wealth of knowledge, skills and understanding to engage pupils in learning.
- Staff are successful in turning around pupils' entrenched negative attitudes. They instil a love of learning and a positive attitude which helps pupils achieve academic success.
- Staff plan well-considered learning opportunities which are closely matched to the needs and aptitudes of individual pupils. They pay heed to pupils' interests and plan activities which have meaningful links to everyday life. As a result, pupils look forward to their lessons.
- Staff relationships with pupils are exceptional. Pupils are willing to take risks because of the trust they place in the adults that work with them.

9. Peer groups

9.1 Our age range is 5 – 16 and we currently (September 2018) have eight pupils. Six of our eight pupils are boys (one boy aged 16, two aged 15; one age 14; one age 10 and one age 12). All the boys have good IQs and are articulate (at the so-called 'high functioning' end of the autism spectrum). Our two female pupils aged 8 and 7 are severely autistic and minimally verbal.

9.2 There are currently five more prospective pupils' cases going to SEN tribunal for a place at BFS.

9.3 Another 14 year old is spending one day per week with us on a trial basis with a view to becoming a full time student.

10. Behaviour and welfare

10.1 Our Ofsted report highlighted that:

- The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding
- Pupils are well cared for and supported exceptionally well. As a result, many who start the school with very challenging behaviour improve significantly over time.
- Staff make good use of opportunities to reinforce teaching about the impact of pupils' behaviour on other people and to encourage their consideration and

compassion towards others. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school gate.

- Timely interventions by staff help pupils develop a strong moral code.

10.2 We have not found the less intensive 'behaviour management' strategies to be at all useful in promoting social understanding, emotional regulation, the ability to take another person's perspective, the ability to manage uncertainty and unpredictability - all of which is at the root of 'challenging behaviour.' Neither have we found such strategies to be effective in facilitating independent thinking, self-actualisation, self-confidence, resilience or self-esteem.

10.3 We know from our experience with the other children at our school that using 'behaviourist' strategies is in fact counter-productive and causes a child to withdraw from the adult, to feel they cannot trust the adult and to contribute to further disengagement from interaction and learning.

10.4 We recognise that due to the nature of the autistic condition, misunderstandings and communication breakdowns are inevitable. Our whole school approach is geared towards helping our pupils develop the thinking skills they need in order to communicate and understand the world better.

10.5 We also know that our pupils' autism means that they have difficulty managing uncertainty – which often manifests itself in a need to control situations and/or sometimes acute difficulties with emotional regulation.

10.6 In support of the above, Bright Futures School has developed:

- Profiles of each pupil including a section that identifies most likely problematic behaviours; appropriate strategies to support pupils when such behaviours occur; and limit setting strategies and sanctions appropriate to each individual pupil
- Ground rules for behaviour in school
- A pupil/school agreement that sets out the culture we are trying to promote at Bright Futures School, kinds of behaviour are unacceptable, and what sanctions will be applied for transgression of anything in the agreement. This will be personalised for each pupil.
- A personalised reward system for thoughtful and kind behaviour
- A system for recording minor incidents in the pupil's home-school communication book together with discussion at staff meeting so that staff can ensure continuity of approach in management.
- Where a social communication breakdown or social misunderstanding has occurred, staff will work with pupils to enable them to understand the other's perspective,

facilitating mutual understanding and ensuring that an apology is made where any party has been aggrieved.

11. Feedback from pupils and relationships with parents and families

11.1 Our students are happy and thriving. Our current students regularly express their feelings about school and what it has enabled for them:

H age 14, ahead of meeting up out of school with 2 other pupils 'I'm really looking forward to going out with the boys tonight, Mum. Remember when I didn't have any friends?'

M age 13, 'I was excluded a lot at my other school. They didn't understand my autism. I felt like I was being punished for being autistic.....but I can't help it. I've never been excluded at Bright Futures and for the first time, I am happy at school, doing all my lessons and have friends.'

M age 14, 'Bright Futures helps me sort things out when I'm feeling low. It's a really happy place and I love learning here It's joyful.'

B, age 17, on leaving Bright Futures School in July 2018, "I started visiting school when I was nearly 10 years old, and officially became a pupil in May 2012. To me, it doesn't feel all that long ago, however I'm sure some of you veterans feel differently! It's honestly hard for me to think back to what I was like before coming here, regarding my mannerisms, knowledge about the world and self-confidence. However, that shouldn't particularly matter now. One things for certain, I've changed a lot. And you've all played a part in making me who I am today, and for that let me offer my deepest thanks to the staff and pupils. Once I am settled at College, I'll be sure to come and visit you all. You won't get rid of me that easily!"

11.2 Our students' parents are very satisfied with our provision and this is reflected in our Ofsted report, where it is highlighted that 'Parents hold the school in high regard and cite the skill, dedication and care of staff as a strength.'

Mum of a 14 year old pupil: 'His previous school plain and simply didn't understand autism and thought he could be communicated with and taught in a 'mainstream' way. He was picked on by his peers, his mental health deteriorated to the point that our family life was in turmoil, his self-esteem was at ground zero, he was in tears every morning begging not to go to school, he'd bottle his feelings up at school then explode at home, he didn't have a single friend in the world, and this temper would also trigger seizures too.'

The change in him has been astounding - he loves going to school, he's made meaningful friendships, he's no longer insular, his confidence has blossomed, and I'm so happy to say he's been seizure free in the two years since being at BF and is on his final months withdrawal of epilepsy medication, which his neurologist never dreamed there would be hope of.'

The Dad of one of our younger pupils: 'I've seen your videos and your comments in the home/school communication book about S making a breakthrough and I can't believe the difference in her, she is so different towards me it is amazing. She never screams and is really happy all the time.'

Mum of a 6 year old pupil, describing the changes she has observed in another pupil of a similar age: 'The two pieces of video footage are like night and day. In the first clip, L takes very little notice of anyone else in the room. She doesn't join in and she is unmotivated/unable to take turns. She is very object-focused. She finds it more fun to play with the animals in her own way (like putting the horse on her head). In the second clip, she is so attuned to Jo (staff member) and she is doing so many neuro-typical things, like referencing, imitating, and co-regulating. These clips are what I show my family when they ask about how Bright Futures works with pupils. These clips are full of hope for other autism parents like me.'