



National
Autistic
Society



Church
Lawton
School



Welcome to
my school



National
Autistic
Society
NAS Academies Trust





“The school is a calm and positive place. Pupils are proud of their school.”

Paul Scales, Principal

Welcome to Church Lawton School



Paul Scales, Principal

We opened Church Lawton School in 2015 as a school for children on the autism spectrum. Our school supports young people who need an autism-specific environment to achieve academic progress in line with their peers. We provide a complete education all the way from age four to age 19, building each child's development week by week, term by term and year by year.

We are a local school, educating children from East Cheshire, Staffordshire, Stoke and surrounding authorities. Church Lawton School opened because our research showed that children on the autism spectrum need this specialist provision to thrive academically and socially. We have spaces for 70 children and every child here has the potential to achieve well and we have high expectations of them all.

Our school has been rated as 'good' with 'outstanding' features by Ofsted; the November 2017 report stated that 'Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and during social times. The school is a calm and positive place. Pupils are proud of their school.'

We designed and built our school specifically for children on the autism spectrum, and have created a comfortable, quiet and spacious place to learn. Our classes are small and all our staff are trained and experienced in working with children on the autism spectrum. We see a huge sense of relief in children when they come here that at last they have found a school that understands them.

We celebrate your child's strengths, recognise what they find hard and help them to develop all their skills through a highly individual programme. Above all, we take time to get to know your child so that they enjoy school, learn well and become ever more confident in their own abilities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Scales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Scales
Principal



“Lovely to see so many happy faces and wonderful objects of work.”

Visitor to the school

“I love sports - I play football. I love maths and I love going to school. I try my hardest and my best - I just want to enjoy life at its finest.”

Student

We're autism specialists

We are dedicated to autism education

Our staff are committed practitioners, trained to deliver a flexible and engaging curriculum that is designed specifically for children on the autism spectrum.

Your child will engage with and enjoy learning and we will help them to overcome barriers to learning caused by their autism.

We use our knowledge and expertise to make sure that your child is a successful learner. As they progress through our school, they will learn to handle the challenges their autism brings, and to develop their strengths.

We are friendly

We are a small school, with small classes, and children feel at home here. They are among friends who work hard to understand the way they see and experience the world.

We work closely with your family too. You know more about your child than anyone, and we want you to be part of our team. You can visit or talk to us at any time, and we will be here if you need extra support.

We are ambitious

We know that your child can be a successful learner.

At Church Lawton School, we expect every child to make progress at least as fast as their peers in mainstream schools, if not faster.

We monitor and assess your child and plan their learning individually to make sure that this happens. Our results so far confirm that we are right to be confident in our children's abilities and hard work.

Key facts about Church Lawton School:

- specialists in teaching children on the autism spectrum
- primary, secondary and sixth form
- ages four to 19
- girls and boys
- 70 day places
- full National Curriculum
- high staff to student ratio
- purpose-built school, opened 2015.



"I've made new friends."

Student



**“We inspire your child
about school and
learning.”**

How we help your child

A positive school for children on the autism spectrum

When your child comes to Church Lawton School, they will be surrounded by children and adults who understand autism, and who celebrate them for who they are. They will be taught and supported by knowledgeable, committed and experienced people who believe fully in their potential.

Our vision

Our school's vision is for every child at Church Lawton to learn to their full potential in a fun and safe environment.

Our mission

We recognise your child's strengths and teach them learning skills that they can build on throughout their education and beyond. We help your child to minimise barriers, to understand their own challenges, to adapt to and accommodate change, and to develop strategies to help them through every stage of life.

We inspire your child about school and learning. We help your child to acquire knowledge and skills that prepare them for goals such as further study, employment and independence.

We encourage your child to achieve nationally recognised accreditations and qualifications. We use the very best teaching practice to give our students the ambitious and full education they deserve. We base our approach on the National Autistic Society's 50 years of educational experience and research; everything we do is backed by evidence.

Our approach

We use the SPELL approach, the National Autistic Society's framework for understanding and responding to the needs of autistic people. It focuses on five principles (Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal and Links) that have been identified as vital elements of best practice when working with autistic people. The SPELL framework emphasises ways to change the environment and our approaches to meet the specific needs of each child.

New opportunities

We open up opportunities for your child to learn beyond Church Lawton School, whether by helping them to take part in some lessons or activities in another school or college, or by preparing them to transfer fully when they are ready.

Since 2017, we have taken part in an Erasmus+ international school exchange with Rodengymnasiet College in Sweden. The exchange visit gives some of our students their first opportunity to travel to a different country.

Our Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Group supports students to develop their volunteering, sporting and practical skills, and complete overnight expeditions.

Adventure learning

We promote active and adventure learning. Hiking, biking, climbing and skiing enhance students' intellectual, physical, and social development. Not only do students learn to work together when experiencing an outdoor adventure, but they are also provided with opportunities to learn important life skills, such as a sense of responsibility. By being given a challenge, which an outdoor adventure can provide, students can learn to overcome their fears and become more independent. The sense of accomplishment they feel at the end of their adventure helps to build their self-esteem and confidence.

Our ethos

Our school is a place where all people are respected, achieve beyond what is expected, are empowered to make positive choices about their own lives, and have rich and varied experiences. Our learning is truly personalised and capitalises on each child's personal strengths and interests. We make a positive, inclusive contribution to our community.

Working together for your child

“A sensory diet is a personalised plan of activities that provides the sensory input a person needs to stay focused and organised throughout the day.”

A committed and experienced team

Our staff are knowledgeable, experienced and committed to providing the best quality education to your child. Everyone who works at Church Lawton School is trained in working with children on the autism spectrum.

We are a close-knit team, and we work together every day, sharing our expertise and observations to make sure that your child is happy, thriving and learning well.

We fully integrate our speech and language therapists' programmes into your child's teaching and learning so your child will make continual progress with exactly the support they need.

Sensory diets

A sensory diet is a personalised plan of activities that provides the sensory input a person needs to stay focused and organised throughout the day. This can help people to tolerate sensations and situations they find challenging, increase attention span, limit sensory seeking and avoiding behaviours and enable them to handle transitions with less stress.

Our students have access to sensory diets which are designed by the occupational therapist and embedded throughout the school day with the support of teaching staff, who often advocate for students' sensory needs.

The Centre for Autism

In addition to our own staff's expertise, we draw on the specialist knowledge of the National Autistic Society's Centre for Autism. The Centre gathers and shares research evidence about autism and is an extremely valuable resource as we develop our programmes and extend our work.

We also work very closely and collaboratively with all other National Autistic Society schools.



Photo shows the sensory studio

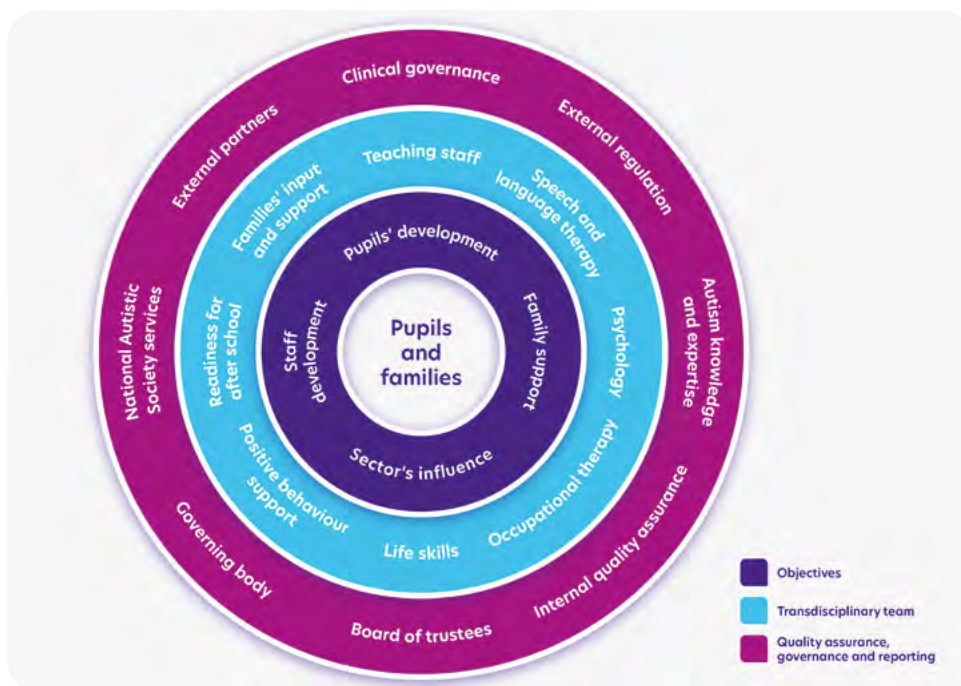
Quality of Life framework

Every child is entitled to an education and every child deserves the best possible developmental opportunities so that they learn more and do more, preparing themselves for life after school. Our autistic pupils learn in happy and safe environments that are able to support their individual needs as autistic learners.

All National Autistic Society schools and Children's services follow our Quality of Life (QoL) Framework. The major objective of this framework is to ensure we plan each child's education carefully and cohesively, shaping each pupil's provision around their EHCP and agreed developmental goals in order to develop pupils' knowledge and skills now and for the future.

Our QoL framework includes:

- putting the child and family at the centre of the assessment and planning process
- assessing our pupil's quality of life using a range of indicators
- combining support and development across academic, vocational, life skills, occupational therapy, psychological, speech and language, and pastoral inputs
- working with colleagues in partner organisations and Incorporating autism best practice to support individual development
- ensuring each pupil has a nominated keyworker who has the potential to change a child's life by being the key advocate for the pupil in school and key point of liaison for the parents
- ensuring our curriculum supports pupils in developing the skills they need now and will need in the future to have the best possible quality of life.



“I have never come across a school that is as kind, caring and understanding about its students.”

A visiting parent

Our QoL framework is built on the National Autistic Society's position that parents and young people need to be full participants in decision making and that we should be working together to support autistic young people to live the lives they want as they move towards adulthood.

The QoL framework was developed in partnership with Swalcliffe Park School.



“Our curriculum encourages your child to overcome barriers to their learning.”



A full and rounded education

An ambitious education for every child

We are a high-performing school, providing an exceptional education to all our children. We are here to provide academic excellence and an environment where all our students learn well.

We aim for our students to achieve good grades in GCSEs and A levels, and more. We teach to the extremes of your child's educational ability, giving equal attention to the things they are great at and the things they struggle with.

We deliver the full National Curriculum throughout the school, starting with the Early Years Foundation Stage for our youngest children.

Our curriculum

From the very start we focus on ensuring that your child has a secure knowledge of the core subjects of maths, English and science. By the time they move into our secondary classes, we focus increasingly on the areas our students are particularly interested in such as sciences, ICT, textiles, photography and art.

We deliver a complete curriculum from Year 7, including history, geography, RE, food technology, art and design, modern languages and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. In everything we do, we emphasise social, moral, citizenship and life skills, encouraging your child to do well and to make a positive contribution to their community.

We are an Adventure Learning School, using the principles of learning through adventure – in school and in urban and wilderness environments – to build your child's independence, problem-solving ability and confidence as well as their academic skills.

Our curriculum encourages your child to overcome barriers to their learning, to develop coping strategies, and to learn to manage their own behaviour.

Every child has their own individual education plan. Through this plan we build on your child's strengths and capitalise on their interests so they have a reason to learn, and believe in the importance of what they achieve.

Homework

Homework has a valuable role to play in your child's education by helping them to extend, develop and generalise their skills with your support. Your child's teachers will discuss suitable work to be continued at home. This may be academic in nature, for example reading, or more general, such as continuing a positive behaviour support programme. All homework is subject to parental choice and decisions are made on an individual basis.

Our classes

The class sizes at Church Lawton School are small: on average a class of six-eight children will learn with one teacher and two learning mentors, and some children are supported individually. Our secondary classes are taught in sets.

We've found that our children learn best when they take most lessons in their own classroom. For science, maths, English, and food technology, your child will learn in our specialist classrooms where they have excellent facilities and can extend their knowledge through experimentation and creativity.



“We have a learning centre for children with more complex needs.”

Our learning environment



Purpose-built for autism

Our school is on the site of the original village school in Church Lawton, but in 2015 we opened with brand-new, purpose-built buildings. We designed our school to be the perfect place for children on the autism spectrum to learn: it is light, spacious and quiet and this makes it easy for us all to work together.

Our primary, secondary and sixth form classes are in distinct areas of the school, so that while we are part of one community, each age group has its own space.

Our dining room has individual and open seating areas and our catering kitchen serves fresh home-cooked meals to all students.

Our hall is light and airy and has changing rooms and showers: we come together here for assembly, indoor PE and gym.

There are separate outside areas for primary, secondary and sixth form students, and we have developed our playing field into a sensory field where pupils can explore, socialise, learn and take time out. The field is complete with a multi-use games area, sensory garden, cycle path, raised planting beds, life skills classroom and outdoor reading areas. Our school is securely fenced

all round but feels spacious and has a country atmosphere as we have fields and open country around us.

Our classrooms

Our classrooms are large and open, with plenty of light. Our lighting system is 'human-centric', mimicking the qualities of daylight indoors to enhance students' performance and wellbeing. As our average class size is six-eight students, we never feel crowded. We balance our pleasure in displaying work with our children's preference for a low-stimulation environment, and our classes feel friendly and welcoming.

Every classroom has its own individual learning area for times when a child needs some time apart to learn, and all classrooms open onto a secure and safe outside area.

We can organise a classroom into discrete areas to help students to understand the structure of activities for their day, to reduce anxiety and to feel in control.

Specialist classrooms

As our children move to middle school (KS2-KS3), they will begin to use our specialist classrooms: we have well-resourced music, art, design and technology, science and food technology rooms.

Our sixth formers have their own classroom and a common room to relax and socialise in.

We have a learning centre for children with more complex needs. It has two classrooms, each with two individual learning rooms. The learning centre has its own outside area that opens off the classrooms.

Key facts about our facilities:

- ten classrooms and a sixth form area
- individual learning area in every classroom
- every classroom opens onto an outside area
- separate primary, secondary and sixth form departments
- dining hall with individual and open seating and staggered lunch times
- specialist classrooms
- science laboratory
- common room for sixth form
- large playing area and adventure play equipment part-funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.





“We encourage our students to develop their ICT skills in many directions.”

A rich mix of resources

From sandpits to laptops

We have an excellent range of traditional resources, from wet and dry play materials for our youngest children to a fully equipped science laboratory for our older students.

Our specialist teaching rooms have all the resources your child will need at every stage of their education. In addition, every classroom has a fully interactive digital screen, linked to the teacher's laptop, which enables teachers and students to work together online or offline on a large screen.

We encourage our students to develop their ICT skills in many directions, from coding to app design and from music making to editing film. No one knows what the future of these technologies will bring, so we use a range of machines and operating systems to give our students deep knowledge of these tools. We have invested in iPads for every student to allow them to develop their media technology skills.

Learning and sharing with our community

Our education is designed to help your child gain knowledge and skills that will take them on to further study and adult life. We therefore give all our students plenty of opportunities to extend their learning beyond our classrooms and to meet a wide range of people. We are continually developing and extending our links with our local and wider community.

We make regular visits to places of interest such as local farms, parks and National Trust properties, linking our trips to the topics we are studying in class. We encourage your child to interact with as many people as possible, building their confidence and skills. For example, your child might learn to choose and buy their own snacks in a local shop, or we may welcome a local faith leader, or a police officer into school.

Our older children will take part in careers and vocational activities including work experience, and have opportunities to study in local colleges and universities both to develop their learning and to prepare for study beyond Church Lawton School.





“Our students’ families are as much a part of our community as the children.”



Support for you and your child

Moving to Church Lawton School

Children may join the school at any stage, and we always give children and parents complete support during this important time of change.

We like to get to know each other well so that we can help your child to settle in quickly. We build a powerful and individual learning plan with them to enable them to make progress from the start.

As soon as your child receives an offer of a place at Church Lawton School, we invite you and your child to visit the school together. We will also visit your child in their current school, or at home if they are not in school.

Before your child starts at Church Lawton School, we will arrange a transition programme so your child and their classmates can get to know each other. We will help them to find their way around the school, and answer any questions they have so that by the time they join us, they are ready.

While many children start full time straightaway, we are happy for your child to start initially for a few days a week or for part days. We are always guided by what is best for your child.

You are part of our team

Our students' families are as much a part of our community as the children. You are always welcome to visit or ring us, and we are here to support you.

Your child's teacher and learning mentor will communicate regularly with you about what your child is doing at school, the targets we have set, and the progress they are making. We explain how we are helping them to tackle the challenges they face, and celebrate their successes with you.

We are always happy to talk and to share ideas, so if you're worried about your child, or wondering how best to support them at home, please ask us.

We are also committed to helping you to get all the support you need from health and social care services and agencies - we know how hard it can be, and we will be by your side.

"You are all doing a fantastic job!! It makes a massive difference to us both, thank you."

Parent

Applying to Church Lawton School

Find out more about us

We offer education to young people aged four to 19 with a diagnosis of autism who have been referred by their local authority.

If you think our school might be the right place for your child to learn, we suggest you contact us to find out more about what we provide, or to arrange to visit us to see what we do.

Making an application

If you decide you would like to apply, you need to discuss your child's needs with your local authority, and make a joint application. Once you have made your application, we will assess your child.

There are several steps to the application process. We can explain them to you and there is a chart showing the process on our website:

www.churchlawtonschool.org.uk



“What a wonderful school - full of joy, creativity and achievement. I was so impressed at the pupils' engagement and the school's environment. The whole atmosphere is so positive.”

Visitor to the school



**National
Autistic
Society**

NAS Academies Trust




The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people on the autism spectrum and their families.

Since we started providing autism-specific education in 1965, we have developed our education offer into a diverse network of independent and free schools. Free schools are state-funded schools, established in response to local need and run by sponsoring voluntary organisations with relevant knowledge and experience. We sponsor our network of free schools and academies through the NAS Academies Trust.


Our unique expertise in delivering a meaningful education to young people on the autism spectrum comes from 50 years of hands-on experience working with our students. We support each student to fulfil their potential, no matter their level of ability or the complexity of their needs. No one understands autism better.


 **NAS Academies Trust**
393 City Road
London EC1V 1NG

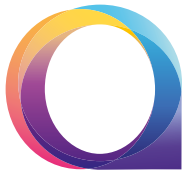
 020 7833 2299
 academies.trust@nas.org.uk
www.autism.org.uk/academiestrust

You can get help from the following telephone services:

Autism Helpline:
 0808 800 4104

Education Rights Service:
 0808 800 4102
(leave a message)

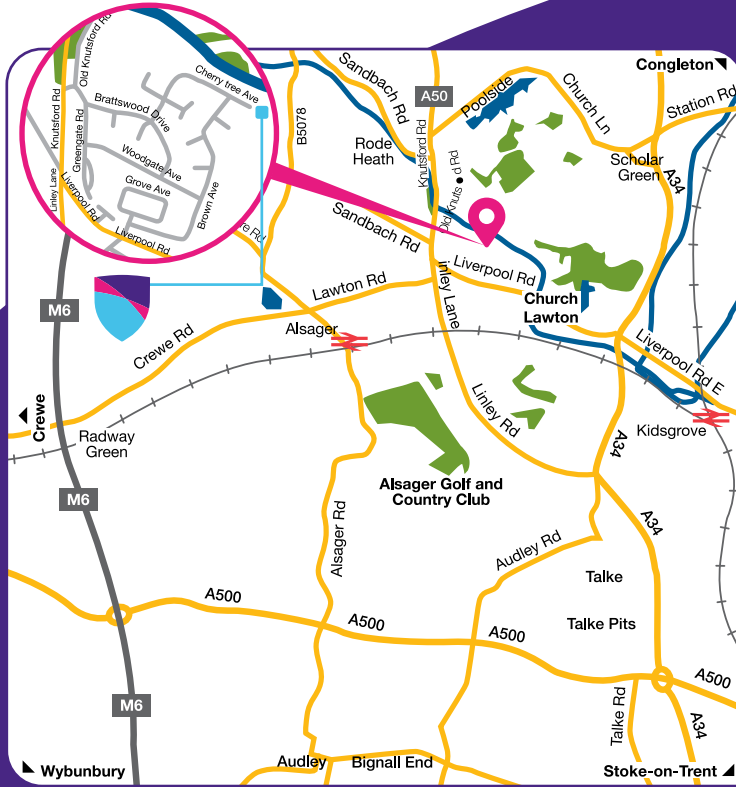
Parent to Parent Service:
 0808 800 4106
(leave a message)



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Church
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If you have any questions or want to find out more about our school, please feel free to contact us.

Principal: Paul Scales

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Staffordshire
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 01270 877 601
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For more information about all our schools, please get in touch:

 schools@nas.org.uk
www.autism.org.uk/schools



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Silver Award**
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