



**AUTISM**  
ACCREDITATION



The National  
Autistic Society

# AUTISM ACCREDITATION EXCELLENCE AWARD

## Greenside School – 2016 winners

Greenside School was commended for its innovative social enterprise scheme, 'The Greenside Studio'. The studio is based in a local shopping centre and offers retail work experience to pupils. It was thought to be exceptional practice, embracing the wider community and providing a diverse range of real opportunities for learners at all levels.

Greenside is a special school for 132 pupils aged two to 19 years who have severe or profound learning difficulties. The school and specialist provision for autistic pupils was accredited by The National Autistic Society in 2012 and reaccredited, with commendation, in 2015. The Accreditation process was introduced by the local authority in 2012 to support the development of its provision to autistic pupils within all their special schools catering for pupils with learning difficulties.

Greenside welcomed the opportunity to use the framework of Autism Accreditation to review and develop its specialist provision for autistic pupils. The process was challenging and supportive and informed the school's self-evaluation of the quality of its specialist provision.

The Greenside Studio is a specialist, vocational teaching resource, based within a shopping centre in the heart of the school's local community. A 'living classroom', this local shop provides autistic young people, some with severe or profound learning difficulties, with exceptional opportunities to undertake work-related learning. It provides work experience and work-related learning which is not otherwise easily available for young people with autism and severe learning difficulties, including vocational courses designed to develop communication, social interaction and independence skills.

The studio offers a choice of enterprise – working in a sweet shop and a ceramic studio – providing a range of work-related learning opportunities, as well as offering creative activities which all pupils can access and enjoy. The ceramic aspect of the studio features a potters wheel, and the ceramics are sold and painted by members of the public at the studio. The front of the shop is a fully functional sweet shop, selling sweets by weight. Current and ex-students work in the shop both during the week as part of the curriculum and at the weekends as part of their paid employment.



The studio provides a bridge between the structures, systems and order of school, and life within the wider community. Students are faced with real life problem-solving situations which gives them the opportunities to adapt and apply their skills.

The studio also provides a base from which work experience in the neighbouring shops is supported by members of staff from Greenside. This will be extended through the introduction of supported internships, with staff undertaking training as job coaches with the aim to enable autistic students to access paid employment.

Dr Hazel Lawson of The University of Exeter has researched the additional learning opportunities provided by the studio. The findings, published in SLD Experience (Spring 2014), were that establishing a teaching and learning resource in the heart of the wider community has enabled the school to extend the transition process for life after school, which has been of particular value for autistic students. The resource has raised the profile of the school within the community, providing a positive image of the potential and abilities of autistic young people, confronting prejudice and transforming expectations.

**“We find that the visits made by the Accreditation advisers help us to focus on key areas for reflection as part of an ongoing process, meaning that we are constantly moving forward.**

**“The review process was positive, supportive and directly influenced the development of practice which has enabled further pupil progress. The reviewers who lead the process are clearly experts in their field, which inspired respect from all staff with regards to their advice, guidance and judgements.**

**“The accreditation reports have been of particular value to the school’s governors who have appreciated the level of detail and explanation that has been provided. The reports have informed strategic, whole school development planning decisions which have required significant financial investment to develop specialist resources, facilities as well as engaging leaders in their field to provide training for all staff.”**

Greenside School

Autism Accreditation was established in 1993 and now supports over 500 organisations to achieve and recognise good autism practice within their settings. The Autism Accreditation Excellence Award is given to services that show particular creativity, innovation or outstanding impact.

#### Find out more

For more information or advice, or to arrange a call with one of our Accreditation advisers contact the office on

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