

## Autism Accreditation Assessment

### Mowbray School

Reference No.	27533
Assessment dates	19 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2020
Lead Assessor	Anja Cole
External Moderator	Abi Cowie
Status prior to the assessment	Accredited
Advanced status applied for	Yes

## Section 1: Context

### About the Provision

#### **Brief description of the provision made for autistic people:**

Mowbray School is a local authority specialist day school. *'Autism practice is embedded within the school, with strategies being used and benefitting the whole school population.'*

#### **Number of autistic people supported by the provision:**

The school has 112 pupils with a diagnosis of ASC, with 225 pupils on roll.

#### **Range of autistic people supported by the provision:**

According to information provided by the school, it caters for pupils aged 3-16 years with a wide range of needs: *'Pupils with ASC have the full range of needs from sensory, fully supported non-verbal pupils to pupils who could achieve up to 5 GCSE qualifications.'*

#### **Outcome of last statutory assessment (Body; date, outcome):**

The last Ofsted inspection in January 2017 rated the school as 'good' in all areas.

### About the Assessment

- The assessment took place over 3 days.
- The school's adviser acted as assessor, with support from an external moderator.
- A presentation was given by the school on how provision is made for autistic pupils.

- A tour was carried out of the school.
- Thirteen sessions were observed by the assessment team. These included a range of transitions (arrival at school and between activities/ lessons), classroom-based activities (English lesson, Attention Autism, Rebound/ Jabadao, PE lesson), outdoor activities (nature reserve, farm, horticulture), playtime and snack time.
- Personal files were sampled across each key stage.
- Some key policy documents provided by the school were taken into account, such as the ASC Policy, the Communication and Social Interaction Policy, the Sensory Policy, the Teaching and Learning Policy for Learners with Autism, and the Policy to Support Transitions for Learners with Autism.
- Discussions were had with both teaching staff and therapeutic staff, some autistic pupils and some parents.
- The results of surveys carried out with families were also considered.

## Professional Development and Support for Staff

### Main approaches or methods employed by the provision in supporting autistic people:

The school states that staff have '*full ASC knowledge*'. A full school ASC friendly environmental checklist is carried out each year. All staff receive training in sensory regulation, emotion coaching, Makaton, TEACCH, SCERTS, social stories, PECS, intensive interaction, visual support, Attention Autism and SALT provision (Social communication, Social Narrative).

Teaching is carried out in small groups, following a bespoke and creative curriculum. Groups are taught following six different pathways, which all aim to increase students' independence and life skills and prepare them for their transition out of Mowbray School (see next section on Person Centred Planning).

Research based strategies are '*applied throughout the school*', through a number of ways such as bespoke visual support, chunking information, identifying and meeting sensory needs. Staff and parents spoken to explained that '*many social interaction skills are taught both formally and informally*,' '*maximising communication skills are a golden thread throughout the school*'.

The school places great emphasis on '*preparation for adulthood*', which will be explained in greater detail under the 'Self-Reliance and Problem Solving' section.

Emotion coaching strategies are used '*for those pupils with good comprehension skills*.' This will be expanded upon in the 'Emotional Wellbeing' section.

Induction:

- An overview of Autism, Sensory Sensitivity and Emotion Coaching is part of the well established induction programme.
- A *'thorough and robust training induction programme'* is offered to all new staff which covers autism and related conditions. New staff go through a thorough, varied, comprehensive and well-established induction programme. The staff handbook provides a guide through induction and includes behaviour policy, child protection, assemblies, organisational structure of the school, health and safety/ fire, GDPR, etc. There is also list of acronyms in the handbook to ensure that all staff, especially new staff, know what they mean.
- The induction programme includes autism specific training, such as 'sensory sensitivities', a unit on 'understanding autism', and a session on 'environment': how to shape our environment to support autistic pupils', as well as training on ASC strategies. Induction training is provided online, as well as face to face. Face to face sessions include,
  - Staff – parent communication and contact with parents
  - Communication aids
  - Introduction to the Cygnet training
  - Emotional coaching
  - Makaton
  - Pathways/ curriculum information
- New members of staff shadow an experienced member of staff. They also have an allocated mentor who supports them through their induction. Time is set aside for them to get to know the school, the children and staff, and to then familiarise themselves with all the working documents, putting emphasis on knowing all the children/ young people well.
- Staff attend twilight sessions, as well as specific training delivered by the school internal SALT and OT when applicable.

All staff:

- The school has a comprehensive and ongoing CPD programme to develop skills, including a *'comprehensive programme using many excellent online courses'*.
- The school's ASC General Policy states that *'Mowbray School aims to maintain a position whereby all its staff have a shared and consistent knowledge and understanding of autism'*. This is achieved by having a *'shared and consistent knowledge of autism'*, offering training and support to those who work with learners with autism, *'informing practice through evidence based research and accepted knowledge of autism'*, *'maintaining and reviewing operational policies and records in relation to autism on a regular basis'* .
- The school improvement plan has a detailed section on training.
- A clear and comprehensive action plan relating to the accreditation process is also in place, highlighting any training needs within the staff team.

- Staff meetings cover a varied programme and range of topics. In the spring term 2020, sessions focused on areas such as Tacpac training, Lego therapy and SCERTS.
- The school employ their own SALT, and the SALT team provides bespoke training for staff. They also work alongside class teams to model strategies. In specific cases SALT deliver intervention plans, and then work intensively with staff over a 6 week period to embed strategies in daily working practices.
- SALT deliver whole school training. A recent training day, for example, was offered on 'visual support'.
- The OT team are in school once a week. They deliver sensory training for the whole school, as well as working alongside staff and class teams, modelling activities and interventions and reviewing individuals' progress.
- A high ratio of staff have completed Rebound Training: for example in February 2020 more than 15 staff were trained to deliver Rebound Therapy.
- Whole school training has been delivered on areas such as TEACCH, SCERTS and 'Clicker 8'.
- Staff talked about the recent training day they had on 'sensory overload' and said it had been very useful and practical.
- The school have trained in and established 'Solution Circles', which are used frequently and are initiated by staff as needed to address areas or individuals they need support with.
- Emotion coaching, emotional wellbeing and attachment disorder training has been a recent focus point for the school and has been delivered as whole school sessions, as well as to a number of staff attending at North Yorkshire County Council training sessions. The school has won various awards and is now a registered 'emotion coaching school' and an 'investor in pupil school'.

#### **On-going support available to staff in working with autistic individuals**

- Staff individually and as needed attend a variety of courses and conferences, such as SCERTS training, training on autism friendly environments, the NAS Raising Standards Days (various, but the latest in March 2020), or a conference at the 'the Birmingham Attachment Research Community' (November 2019)
- Educare is the online training provider used by the school. This offers bite size training on relevant topics.
- A high number of staff and support staff members are completing the 'Understanding Autism, Level 2' training (provided by NCFE).
- 'Understanding Behaviours that Challenge' has been completed by a large number of teaching staff and support staff.
- The school is part of wefindanylearner.com, a government funded site, enabling staff to access relevant training.
- Some teachers have taken on a champion role for areas such as SCERTS, TEACCH, Forest School training, Compass Buzz (low mood support), Workforce

Wellbeing, Tacpac and advanced Tacpac, Visual Processing Difficulties, TEACCH. They cascade their knowledge to the rest of the staff team.

- One member of staff was interviewed who is in charge of 'Attention Autism', and has taken on a champion role for this area. She delivers content to pupils, as well as staff groups, and intends to work with staff at the Ripon school in order to benefit more pupils with a diagnosis of ASC.
- One member of staff has signed up for a week's training on 'Autism and Employment'.
- All courses are followed up with a feedback audit ('one important thing to remember, two things that you have learnt and three ways in which this will impact on practice') to ensure new ideas can be shared and learning can be embedded in the school. Examples of 'one thing to remember': 'It's never too late to start', 'Prompts can be visual, verbal, physical or gestures'. 'Two things you have learnt' examples include 'Some children can become overly reliant on prompts', 'Learning is easier for a lot of children when done visually'. Examples for 'Three ways in which this will impact on practice' includes statements such as 'Reduce prompts as child becomes successful', 'Make myself available for a chat' and 'Include colourful, lifelike photos'.
- As mentioned above, 'Solution Circles' are well embedded in the school and are used to enable staff to address particular challenges. Staff interviewed stated that this is a positive tool. One member of staff commented on the 'Solution Circles', and said they found them to be very well embedded in the school's working practice, and that they find these helpful to discuss individual challenges or issues.
- Staff can receive support from the senior management team, various champions/ specialists, SALT and OT as and when needed.
- Staff who were interviewed stated that the school and all colleagues are very helpful and supportive, that they know where to go and find help or support, and that there is always a range of relevant training available.
- The school encourages reflective practice, and the sharing of good practice in staff meetings, and through their well-established 'solution circles'. This is seen as a particular strength of the school, and the assessment team invite the school to continue this practice. In one interview, staff suggested that it would benefit new members of staff in particular to have more time to share good practice within the whole staff team and to discuss what has gone well, and reflect on situations or student who may be struggling in some areas.

## Section 2: Findings from Assessment

### Person Centred Planning

**Brief description of how individual support is planned, implemented and evaluated:**

According to the school's ASC General Policy, the *'Mowbray School is a special school, all the pupils have a full EHCP. The school has developed an inclusive approach to learners with autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs). Mowbray School values each child as an individual and ensures that the needs of every child are met as fully as possible. All planning takes into account preferred personal learning styles.'* The policy also states that *'When pupils come to Mowbray School they enter a continual process of contextual assessment; recording and programme planning which is individualised and responsive to changing needs. School planning is supported by a range of professionals' e.g. educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social work and parents'.*

Amongst other things the school aims to *'provide an education that meets the individual learning styles and needs of pupils with ASCs'* and to *'provide a broad, relevant and balanced curriculum for pupils with ASCs differentiated to meet individual needs, reflecting the diversity of the world in which they live and preparing them for adulthood.'* (from the 'Teaching and Learning Policy for Learners with Autism'). Mowbray School has recently updated their educational pathways (to cater for Sensory Learners, Semi-Formal, Formal Pastoral, Formal learners, Independent learners and EYFS ), offering a varied curriculum for everyone, tailored to pupils' needs. All pathways are bespoke to different pupil groups, emphasising different areas as appropriate. For example, some outdoor areas have recently been extended and developed further for students of the semi-formal groups, to enable all pupils to continue outdoor education. ASDAN Independent Living qualifications are included in the semi-formal pathway of the curriculum. The formal pathway follows a more 'conventional' secondary curriculum, and offers for example BTEC qualifications for students to work towards. In all pathways, emphasis is put on preparing all pupils for adult life and for transitioning out of Mowbray School and into the work environment as appropriate. The assessment team were very impressed with all the opportunities that are created for the young people, particularly around enterprise and preparation for life. This area is seen as a great strength of the school, and the assessment team were excited to share a small section of all the amazing initiatives, projects and activities.

LASS assessments are used to carry out cognitive profiling, highlighting specific learning needs, in order to highlight areas which individuals need support with and LASS outcomes are in place for all pupils.

The school also carries out a self-esteem audit for pupils. Person centred planning then focuses on any areas raised and takes into account individual needs, preferences, interests and areas that need further support. Pen Portraits are in place and list specific preferences and support needs.

In recent months and during the lockdown, North Yorkshire CC has worked with the school and they have together adjusted the 'Century Tech' platform to enable some of the Mowbray School pupils to access learning via this resource. 'Century Tech' has been introduced to the formal learners to increase engagement and keep students involved, and to enable them to continue their learning at home. The 'Purple Mash' platform is used for learners with more special/ complex needs.

## Differences in Social Communication

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

According to the school's Communication Policy *'helping children to develop their communication and interaction skills as fully as possible assists their independence at school, at home and in the wider community and in preparation for adult life.*

*Communication happens when one person sends a message to another either verbally or non-verbally. Interaction happens when two people respond to one another, hence a two-way communication'. It further explains that 'the assessment of communication and social interaction is done through observation, interaction and in partnership with parents/carers who know their children best. At Mowbray School, work on pupils' communication and on social interaction is developed with close links to the speech and language therapy department. It is useful to distinguish between what a pupil understands (receptive language) and their ability to use communication (expressive language). Children can often understand more than they can communicate.'*

The school's ASC General Policy explains potential communication barriers and states that *'by social communication, we mean how people communicate with each other both verbally or non-verbally in social situations. It affects both how we communicate with others and what we understand of what is communicated back e.g. a child with autism, may develop speech relatively slowly and have limited ability to understand another's feelings. By social interaction we mean the innate drive that most people have to get on with one another. Children with autism may prefer to be on their own or want to interact successfully but lack the skills to do so.'* The policy further states that *'in Mowbray School we value the power of communication and recognise that the learner with autism is disadvantaged in terms of both receptive and expressive communication. Communication is embedded in our school policy. We have individual programmes and practices that promote the development of functional and social communication. We provide our learners with a wide range of experiences, both in and out of school to enable them to develop interactive and spontaneous communication. We are responsive to the needs of individual children. Staff are trained in the use of specialist systems such as PECS and Makaton. We also use photographs, symbols, gestures, etc as appropriate, working in collaboration with our speech and language therapy colleagues'.*

The school employs additional SALT expertise to compliment the work carried out by NHS employed staff. SALTs are responsible for carrying out assessments, as well as delivering staff training. Class teachers use engagement profiles to track pupil involvement, and also complete LASS profiles to highlight individuals' strengths and areas of weakness.

Personal documentation at Mowbray is highly personalised and detailed. In all personal support documentation, it was found that plans identify how each autistic pupil prefers to communicate and what motivates them to socially interact with others. Pen Portraits give a clear overview of communication needs/ social interaction, such as 'normal interactions with a slower emphasis', 'extra processing time', descriptions of individuals' need's with regards to visual aids, having a 'low visual environment', or using social stories. Plans also identify what challenges or barriers each autistic pupil may experience in social communication and interaction.

Clear approaches and tools are well-embedded throughout the school to enable all students to communicate and participate as fully as possible. Visual aids are displayed consistently throughout the school, resulting in a consistency of approach and enabling pupils to understand what was happening or expected. There is a clear and consistent goal setting process, tracking outcomes and celebrating success in all areas, including communication and social engagement.

Every September the school carries out a Total Communication Audit, stating '*A communication-supportive environment for pupils with communication difficulties, ASC and/or Dyslexia has to be visual – an environment that promotes the development of speech, language and communication skills and that offers support to those who struggle with these things*'. The audit aims to review the use of visual support, evaluate resources, look at the school environment, examine the use of verbal language used and to ensure consistency across the whole school.

In interviews, staff showed a thorough and comprehensive understanding and knowledge of autism in general, and most of all of the pupils they work with. It was clear that all staff know the pupils very well and are able to tailor their teaching and the support given to individual needs. They were able to give examples of how autistic pupils have been supported in their communication and social engagement and the positive outcomes they had achieved, for example one member of staff described a Snakes and Ladders game that has been created to support a student 1:1 and encourage him to expand his vocabulary. One parent commented on the fact that until last year she thought her daughter was '*non-verbal*', but has made such good progress in the past few months that she is now able '*to have a conversation*'. One member of staff described in detail the positive impact of now-next boards for one young person they work with, as well as other visual support that is in place.

The school's Student Support Specialist focuses on Speech and Language work. She works alongside SALT who do the assessments. Targets and interventions are then set together for every pupil who needs further support, and the Student Support Specialist

works with the individuals on a 1:1 basis. Bespoke resources (symbols, pictures, games) are created to meet individuals' needs.

Staff in the semi-formal pathways are SCERTS trained, but the school is concentrating on establishing and embedding SCERTS more thoroughly throughout school. A member of staff has a TLR for this responsibility, and the school is currently sourcing some online training for all staff to complete to refresh and update their knowledge and understanding.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

- In all observations, it was found that autistic young people were well supported in their communication. For example one session was using i-pads and 'Clicker' to enable autistic young people to ask for snacks and drinks. Everyone observed was able to access this resource and make choices. In some cases, staff encouraged pupils to use some verbal requests in addition to 'Clicker', for example one young person managed to verbalise 'juice please', whilst another young person was asked how many pieces of banana they wanted, and replied 'I want three'.
- All pupils observed had their own communication targets, for example one boy's target was to use the Makaton sign for 'more'.
- In all observations, staff used a variety of communication methods, such as modelling/ demonstrating, doing things together, pointing, using objects of reference and giving clear and simple instructions.
- Staff make themselves understood through an extensive variety of communication tools. The use of visual aids was consistently observed, and staff and pupils were seen to refer to visuals all the time. Visuals are clearly built into all lessons, and pupils were used to them and were able to access and refer to specific aids as needed. Visual aids were incorporated in activities in a natural way that demonstrated how confident staff were to use them. Makaton signing and visuals were seen to be 'second nature' and were an integral part of all communication.
- Staff were seen to use Makaton and signing, especially when working 1:1 or in smaller groups.
- All observations demonstrated staff adjusting to individuals' needs and communicating appropriately and effectively, for example by simplifying or structuring verbal language and referring to objects of reference/ pointing/ demonstrating. All communication support was tailored to individuals'/ class needs and was highly personalised and bespoke. This resulted in some amazing interactions, where autistic pupils were able to make themselves understood and interact with staff and with each other in a very positive, proactive and independent way.
- Relationships between staff and pupils were always positive and purposeful at all times. Staff knew the young people they were working with very well and were

able to encourage and guide them effectively, giving frequent praise, and responding to individuals' needs and preferences.

- In one classroom pupils were using an i-pad to choose snacks at break time – pupils were able to communicate their preferences and choices, and staff were working 1:1 to accommodate them. It could be argued that using just the one i-pad was good for pupils to learn turn-taking. The assessment team wonder whether all pupils could each have an i-pad. The assessors acknowledge that this is school finance dependent.

## Problem Solving and Self-reliance

### Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The ASC General Policy states that *'Promoting independence is a key target for staff and plays a central role in Preparing for Adulthood. Staff are always aware of the delicate balance between the protection of the vulnerable and facilitating independence based on an assessment of risk'*.

The school puts great emphasis on the importance of transitions, and according to the ASC General Policy, they *'acknowledge the challenge of minor changes such as a change of teacher for a lesson and major changes such as primary to secondary. When planning for transitions, large or small, we understand the need to provide instruction supported by visual materials and autism-specific strategies. The pace of induction to new settings is personalised taking account of individual need. Issues causing anxiety are identified and addressed wherever possible.'*

Staff, pupils and parents interviewed at the assessment were all able to give examples of positive strategies that have been introduced to support people at times of transitions. One mum for example talked at length about her experiences when her children started at the school. The school provided social stories, photos of staff and the environment and thoroughly assessed the pupils' needs. The mum had access to a parent liaison officer, and stated that she felt *'very supported'* during the process.

The school's *'Policy to Support Transitions for Learners with Autism'* goes into further detail and acknowledges that *'many of our pupils attend Mowbray School at different stages in their lives. Increasingly pupils attend a mainstream setting until it breaks down, then they come to Mowbray'*. A number of pupils and parents spoken to during the assessment described their pre-Mowbray experiences and expressed their relief at having found a school that has such a *'caring way of working'* and that *'meets the needs of everyone at the school'*. Another important transition that the school actively works on from Year 9 onwards is the transition out of the school, into college, work, further education or adult settings. It was clear from all interviews with staff and

parents that this is a shared goal and that everyone is aware of the importance of every student being prepared and ready to move on.

In all personal support documentation, it was found that each autistic young person is set personal goals relevant to them, to develop independent life skills, with clear scoring and progression. Plans clearly identify (as appropriate) each pupil's skills and challenges related to everyday life, adulthood and education. Clear and highly personalised goals are set for each individual pupil, such as 'To respond appropriately to narrative "who, what, where" questions, using short phrases within structured activities, with 80% accuracy.', 'To take turns in a familiar game or activity (e.g. bubbles, rolling a ball) within a small group setting for 15 minutes, with minimal support from adults.', or 'To use JED or other internet investigations to be informed about post 16 and the world of employment.'

Mowbray School has strong links with the community, promoting community involvement and individual progress and independence. Projects such as the link with a local supermarket to collect food to use in the school's food technology room and the shop (which is currently closed) provide long lasting and impressive experiences. It is clear from speaking to staff and to pupils that they feel a very strong connection with the school and are incredibly proud of the work they do and their achievements. Through the various initiatives, the school is well integrated into the local community.

The school's broad and varied curriculum includes the use of the local leisure centre for swimming and fitness, outdoor centres and climbing walls, school and forest cycling, skateboarding, farm work, a theatre group, playing golf, inter-school sports, archery and local residential visits.

The school has a clear goal setting structure. For example academic goals such as 'counting to 20 consistently' or 'I can join in writing activities' are set as 'emerging – developing – secure', with clear descriptors and differentiation.

The school have recently revised their curriculum/ pathways, with great emphasis on 'Preparation for Adulthood'. Staff interviewed were clearly driven to 'make a difference' and teach their pupils functional life skills, enabling them to become more self-reliant and autonomous. The assessment team saw great examples during their observations, confirming the proactive approach the school takes in this area (see observations below), providing highly personalised activities and methods/ approaches.

All interviews with staff reflected a sound and comprehensive knowledge and a clear understanding of autism. Staff were consistently able to give examples of how they have supported autistic pupils in following routines, coping with change and making decisions/ choices – and the positive outcomes achieved as a result. For example, staff described some recent 'life skill days', one of which focused on increasing pupils' independence to access travel/ transport. All staff were able to describe positive transitions, and were able to give examples of how transitions are planned and catered for.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

- In all observations, it was found that autistic pupils had the confidence and were able to make choices and express opinions. For example when choosing snacks, pupils were seen to ask for 'more' or say 'finished' and making clear choices what they wanted.
- There were many situations when pupils were seen to work together, consult each other and take turns. It was clear from all observations that team work and increased independence are a strong focus at the school.
- Visual schedules, visual aids and now-next boards were well embedded in teaching practices and enabled autistic pupils to work out what they needed to do now and what they were expected to do next. All support observed was highly personalised to meet individuals' needs and was given as needed, with teaching staff happy to 'step back' to let pupils work out things by themselves. Great examples of graded assistance and active support were observed, for example during an outdoor activity when one autistic pupil needed more support than others, and staff picked up on this and discreetly offered to help.
- It was clear from all observations that pupils are provided with opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills in areas such as literacy and numeracy skills. Personal achievements are celebrated throughout the school, and communicated with parents/ carers. One boy has just won a county creative writing competition.
- Autistic pupils were consistently observed as being happy to communicate with staff. They were confident and keen to engage. For example, they had the skills to answer simple questions about their weekend. Pupils with more complex needs have increased visual support and 1:1 support to enable them to fully participate.
- The assessment team felt that students were particularly keen and able to communicate, not only with staff and other pupils, but also with the assessors. They were keen to showcase their school and celebrate their time there, demonstrating how proud they are of their achievements and how connected they feel with their school. For example, members of the School Council were interviewed. They talked about money raised in sales and other events to purchase equipment for 'people who need it', such as new accessibility bikes to meet the needs of all abilities. They also described a 'playtime buddy system', where some pupils look out for others to keep them safe and yet integrated and involved. The School Council arranges various activities for charities, and is also in charge of organising recycling.
- In all observations staff clearly worked collaboratively together as a staff team and with their classes and individuals to enable students to become more self-reliant and autonomous. It was clear throughout the assessment that the school takes a very proactive approach to teach life skills and focus of preparation for adulthood.

- Pupils always knew what was expected and what was happening now – next – later. There are clear routines in place, for example everyone knows which school entrance to use, Pupils arrive at different areas and times, making the arrival at school well-structured and relaxed. The arrival at school is a new arrangement that was introduced under the current restrictions, and the school have noticed that the new arrangements work even better than the previous arrival at school. All pupils seemed at ease when they arrived at school. They knew what their timetables were, knew what to expect and where to go, and were seen to walk into school with purpose and enthusiasm.
- One pupil struggles with the transition into school in the morning. The school have taken various steps to support him: X uses an alternative entrance to come into a quieter, less busy outside play space. The same, consistent member of staff meets him. A train set is set up for him, ready to play with (with a different train every day to maintain interest). Staff observe him on arrival and adapt what they do to meet his needs.
- Autistic pupils were consistently observed working independently. They were always on task and engaged, and were able to (as appropriate) describe what they were doing and why.
- Individual pupils' choices were not only respected by staff, but actively encouraged, for example one boy chose water rather than hot chocolate during snack time. Another example was when one boy decided to walk around the top part of the nature reserve by himself during a break, while two other boys played Dr Who and a small group played hide and seek.
- Many tasks were clearly reared around preparation for adulthood. The facilities at the school are outstanding for pupils. Many life skill sessions and projects have been established, and pupil involvement is evident everywhere.

## Sensory Experiences

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

The school's ASC General Policy explains what sensory needs are and states that *'Our senses work together to help us understand ourselves, and manoeuvre effectively in our environment. When the senses are working together they protect us and allow us to enjoy our surroundings. When senses do not work together they can make the world an uncomfortable and sometimes frightening place to be.'* According to the same policy, *'Mowbray School are aware of the significance of sensory issues in autism. We work with parents and colleagues in partner agencies to assess and plan for sensory differences in the following domains: Visual, Olfactory, Auditory, Oral, Tactile, Proprioceptive and Vestibular. Programmes, interactions and practice reflect this*

*understanding, e.g. a pupil may be supported to have a gradual introduction to the school hall before other children arrive and be allowed to explore new tastes and textures.’ The Sensory Policy describes ‘Our senses provide us with a means of interacting with and being part of society and enable us to understand and respond to the environment around us. Many individuals, particularly those on the autistic spectrum, have difficulties in integrating or making sense of sensory inputs, which often manifests itself as withdrawal, distress or challenging behaviour. Addressing sensory issues should result in increased engagement with the curriculum and therefore improved learning experiences, along with greater opportunities for engagement in both school and non-school activities. Sensory assessment can further personalize learning programmes, especially those pupils with complex learning difficulties’.*

The school has a designated OT who provides training, carries out sensory assessments, suggest methods, strategies, interventions and equipment and works alongside staff to model their suggestions.

Staff have access to the ‘Sensory Strategies Booklet’, giving a detailed outline of hypo and hyper sensitivities, and listing sensitivities, activities and resources for the different senses. For example: Sight (hyposensitive) – Sensitivity: seeks bright/ flickering lights – Activity: give pupil time to explore shiny objects – Resources: Spinning toys, Glitter tubes, Flashing toys. The assessment team feel that this is a very useful and detailed document that is easy to access and use for staff.

The school environment has been modified to accommodate the sensory needs of individuals with autism and staff receive training in understanding and responding to sensory differences. The school has a sensory circuit room, a sensory room and two calm rooms, offering space to self- regulate. In addition to the indoor space, the outdoor provision includes a farm, horticulture and a nature reserve where forest school activities take place.

A Sensory Profile is carried out on each autistic pupil highlighting challenges they may experience in the classroom environment. The sensory assessment used at Mowbray School is based on work by Olga Bogdashina. The school is in personal contact with her, and members of the staff team have personally worked with Olga Bogdashina, and have suggested some changes in the assessment tool. The amended checklist that the school now use identifies sensory needs, preferences, strengths and challenges and is completed by the class teacher, with input from the pupil and parents/ carers. Sensory profiling is carried out by support staff, and managed by the heads of department. The Olga Bogdashina sensory profile is used to assess all pupils. Observations on the pupils are carried out to underpin the findings and plan for specific areas.

Pen Portraits give a concise overview of sensory needs, special interests and motivators and triggers (for example transitions). They also outline current interventions.

One member of staff has taken on a project over two/ three terms to improve provision for autistic pupils, and to further develop sensory independence skills around the school. When interviewed, she explained that as a result of this project the school has

- Embedded zones of regulation in teaching and learning: classroom audits now include zones of regulation where appropriate.
- The PSHE curriculum now contains a unit of work on self-regulation and sensory learning for KS3 and KS4. Data findings following the changes to the PSHE curriculum demonstrably shows that students have made considerable progress with sensory regulation, understanding their sensory needs and developing independence skills that impact on their learning.
- Audited knowledge of sensory regulation within the staff team and pupils: data taken at the beginning and at the end of the project shows that students have gained significant skills in recognising their own sensory needs, and being able to self-regulate.
- New sensory resources have been purchased and developed. A sensory lead is now in charge of auditing sensory equipment. One pupil did a sponsored run and used all the money he raised to purchase new equipment.
- Developed personalised programmes to support all pupils with sensory regulation: the pen portrait has been amended to include sensory needs, with a detailed sensory profile attached.
- Staff training on sensory needs and regulation was delivered by the teacher to all staff.
- The project collated data from staff as well, which shows that staff are more confident to support learners with self-regulation and to access sensory activities.

All staff interviewed were able to give examples of sensory adjustments that have been made and how they have supported autistic young people in their sensory regulation/ avoiding sensory overload, for example staff described the impact of being able to access outdoor learning regularly, gave examples of the use of sensory equipment, or keeping the environment calm and low arousal. One member of staff described the importance of having a calm, relaxed space to work in for her 1:1 sessions.

Staff carry out very detailed observations of the young people they support, tracking progress and raising areas that need further support, either in their 'pathway' team, with the class team or with the OT.

Staff reflected on sensory training they have completed. One member of staff for example spoke about a successful recent whole school training focused on sensory overload and explained that it was '*useful to understand what this feels like*'.

The school employs a number of sensory activities, such as rebound, Lego therapy,

Jabadao, Rebound Therapy, swimming (some groups attend public swimming sessions), and the use of the 'Dexterity' app on i-pads for fine and gross motor skills. Sensory resources are available for pupils to use, such as weighted blankets, ear defenders, cushions, dark dens, sensory fiddlers and sensory play. The extensive outdoor learning space offers quiet areas and space to get away, and is incorporated in all timetables as regular outdoor activities take place.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

- In all observations, it was found that autistic young people were well supported with their sensory needs. All staff clearly knew the young people they were working with and knew about individuals' potential triggers and preferences. For example one autistic boy came outside to access the bikes with a member of staff, to get 'some peace and quiet' and some exercise, but then decided that he wanted to walk around the playground instead.
- One autistic girl was observed being supported to self-regulate her emotions. Staff put on some different music and then took her hand and ran with her. She visibly responded to this approach and calmed down.
- Autistic young people were consistently observed to access sensory activities which they found enjoyable or relaxing, for example a Rebound/ Jabadao session showed a clear difference in the presentation of the group: at the beginning of the session the group seemed unsettled and all pupils were engaged in individual activities. Within a short amount of time, the atmosphere calmed down remarkably, and pupils began to interact with each other and engage actively.
- During a PE lesson pupils were very focused and engaged, taking initiative and asking for help. They made use of the space in the sports hall and managed to all complete the lesson together. Staff were available for 1:1 support as needed and to model/ demonstrate activities.
- Pupils were able to access sensory resources at all times, and the assessment team observed the use of ear defenders, requests for time out, the use of a variety of different work stations and low arousal approaches.
- In one observation, one girl knew that a balloon would make a loud 'pop' sound and decided to crouch under a table in the corner, as a means of self-regulating and coping.
- During one activity, a boy was over-stimulated. This may well have been due to the additional adult present. He was seeking reassurance from the TA, and went to the sensory room to calm down. The assessor felt that he may have benefited from access to a chewy tube, or a bear hug vest, but also acknowledges that she does not know the boy, and that these may not be appropriate resources for him.
- One pupil, who is known to potentially struggle in busy spaces, was seen sitting at a table with a peer for snack time. He had his ear defenders on and was

happy to be in the main classroom. The teacher told the assessor that this was a huge achievement.

- Pupils were observed in one activity, sharing a space, all around a shared table area making breakfast wraps. They had a choice of wrap fillings and were making their own wraps, working independently.

## Emotional Well-being

### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:**

The school uses a variety of resources, interventions and strategies to address pupils' wellbeing. Pen portraits, engagement profiles are in place for all students. The 5 Point Scale, Compass Buzz and '2 Build a Profile' are used to inform teaching and learning. Staff know the pupils at the school very well, which ensures that triggers/ challenges are known and staff are able to prevent or react appropriately to support each individual.

As described in the previous section, the school benefits from a variety of sensory and calm spaces to enable pupils to self-regulate.

A rich PSHE Curriculum is thoroughly embedded in the school day, as well as the 'Preparing for Adulthood' curriculum. The School Nurse supports these areas, and sessions are personalised to each group of learners.

Zones of Regulation have been thoroughly embedded in the classrooms, with school internal lesson observations focusing specifically on this area. Pupils are encouraged to identify and understand their emotions, and are supported to develop coping strategies. This is all underpinned by the 'Preparing for Adulthood' curriculum, as well as being put into practice in lessons, and during outings/ time in the wider community.

The school prides itself in its 'real' and 'meaningful' activities and curriculum. Some staff are forest school trained. All students, in all pathways, regularly access outdoor learning. Not only does the extensive outdoor area offer space to calm down and self-regulate, it also provides real life learning opportunities, such as gardening, farming/ animal husbandry, and activities in the school nature reserve. Activities on the farm and in the garden are used to enhance other subject areas, for example 'counting eggs in twos and in threes' was used to practice times tables, as well as adding/ subtracting.

All documentation shows clear goal setting processes and there was clear evidence of all pupils having clear, person centred targets, such as 'requiring less support during

learning activities', 'controlling impatience', 'tolerance of others' or 'modify actions based on past experiences'.

There was clear evidence of joined up working with parents, and on occasions with CAMHS, producing a detailed report with risk assessments, PBS strategies and triggers. Strategies suggested include '*regular sensory breaks may also support X with emotional regulation*' or '*deep pressure exercises could be built into X's daily routine to support regulation if this has a calming effect*'.

Risk Assessment and Behaviour Plans are in place for all students, these are kept short and concise, almost like behaviour pen portraits. The plans focus on de-escalation and positive reinforcement.

The school is a 'Makaton Friendly School', and Makaton signs for emotions are frequently reinforced, enabling pupils to become more able and confident to express their feelings.

Mowbray School has been awarded the 'Wellbeing Award for Schools' in 2019, in recognition of high standards. The school is also the 'Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award' winner 2019. According to the ARC framework, 'The Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework is a flexible, components-based intervention developed for children and adolescents who have experienced complex trauma, along with their caregiving systems. ARC's foundation is built upon four key areas of study: normative childhood development, traumatic stress, attachment, and risk and resilience. Drawing from these areas, ARC identifies important childhood skills and competencies which are routinely shown to be negatively affected by traumatic stress and by attachment disruptions, and which – when addressed – predict resilient outcome.'

In interviews, staff were able to give examples of how autistic young people have been supported resulting in positive outcomes in terms of quality of life and life opportunities, for example one member of staff explained that it has been very important to coach pupils to have an increased understanding of their emotions, in order for them to be able to recognise potentially difficult situations or triggers and develop individual coping strategies.

Another member of staff explained that 'Pupils are carefully grouped to try and cater for various needs, with the aim to tailor groups as close to personal needs and challenges as possible. We also make sure we give students time to process information, and to have time and space to reflect and learn'.

The adviser also learnt that '*Our pupils mix with a range of pupils with difficulties, and it is through our approach of celebrating differences, skills and areas which we find tricky, our pupils leave school with a knowledge of their own condition and balanced opinion of SEND. We have a rich and broad curriculum, with indoor and outdoor learning on the school farm and nature reserve, indoor/outdoor provision for most classrooms, clubs and after school activities. Out of school pupils have the opportunity attend a range of ASC specific provision, for example a theatre group, Pendragon,*

*Daisy Chain, sunshine Sensory Song time, Fun with Autism, Little Hiccups and Little treasures.'*

Members of the staff team are trained Emotion Coaches, and a lot of work (including case studies) has been done around the whole school to educate pupils in recognising and dealing with emotions. The assessment team examined some case studies that have been completed around emotional wellbeing. There was clear evidence that pupils are being supported to understand how they feel and why they may feel like this, to recognise triggers and develop coping strategies. The use of social stories in this context was well documented, and all case studies showed an increase in pupils' self-worth and confidence.

During the Coronavirus lockdown, staff worked very hard and in partnership with families/ carers to ensure all pupils remained engaged in their learning. Various projects were suggested by teachers, such as 'Write a letter to your grandchild (to be opened in the year 2060) describing life in the UK during the Corona virus lockdown', 'Re-watch your favourite film and write a short report which convinces me to watch it', 'Create a new comic super hero. Draw your character (or describe your character Jamie) and describe their super power. Then write a story or draw a comic book page in which your superhero uses their super power to save the day', 'Put some brown paint on paper and blow until you have made the Gruffalo's body and head. When he is dry add some arms, legs, knobbly knees, eyes, purple prickles and a poisonous wart on the end of his nose', or 'Make a Gruffalo inspired sensory board'. Response from parents was overwhelmingly positive, and parents and pupils got involved, remained engaged, and continued to participate in meaningful activities that they could enjoy together. The assessment team would also like to commend the school for remaining open for many pupils throughout lockdown, providing much needed stability at a time of great uncertainty for their most vulnerable young people.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

- The school facilitates an active School Council group. Some pupils were interviewed during the assessment, and it was clear that they all have a clear sense of belonging to the school, pride to be part of the school community, and the joy of sharing achievements with everyone.
- Interactions between staff and pupils was consistently positive and focused. Staff were highly skilled and responsive to individuals' needs, for example one autistic girl was getting upset when she had to wait for her turn on the trampoline. Staff distracted her very effectively by playing hide and seek behind a curtain, and she enjoyed herself so much that she no longer asked to go on the trampoline, and other children joined in with the game.
- Pupils were consistently encouraged to make choices, and to understand and regulate their emotions. For example, according to staff one girl used to 'snatch and grab food and throw items', making it quite challenging to manage but she has learnt how to ask for food calmly and has been supported to become less agitated at snack times/ mealtimes.

- One young man was able to describe his school journey and how systems had been put in place to help him manage his anger. He described how he is now able to self-regulate by handing a 'time out' card to staff, which enables him to go outside for a walk around the bike track.
- Some students who are currently enrolled on a work experience programme also spoke to the assessor. They were all so enthusiastic about what they do, and the 'real work' they accomplish. They described their work on a farm nearby, and how they help the farmer there, they were able to describe what they have learnt (how to feed animals, do some DIY, check the sheep, stack food, repair fences 'in a way that the cows do not injure themselves on the nails'). They said going to the farm 'is a cool thing to do', and that it was good to be outdoors as they are 'sick to be inside'. One student told the assessor that his grandparents have a farm, and that it is really useful to learn 'real farming'. All students spoke with great pride.
- The school actively works with all pupils on their work and study skills, preparing them for a 'life after school' and seeking meaningful activities, work placements and links in the community.
- In one observation, pupils could choose different activities such as chopping wood, making tiles or planting. All pupils made their own choices and knew what was required. They were able to set up their work independently, and understood the relevant health and safety requirements. Everyone was engaged and worked as a team. One pupil needed a little more support than the others, and this was provided very discreetly by the teacher.
- All activities observed were tailored to pupils' needs and were 'real and meaningful'. For example, pupils harvested herbs grown by them, which were then used in the pea and ham soup made on one day of the assessment. Pupils prepared hot drinks (with support), built a fire and showed the assessor their 'composting toilet'. They were so proud of their school facilities and very engaged in their learning. There was a clear sense of completion and achievement in the observations and also when pupils spoke about the school.
- There was a high level of mutual respect between staff and pupils, and it was clear that staff understand pupils' needs extremely well.
- Autistic young people presented as feeling safe and calm throughout the assessment.
- Autistic pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities. A group of students was interviewed and described class jobs, such as 'composting' where pupils take a bucket to the other classrooms to collect compost, and then take it outside to the compost on the farm. They clearly took great pride in jobs, and are already thinking about which jobs they would like to take on next (jobs are re-allocated every half term). One boy was keen to be in charge of the calendar after the holidays, where he would change the day on the calendar every morning, and changes the month as appropriate.
- Although the local shop that was run by the school has unfortunately had to close now, students were involved in decorating and renovating the premises. They laid new floors, did some carpentry jobs and some painting, providing

them with yet another opportunity to learn important life skills and becoming more independent.

- The school has had to make a number of changes, and the assessment team feel that this has been done exceptionally well. For example, the use of the grounds at the start of the day for young people who in some cases have been on their minibus for an hour was seen to work very well for all pupils - many pupils using the track for walking, cycling and the exercise trail. The new 'arrival at school' procedures have been so successful that the school intends to carry on with similar arrangements post Covid.

### **Consultation with Autistic People**

- The school has an active Student Council, see interviews in previous sections.
- EHCPs are reviewed annually, and students are actively encouraged to contribute to these reviews and be part of them as much as possible. Pupils are involved in their learning, and their contribution is valued.
- Pupil voice audits are carried out to check on pupil well-being both formally and informally.
- Support is tailored to individuals' needs, and activities are consistently adjusted to suit people's preferences.
- Staff carry out detailed observations and try new and different ways to meet people's needs.
- Some students were interviewed during the assessment, and told the team:
  - 'I love going to the farm, it's really cool and I like the work I do there' (about work experience)
  - How keen they were on being involved in the running of the school, through the School Council and by taking responsibility of class jobs.
  - 'It is good to help others. Some people need more help, and it feels good to do something'

### **Consultation with families of Autistic People**

- The school's ASC General Policy describes contact with families: 'At Mowbray School, we have excellent links with families and value the detailed knowledge parents can provide about their children. We meet regularly with parents with the aim of developing a consistent management approach across both school and home settings. We use strategies such as Class Dojo, home/school diary;

photographs, social stories to link home and school and make experiences more meaningful for our learners. Families are involved in the annual review process and are asked to complete a parental questionnaire. There is opportunity to meet with families, and other agencies if appropriate in direct response to need.'

- Three Parent Liaison Officers are in post to signpost and ensure a prompt and accurate exchange of information, and support parents in challenging situations.
- The school provides Cygnet training to parents over a six week course. Staff interviewed described the impact this training makes, as well as the increased confidence and involvement parents show.
- Individual support is provided to parents with resource ideas, lending resources to try at home.
- The school communicate with parents regarding what works well at school and strategies used, to encourage a consistent approach between home – school.
- Parents attend regular parents evenings.
- The school makes regular phone calls home, speak to parents at drop off or collection and also use the 'Dojo App' to communicate with parents and to share achievements and pictures or communicate any changes or issues. Parents are part of annual reviews and EHCP reviews.
- Emotional first aid is offered to parents in a 6 week course.
- Several families were interviewed. All parents spoken to felt very well informed and involved in school life. Their feedback was positive, telling the team:
  - *'My daughter is non-verbal, but staff have worked so hard with my daughter she can now hold a conversation'*
  - *'Staff keep in touch really well, I get daily updates and pictures and things to do. We also have phone calls and video calls to keep in touch'*
  - *'I am really happy with the school'*
  - *'I am always kept up to date with how X is doing and how he is behaving'*
  - *'The school have been preparing X since Year 9 to transition after Year 11. He is really ready to go, and has been very well prepared. I will be really sad when he has to leave'*
  - *'The teaching staff are so nice, it feels as if they are part of our extended family'*
  - *'My daughter has become much more independent and confident'*
  - *'My son has just started in EYFS. He has settled in really well. We are so happy that he enjoys school, especially after such a long break at home'*
  - *'X does things at school that he would not do at home. He feels really relaxed and safe at school'*
- 42 family members provided feedback to the assessment team by returning completed questionnaires. The full results are shown as an appendix to this report. 34 parents strongly agree that the school has had a positive impact on

their family member's life and learning, whilst 6 agree. Only 1 parent disagreed with this statement. All comments received were extremely positive about the work of the school. For example, families write:

- *'Ever since my child started at Mowbray school I have found them extremely supportive and committed to the children's needs. All the staff do an amazing job'*
- *All the staff are exceptionally good, particularly when our child has a dual diagnosis with Downs and Sensory issues. Our Child enjoys such a wide range of learning opportunities from the school that are second to none.*
- *My child has changed beyond all expectations since attending Mowbray. He is no longer permanently stressed and I'll. He is a happy child who is positive about his possibilities. For the first time ever at his last review the talk was mainly about academic ability. I can not thank Mowbray enough for the positive effect they have had on my boy.*

### **Involvement with the wider community**

In addition to the information provided in the advanced status application form, the assessors wish to highlight the school's achievements and involvement in the wider community:

- The Mowbray School is a Research School with a Research Charter Mark at the extending level. *'We welcome research at all levels. Research within the past year has included: A Degree dissertation by an ATA on maximising AAC communication, a teacher has recently been awarded a distinction for her MA dissertation on Lego Therapy-Simon Baron Cohen has asked for a copy. We currently have a PHD research programme lasting 10 weeks and de-sensitising pupils with ASC to specific sounds which they currently find intolerable'.*
- The adviser was informed that *'The local community have just been awarded Makaton friendly Town status in 2019 (only the second in the world) which has enabled us to share the communication needs of our pupils amongst the whole community attending training. Those attending included doctors, dentists, hairdressers, the library, tourist information, ambulance service, churches, cafes, pubs, etc. Mowbray School itself is a Makaton Friendly School.'*
- Prior to Covid, the school had an off-site shop, selling products made by pupils. The shop unfortunately had to be closed due to COVID distancing restrictions and the subsequent risks involved, but online sales continue. Innovation and creativity in using the facilities and resources on offer were observed at all times, and staff are

clearly keen to give their absolute best, take initiative and are happy to try new ideas.

- The school is part of 'Challenge Partners', both within the North East Hub, as well as part of external reviews further afield. This is an opportunity to get an insight into what other schools do and share good practice with a wider circle of professionals.
- There are strong local connections, and a clear willingness of the local community to share and contribute to the learning opportunities of the students at Mowbray School. For example, pupils are given the opportunity to enrol on work placements at a farm, a pet shop, and at a furniture manufacturers nearby.  
Mowbray School is part of the 'Farm School Network'.
- The school is keen to have cultural links with the community to share local events – visiting musicians, various performances, 'Live Music Now', visiting artists such as the Clay Poppy Installation working with Catterick Garrison, and working with chefs from a local cookery schools (with students taking part in 5 star cookery courses).
- Some individuals also enter local competitions, for example at annual Country shows, or poetry recitals (pupils take part in the Annual Wensleydale Festival with contestants in the Poetry Competitions and Choir event). Pupils are encouraged to get involved and participate in local events, for example sporting events through the Special School Sports Trust, or the Easter pancake race community event in Bedale. The school was highly involved in the Tour-De-Yorkshire Bike ride 2019 with Mowbray School pupils giving TV interviews. Pupils take part in agricultural shows, such as the Great Yorkshire Show, and some pupils have entered competitions, for example at Harlow Carr Gardens Harrogate. One young man has just won the North Yorkshire CC 'Togetherness' creative writing competition (October 2020). A quote from his award winning cartoon is 'When you seem lonely, friendship is your guide. Togetherness fills you with pride'.
- There are regular opportunities for pupils to share school based entertaining and fundraising activities: '*Annual Farm Open days, Annual International Lego weekend event in the school Sports Hall, Community Fun run in and around the school grounds*'.
- Parent Liaison Officers provide advice to parents, signposting to all relevant community groups and activities.
- '*Bedale Parish Council have recently sponsored new bikes for the school and they also sponsored Makaton Friendly Town. We have generous sponsorship from the Deanne Gee Memorial Fund (Helping Children with disabilities) and Betty's Northallerton. Falls Timber Bedale donate wood.*'
- The school has set up regular weekly deliveries from Tesco and the Co-Op 'Community Free Share', providing food for use in school. The school also uses home grown produce to make chutneys and jams that are then sold.

- Pupils of Mowbray School carry out activities to put something back into the local community, for example by *'litter picking in and around Bedale, clearing the overgrown Bedale Beck banks'*.
- There is an annual church Carol Service in St. Gregory's with parents and pupils, involving the church community.
- Senior Citizen receive invitations to Christmas Events and the school organises Carol Singing in local care homes.
- There have been Local History Walks with the Bedale Historians.
- Life Skill Days happen frequently in the community, like a recent one on learning about public transport and gaining confidence and skills to use public transport.
- There are staff links with Swaledale Alliance, Red Kite Alliance, currently involved in collaborative work to write a SEND course for 2021-22 delivered by Red Kite, as well as delivering training at an Initial Teacher Training SEND Conference (Nov 2020).
- Voluntary work happens through Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Award scheme.
- The school has achieved a number of external awards:
  - Well-Being Award in 2019
  - Emotion Coaching Award for excellence in 2018
  - Attachment Aware school in 2018
  - National Timpson Award, through the Attachment Research Community, in recognition of best special school and Pupil Referral Unit in the UK, recognising the school's work around attachment issues in November 2019
  - Careers Award 2020 in recognition of the high standard of the school's careers advice
  - Investors in pupils re-accreditation, meeting a range of robust standards across the school in 2018
  - School Farm Network Award (2018) for 'best use of the school farm in the curriculum', as well as for 'School Farm Leadership'.
  - International Eco School Award

## Section 3: Summary of assessment

### What the provision does particularly well

#### What stood out as particular strengths:

- The assessment team were very impressed with all the opportunities that are created for the young people, particularly around enterprise and preparation for life. This area is seen as a great strength of the school, and the assessment team were excited to share a small section of all the amazing initiatives, projects and activities.
- Staff knew all the pupils very well. All staff were seen to interact in a highly personalised and individual way with all the pupils, and teaching staff clearly knew their classes and individuals' needs and were able to plan and respond to them at all times. Staff have been extremely flexible in recent months. For example, some staff have increased their hours in order to cover lessons, enabling the school to cover all lessons with existing and experienced staff, rather than needing to employ agency staff. Staff retention and training is very good at Mowbray School. The school explained that they like to develop the TAs to encourage them to specialise in areas that they are interested in and that are needed in the school. TAs were well deployed - this was seen across all areas of the school. Staff have clearly been empowered to carry out their roles - and used their passions. Staff are clearly very committed to help out in maintaining the farm and looking after the animals over the school holidays.
- Staff were very keen to work towards positive outcomes, and were focused on individuals' aims and goals. The school invests a substantial amount of time into preparing students to leave the school after Year 11. Parents who were spoken to confirmed that their children feel 'ready' and 'well prepared' for life after school, and that they have had years of preparation for this next step. Pupils (and their families) are involved in setting goals, and all have individual and personal targets, working toward areas that are important for them, to develop key skills. As staff are so tuned into their classes and know each young person so well, they are focused on individuals' needs. Ofsted commented that *'personal and social development are strong'*.
- Training: the assessment team feels that the Mowbray School has an outstanding and exemplary training programme. Not only are induction and training sessions well-embedded and established, but the variety of training available to staff is also outstanding. It is clear that staff actively take part in training and this reflects in their practice. All staff observed and interviewed had extensive knowledge and understanding of autism and were able to transfer this knowledge to support individuals in a person-centred and individualised way.

- **Community Links:** the school is part of a wider network of schools working together to continually improve practice. There are also strong links with the local community, through work experience placements, the café, taking part in local competitions, etc.
- **Meaningful tasks/ activities:** All observations showed a clear commitment by all members of staff to make 'a difference' and achieve positive and long-lasting outcomes for their pupils and classes. There is strong emphasis on providing real and meaningful activities. This was evident throughout all observations. The use of the school's nature reserve offers real life learning opportunities, with classes regularly accessing the outdoor classroom, forest school sessions and taking on projects to maintain the area. The farm and garden are integral parts of the teaching activities. Both offer an opportunity for the young people to develop essential skills in many areas, whilst also providing outdoor tasks, contributing to a healthy living style.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** This is a clear strength of the school, and work around emotion coaching and emotional wellbeing runs through all activities as a red thread. Staff are well trained, highly skilled and as a result very aware of everyone's needs. Relationships between staff and pupils were seen to be very positive and mutually supportive. Clear emphasis is put on developing individuals' coping strategies, increasing awareness and coaching the autistic young people to reflect and analyse situations, and by doing so improving/ maintaining their mental-health.
- **Curriculum:** the updated pathways cater for a variety of learners' needs and learning styles. Pupils are involved in their learning, and their contribution is valued. The assessment team feels that the preparation for adulthood aspect of the curriculum is particularly outstanding and impressive.
- The wide range of ASC specific approaches which are used throughout the school reflect the thorough and varied training staff receive, and shows clear commitment to constantly reflect, review and try new things.

**What else the school does well:**

- **Time to reflect and share good practice:** throughout all observations and interviews, staff were seen to work together well as a team and communicate with each other. It was clear from speaking to staff that they knew whom to turn to for support or with any questions.
- The way the school has handled the last few months during Covid restrictions should be acknowledged. They stayed open during the lockdown period and had approximately 70 children in school during the summer term. New systems have been introduced within the school, and the pupils have all responded well

to the change in routine, such as new arrival routines and new marked out playground areas. They all understand the new rules. Everyone has adapted to the changes of entrances and exits to the school and to new dining arrangements. Transitions into school in particular were very well managed, and the assessor was impressed by the smooth running of this busy and hectic time of the day.

### **What the provision could develop further**

#### **Areas to consider:**

- The Mowbray School have opened a new school in Ripon. This is not currently part of accreditation, but will be included in future. The school are reviewing existing systems to ensure consistency across both sites. The assessment team praise the school for expanding and extending their offer and welcome the ongoing efforts to establish similar working practices across both sites.
- Sensory provision is being expanded further, with new resources to be purchased. This may result in some additional training needs especially for new staff. The OT and well-established champions will oversee these developments.
- SCERTS: the school is concentrating on establishing and embedding SCERTS more thoroughly across the semi-formal pathway. A member of staff has a TLR for this responsibility, and the school is currently sourcing some online training for all staff to complete.
- The school encourages reflective practice, and the sharing of good practice in staff meetings, and through their well-established 'solution circles'. This is seen as a particular strength of the school, and the assessment team invite the school to continue this practice. In one interview, staff suggested that it would benefit new members of staff in particular to have more time to share good practice within the whole staff team and to discuss what has gone well, and reflect on situations or student who may be struggling in some areas. The school is already exploring ways of sharing practice within pathways, to share good and outstanding practice, to create opportunities for staff to celebrate achievements, and to have some time exchange ideas and work together. Various options are being looked at, for example a system for staff to 'swap roles' to then discuss findings afterwards. Teachers may benefit from teaching alongside another member of staff.

## APPENDIX 1 : SURVEYS

Feedback questionnaire on Mowbray School, Families

The support my relative is given is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		2.38%	1
2	ok, but could be better		2.38%	1
3	mostly good		14.29%	6
4	always good		80.95%	34
			answered	42
			skipped	0

The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		2.38%	1
2	ok, but could be better		2.38%	1
3	mostly good		16.67%	7
4	always good		78.57%	33
			answered	42
			skipped	0

**The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		2.38%	1
2	ok, but could be better		7.14%	3
3	mostly good		30.95%	13
4	always good		59.52%	25
			answered	42
			skipped	0

**The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	poor		4.76%	2
2	ok, but could be better		2.38%	1
3	mostly good		28.57%	12
4	always good		64.29%	27
			answered	42
			skipped	0

Please note comments are shared with the provision but are removed from the final report so it can be published and widely shared.

## **APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS FROM THE PROVISION**

I very much appreciate the professional advice and support from Anja Cole, her visits to Mowbray School are always very welcome.

Despite the difficulties experienced during this 'Review' year, we finally managed a safe and robust Review with two knowledgeable and experienced assessors. The subsequent report is a true reflection and celebration of our commitment by all the staff team to our young people and their families, as well as a celebration of the daily achievements our pupils make.

**APPENDIX 3: ADVANCED APPLICATION FORM**  
**APPLICATION FORM FOR ADVANCED STATUS**

Name of registration:	Mowbray School
Date when provision was last accredited;	June 2017
Contact person:	Mrs Karen Pickles
Adviser:	Anja Cole

Criteria 1: Does assessment of the provision confirm that there are many considerable areas of strength within the service in relationship to the Autism Accreditation Standards with no or minor actions for development? *This will be addressed within the assessment report and does not require further comment.*  
It has been recommended by our advisor that we apply for Advanced Status.

Criteria 2: Is the service considered to have outstanding features in meeting statutory requirements related to outcomes for autistic people?

Please provide a website link to the relevant reports and any additional comments that might be helpful in interpreting the reports. If the service is not accessed by a statutory body please write n/a

<https://www.mowbrayschool.co.uk>

Criteria 3: Is a high-quality programme of continuous Professional Development in place.

Does it ensure that staff have a robust specialist knowledge of autism specific best practice methods and approaches?

Mowbray School plans a robust programme of professional development which supports staff in meeting the needs of all our 225 pupils aged 3-16yrs. Currently our cohort of young people includes 112 with a diagnosis of ASC. All teaching spaces are assessed using an ASC good practice audit in September every year to ensure that the environment meets the needs of pupil with a diagnosis of ASC and our whole school population. During the course of the past three years since our last assessment, our training has included sensory regulation and subsequent resources which support the young people with managing their own sensory regulation, zones of regulation, well-being and Emotion Coaching through Emotion Coaching UK for all staff, Compass Buzz low mood training for 12 specific staff, self-esteem measures are now part of our assessment process, all staff have been trained to assess pupils self-esteem and identify specific areas which need a focus intervention. Through identified CPD, staff have been involved in re-shaping our whole curriculum in order to ensure that whatever we teach our young people is preparing them for adulthood. The Curriculum Pathways for pupils include; a Sensory Pathway, Semi-Formal Pathway, Formal Pastoral Pathway, Formal Pathway and Independent Pathway. We have worked as a school team to develop the essential areas of learning for adulthood under different Pathways. We now have a comprehensive data base of skills which will enable and equip pupils to be as independent and as confident as possible into adulthood. SLT have been involved in re-shaping the Education Health Care Plans with the Local Authority in order to ensure that these statutory documents truly reflect the pupil needs and identify targets which will directly benefit the young person both now, and into adulthood.

Criteria 4: Is feedback from autistic people and their circle of support excellent showing that the service is held in very high esteem and its work is greatly valued?

*This will be primarily based on surveys carried out by Autism Accreditation as part of the assessment process.*

As a school we are always very proud of the honesty and positivity of our young people. All pupils and parents/carers are invited annually, at the pupils Annual Review of the EHCP, to express their opinion on the work of the school. We audit this feedback and results are very positive. Regular positive feedback is also provided through our home/school online links with parents using Class Dojo in our primary department, and the home/school planner in our secondary department. Any concerns are acted upon and shared with the Senior Leadership team.

We also carry out regular survey monkey questionnaires, and visually supported paper questionnaires which again are very positive. School Council is very active, and minutes of meeting evidence what the pupils feel is going well in school, and areas of provision which need to be developed.

Criteria 5: Is the service established as a centre of excellence in the field of autism, sharing its expertise through quality consultation and training as well as actively contributing to research into autism and innovations in practice?

Autism Accreditation is a quality Mark which we greatly value. We have shared our ASC knowledge and curriculum development with a network of schools both informally and formally. Formally we network through a hub of quality assurance Challenge Partners, a group of 9 SEND schools who share good and outstanding progress enabling quality assurance in all practice. We have delivered numerous presentations, consultation and training within this network of schools, as well as through the Swaledale Alliance. In February 2019, after much community involvement and enthusiasm, Bedale was awarded the status of 'Makaton Friendly Town', becoming only the second Town in the World to achieve this accolade. The whole project was driven by a Makaton Regional Tutor from Mowbray School, enabling pupils from Mowbray School who are Makaton users to communicate in the town and generalise their skills, this has been a fabulous resource for us as a school.

We are a Research School with an extended level in the Research Quality Mark status. Current Research projects which are being carried out in school are; Memory Skills project, a Masters dissertation carried out by one of our Primary practitioners on ASC and Lego Therapy, only this week she has received her mark with a distinction, and Simon Baron Cohen has emailed her asking for a copy of the research as he is highly interested in the results, this research will be published. We were fortunate to receive research funding from the Communication Trust enabling Professor Vicky Joffe (London University) to support us in a project on maximising communication through the use of AAC resources. A support assistant who had been highly involved in the project used the data gained and she also earned a distinction on her Degree research project on the use of AAC resources as an aid to communication in a range of social settings. We are currently involved in an action research PHD project with 11 pupils with a diagnosis of ASC taking part in a 10 week project using virtual reality headsets to explore a range of games, during which, pre-set sounds are played, some of which are major triggers for our pupils eg babies crying, loud sudden noises. The aim to desensitise the young person to specific sounds.

Every parent/carer of a child In Mowbray School with a diagnosis of ASC is offered Cygnet Training, a six week comprehensive course. 2 members of SLT are fully trained to deliver this course. We have some very positive responses from Parents/Carers highlighting the value of not only the course, but the subsequent networking with other in a similar situation, sharing advice and expertise. Our two parent liaison officers have attended the course to equip them to support parents within the home environment. We also offer Emotional First aid training to parents/carers, again, we have some excellent comments on the value of this course.

Criteria 6: Are assessments informed by specialist expertise and grounded in a robust understanding of the nature of autism?  
Is assessment data collated and presented in a range of formats so that it is accessible and of practical value to staff who have different levels of contact with the autistic person, as well as the autistic person and their circle of support?

Recent developments within assessment at Mowbray School are enabling staff to very quickly understand the needs of pupils in their care and use consistent strategies and resources to support individual needs. All pupils in school have a Pen Portrait which includes specific needs of the pupil, likes and dislikes. All pupils are assessed using LASS, a cognitive profiling electronic assessment which gives an excellent insight into specific learning needs. All pupils also have a sensory profile, which supports staff in meeting individual sensory needs.

Pupils who have specific behaviour needs have a comprehensive RABS (Risk Assessment Behaviour Summary). All staff who teach the young people with a RABS have often contributed to the content, and know the strategies included in each RABS. The purpose of this document is to ensure a consistent approach by all members of staff.

Pupils are taught in personalised Curriculum Pathways, each Pathway delivered in a way which supports the needs of the young people to maximise learning. Formal learners follow a structured specialised but mainstream type model of learning. In the primary department the pupils are taught in a class group, and in the Secondary department they move independently to subject leaders in order to access their learning, these pupils are assessed using mainstream outcomes, and often have additional support in exam conditions, as well as SLT choosing exam boards very carefully to ensure that the required exam demands suit the needs of each pupil. Some pupils who are not ready to sit a formal GCSE are entered for alternative continual assessment exams eg BTEch qualifications.

Students who find transitions very difficult and would not yet cope with a Formal Pathway, are grouped into Pastoral Pathways, still accessing a range of curricular subjects, but with the same team of support staff accompanying them, supporting and developing their difficulties with transitions. A range of assessments are used to measure progress, including their self-esteem and well-being.

Pastoral Pathways, Semi-Formal Pathways and Sensory Pathways enable the young people working at a lower cognitive and communicative level to develop skills which are important to their self-esteem and life skills which will equip them for a happy and fulfilled adult life.

Maths and English are assessed using an App- 2 build a profile, this App is populated with our own 'I can...' Statements and a photograph portfolio is collated electronically and emailed out to parents/carers every 6 weeks. This App has recently been updated to 'Evidence Me' and we are currently working on how we can best use this App to meet our assessment needs. All Assessment outcome data is collated on a spreadsheet for staff to quickly snapshot pupil levels eg reading ages, maths and English stages, phonic stages, self-esteem levels. We work closely with SALTs, OTs and physiotherapists. We are aware that time allocation is restricted, therefore we work closely together to maximise their skills and assessments, and embed their advice into daily practice. A member of the SLT formally meets with Health support agencies every term to ensure that communication remains good and the best outcomes for pupils are achieved. Whole class groups often follow OT advice and practice daily fine and gross motor skills. We also employ an HLTA who delivers specific language programmes to pupils over three days each week.

Criteria 7: Does the service provide highly creative and very personalised support based on a thorough and up-to-date understanding of how each autistic person communicates and socially interacts; their independent living skills and the impact of external factors including sensory input on their emotions and well-being? *This will be primarily based on observations of practice carried out by Autism Accreditation as part of the assessment process.*

Communication and Social interaction is a priority golden thread throughout the curriculum at Mowbray School. The emphasis we have placed on Well-Being and the development of Emotion Coaching and Coaching Champions in school highlight the creativity and importance we place on communication, social interaction and well-being. We are only one of three providers in the UK to achieve 'Emotion Coaching UK school of excellence'. Over the past year we have worked hard with the local community of Bedale, a small town within easy walking distance of School and used widely by our pupils to develop life skills. Bedale was only the second town in the world to be awarded Makaton Friendly Town status in Feb 2019, after intense training was delivered to organisations throughout the town by a Makaton tutor from Mowbray School. This is already proving to be hugely beneficial to our Makaton users in school as skills can be generalised, in a town which is now a great resources for the school. We are currently developing an even closer link with Bedale Co-op, a shop which many of our young people use, we are looking to further maximise the use of communication skills and social interaction skills within the store between our pupils and Co-op staff. A new acquisition within Bedale is a Mowbray School shop, which the pupils run with a focus on communication and social interaction, as well as developing enterprise skills and preparation for adulthood skills. Pupils in the secondary department have developed the interior of the store which sells upcycled items as well as personalised wooded gifts which will be inscribed using the DT laser printer and resources at School. Our 5 acre farm based at the school is highly motivating for many of our pupils to develop independent living skills, communication and social interaction skills, meeting sensory needs, as well as our extensive outdoor education programmes, and our nature reserve which is adjacent to the school. We invest in a highly skilled higher level teaching assistant to devote 3 days each week supporting social communication intervention groups under the guidance of SALTs. As the health authority could not provide enough hours for SALTs to meet our needs, Mowbray school supplements SALT provision by funding 2 days each week for a fully qualified SALT as well as the three days to fund the HLTA.

Criteria 8: Has the service collated an impressive range of qualitative and quantitative data which provides compelling evidence of the considerable positive impact it has had (both in the short-term and in the long-term) on the lives of autistic people? Can it demonstrate that it is truly inspirational in what it is able to achieve?

Data is collated throughout the school providing compelling evidence our provision has on the lives of Autistic pupils. From AFL classroom formative assessments, to parent comments in 'Thankyou Cards' and in the parent/carer questionnaires, the half termly 2 build a profile report emailed out with picture evidence of the range of activities which their child has taken part in over the past 6 weeks. The Annual Reviews are a snapshot of the progress the child has made over the past year in all areas of learning, pupil comments are a big contributor to the Annual review process. Pupils who are able to contribute to the review process are present at the review. Standardised assessment are collated on an assessment spreadsheet and progress is monitored regularly. Standardised assessments include; cognitive profiling, SALT assessments, reading assessments, phonic levels, educational psychology reports, reports from CAMHS. The reports received from Autism Accreditation 2017, Investors in Pupils July 2019, Attachment Aware School award 2018, Emotion Coaching School 2019 and Investors in Pupils July 2019 all support our self- evaluation that we truly do positively impact on the lives of autistic people.

Comments from visitors to the school and from Challenge Partner hub school's comment on our range of provision, the calm and happy atmosphere in the school and the welcoming nature of our pupils and staff who are proud of their school. Pupils with a diagnosis of ASC often return to school to update us on their progress. Only yesterday a young lady who left school in July 2018 and has a college placement, came to tell us that she had some exciting news, she had got a part time job at an ice cream parlour on Sundays, she knew that we would be genuinely pleased and proud of this achievement, and we were!

OTs and SALTs play an important role in Mowbray School, supporting staff across the school to embed their knowledge within the daily teaching. The OT is in school every Friday where she carries out specific assessments and works collaboratively with staff. It was acknowledged some time ago that there was not enough time allocated to the OT to work directly with the 138 pupils who require OT input, but if the OT gives the trained staff programmes to work on for a 6 week period of time within daily teaching, then the pupils indeed do progress. Reports submitted by professional at Annual Reviews evidence this.

Parents evening are planned each term, with the Autumn Term meeting enabling the whole class or tutor team to meet parents and develop relationships. This is always very well received, and we have many very positive comments from parents/carers on how quickly their child has settled in, and how happy they are at Mowbray School. Experienced and well -trained staff across school know our pupils very well, and many visitors to the school comment on how calm it is, and how happy the staff and pupils are to be here.

The wide ranging curriculum which, from their first day at Mowbray School prepares our young people for adulthood, embraces qualities which we as a school know will support our young people into adulthood to be; as independent as possible, have good health, have friends and relationships and have a valued place in society with possible employment. These attributes are taught through a range of different pathways, and delivered through 6 focus areas of learning. These are; Communication skills, out and about, physical wellness, thinking skills, numeracy skills, and pupil skills. The delivery of the many outcomes within these skill sets, are monitored and assessed when the

pupils are in year 6, in preparation for transition into secondary, and yr 9, to enable a greater focus on specific skills which will be identified as a focus in preparing the individual pupil for adulthood during the last 2 years of their school Life at Mowbray, in year 10 and 11.

The range of qualifications offered at Mowbray are wide and varied, in order to meet the pupil's individual needs and enable them to achieve the highest recognised qualification they can. The qualifications offered include; AQA unit awards, Entry level 1,2, and 3, functional skills, NCFE awards, GCSE awards, BTEC awards at level 1,2 and 3, entry level Bronze and Silver DofE award.

Mowbray School has an excellent reputation and many comments are made about the school and what a difference Mowbray School makes to the lives of those who attend. Many very positive and powerful comments are made including this comment from a parent of a child who left the school in July 2019;

'You all, by far are the most amazing people. I honestly couldn't be more proud of him and his achievements. You, as a school have given him opportunities which have exceeded what I thought he was capable of. His confidence, his singing voice, his acting skills. He's writing now and he's taken part in so many things. All this because you guys take the time and genuinely care. Not only have you supported C, but you have been there for me too. Sharon, (*parent liaison officer*) you were my rock, I will forever be grateful to you. A MASSIVE heartfelt thankyou. All you wonderful staff, thankyou for helping mould my son into the amazing young man that he is'.