

Whitmore High School's Specialist Autism Resource Base



Prospectus



Introduction



The Specialist Autism Resource Base at Whitmore High School was opened in September 2021 and is the first of its kind in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Base provides support for students with a diagnosis of Autism and enables them to access an excellent education. Our aim is to

give our pupils a mainstream school experience, within a setting which has, not only a high level of specialism, but also empathy and understanding embedded into every decision that is made for our pupils. Following the success of the Base at Whitmore High School, the model has been recognised and implemented in two new satellite Bases in secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

We strive to ensure the best possible provision for our students and our staff have many years' experience of working in and opening autism provisions. We recognise that accessing education is not a 'one size fits all' approach for our students. We are committed to the individual pupil; to their learning, their families and their long-term prospects. Our students are fully included in school life - we want them to have the same opportunities as all students and to enjoy their time at school.



This prospectus includes information on the approach which Whitmore High School takes to ensure we offer the best possible provision for each of our students.



The Transition Process

The time when a student begins their transition from their previous school to the Base at Whitmore High School, is one of the most important times in their school life. We understand the importance of this time and have a clear structure in place in order to ensure it is successful.

The Local Authority (LA) allocates children to the Base and this usually takes place in their final year of primary school. Once a student has been allocated to the Base, we will then start the Transition Process.



Firstly, we will contact you to discuss our provision and your child. This is a great opportunity for us to get to know more about your child and will help us to plan their visits to the Base. We will then visit your child in their current school, most likely at the beginning of the summer term, to meet them and get to know them a little better.

“The school’s specialist resource base provides a safe and welcoming environment for pupils.” – Estyn, 2022



Later on, in the summer term we will begin Transition Visits. This is when your child will visit the Base and meet the staff here. A lot of careful planning will go into this. We make sure that Transition Visits are filled with fun, engaging activities which are connected to your child’s likes and interests. As well as this, students will have a Transition Booklet which includes photographs of the Base, the staff, the school and also has some activities about the pupil’s interests, hobbies and feelings towards starting secondary school.



Transition Visits will look different for each student – some may attend for longer periods, some may visit for short periods. Some students may only visit the Base a couple of times whereas others may require regular visits throughout the summer term. We are flexible with our approach and understand that our students have different needs.

We understand that the transition from secondary school to college can also be an anxious time for students. We liaise closely with Cardiff and Vale College and other colleges to ensure the move from school to college goes smoothly.

“The base provides comprehensive, individual, and aspirational experiences for pupils and is highly valued.”

– Estyn, 2022

Day to Day Running of the Base

We understand that accessing a mainstream school environment can be challenging for autistic students. We are able to provide a variety of strategies and provisions in order to support our students to access an excellent education.



Each of our students has a Pupil Passport – a useful document which students create with a member of staff. This includes information about how to support a student and is shared with all members of staff who work with the student. Our students will also have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which includes targets and is reviewed annually with their parents/guardians.

Our students' days will be tailored to suit their needs. Many of our students enjoy attending a variety of their mainstream lessons, and will be supported by a Base Learning Support Assistant (LSA) when doing so. Our LSAs have an excellent understanding of autism and know our students really well. They



understand how to support students during a lesson; to ensure they feel safe and comfortable and are accessing work which is of an appropriate level. We have a close link with Cardiff University and offer working placements to their students, as well as volunteer opportunities. We have a staff team filled with bright, ambitious and dedicated people who are wonderful role models for our students.



There may be certain lessons which a student may not be able to attend, due to a variety of reasons and during these times our students are supported to complete other curriculum-based activities in the Base. Students may use this time to complete the classwork in the Base, to complete homework, or they may be involved in interventions for Numeracy, Literacy, social skills or other areas. We offer a variety of interventions for our students on topics such as friendships, anxiety, travel training and independent living skills. We offer a number of qualifications to our students, including GCSEs, BTEC courses and Essential Skills qualifications.

The Base is always open and there will always be a member of staff there. If a student needs to use a safe, quiet space, there are sensory rooms and sensory areas in the Base available to them. Our students also enjoy spending their break and lunch times in the Base, where there is a range of activities on offer such as Uno, Chess, Jigsaws and Minecraft, in a calm and quiet environment.

“The staff at the Base are so knowledgeable and passionate about supporting the children. Every single school needs a Base like this.” – Parent, 2023



Extra-Curricular Activities



Whitmore High School offers a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and we encourage our students to participate in these. Our students enjoy attending clubs such as Catering, Minecraft and Homework club. We also run a Dungeons & Dragons club in the Base and some students enjoy helping out at the school bakery every Wednesday.

We offer a range of other activities for our students including gardening, dance, cookery and sensory activities such as sensory circuits, wobble boards, slime and much more. Our students also love spending time with our well-being dogs, Daisy and Blu.

“Our child has grown in confidence, self-worth and happiness and as parents we couldn’t be happier with the joy she is experiencing.”

– Parent, 2022



Home-School Links

We understand the importance of regular contact between staff and parents/guardians. Our Base Teacher is the first port of contact for



parents/guardians in regards to everything school-related, including reporting absence, sharing information about school events/trips, school reports etc. Parents are able to email or call the Base Teacher directly, at any time during the school day.

Every week, we send home a Weekly Update for each of our students. This is a lovely way for parents to keep up to date with what their child is doing in school. The Weekly Update will cover what work the student has done that week, as well as any extra-curricular activities such as baking, gardening and after-school clubs.

We regularly gather feedback from parents/guardians and our students, in the form of surveys, questionnaires and meetings, to ensure that we are providing the best provision for our students. Twice a year we invite families to a Base Coffee Morning, which is a great opportunity for parents to meet each other and also meet with Base staff.



We also have a Base Twitter page, which is updated regularly and is a good way for parents to keep up to date with what is happening in the Base.

“The Base has had the biggest and most positive impact on my children since their autism diagnosis. It’s a place where children can be supported and nurtured... The Base at Whitmore should be a blueprint for every school to follow.”

– Parent, 2022



Contact Details



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