



School Information Report

The Observatory School

Basic information about the school:

The Observatory School is a mixed 11-16 community specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and a number of other special education needs.

We are place funded for 55 pupils, but we will admit up to 10% over baseline place numbers in certain circumstances.

The Local Authority refers pupils to our school for the Headteacher to consider if the school can meet the needs of your child/ward. We will also admit young people, If your child is a boy you can say which school you prefer between the two available SEMH secondary schools in Wirral. If your child is a girl then The Observatory School is the only SEMH provision available within the Local Authority.

All young people will have been identified as having, or could have SEMH or ASC as a primary need. Many young people have other special educational needs. We list here some of the conditions which pupils have, and which we cater for:

- - Moderate Learning Difficulties
- - Autistic Spectrum Condition
- - Asperger's Syndrome
- - Dyspraxia
- - Dyslexia
- - Dysgraphia
- - Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- - Attention Deficit Disorder
- - Irlen Syndrome
- - Tourette Syndrome

To help you understand what The Observatory School offers, we have provided answers to frequently asked questions. We have also included the names and contact details of staff if you have any further questions.

How will The Observatory School support my child?

The Observatory School offers specialist provision for children with SEMH and ASC. The school is built on a foundation of high-quality staff who provide a first-class service and experience for pupils and their families.

The Observatory School is located in a highly modified building.

Our staff are well trained in effective behaviour management techniques.

Our staff are trained in 'Team Teach' techniques which de-escalate and distract from negative behaviours.

We have small classes with a highly trained Teaching Assistant in each class.

We have a Pastoral Manager, Pastoral Assistant and Learning Mentor support.

Onsite Mental Health support is provided when required by specialists.

We have alternative, personalised provision where necessary.

We have breakfast provision where we provide each pupil with breakfast every morning (fruit and water are also available throughout the day).

We have CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Support) and SALT (Speech and Language Therapy) support.

We also have Educational Psychologist support.

The Observatory School was judged by Ofsted as a good school with outstanding features in November 2012. Our school has gone from strength to

strength since that visit. We firmly believe that we achieve the very best educational outcomes for our pupils and our GCSE results are outstanding. The latest (January 2018) DFE Progress 8 figures put us above all other local and independent provisions for children with SEMH.

Our school environment is designed to be therapeutic and calming. There are a number of quiet spaces around the building which are adapted to the needs of our pupils.

We have opened two new Nurture Bases for pupils in a separate facility that run independently of the main school.

What is the school's approach to teaching and learning and how is the curriculum designed to meet the needs of my child?

Our curriculum and our approaches to teaching and learning are specially designed for each individual child.

We have a team of highly effective teachers, who each lead on a specialist area of the curriculum. The schools exciting curriculum was highlighted by a OFSTED Good Practice case study in 2015.

A rich and varied curriculum is offered which is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. Teachers ensure that courses are delivered to suit the needs of each pupil and these courses ensure the best standard of achievement possible. This enables our pupils to move on with their education when they leave us after Year 11.

When joining The Observatory School, every pupil is assessed using a range of diagnostic tests (e.g. reading and spelling) to determine attainment. We also assess every pupil for Irlen Syndrome. The results of all these tests are analysed by the Headteacher and other staff to ensure that the pupils get the right help at the right time. The staff will then prepare a set of recommendations for the whole staff team.

These recommendations help our staff to design a personalised curriculum for your child and to decide the appropriate exams or courses your child will take part in. We consult you and your child throughout this process.

Continuous termly reviews ensure that your child's progress in all curriculum areas is monitored.

Extracurricular activities are an important part of our school day. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in many different activities throughout the week including Cookery, Art, Music, Sports and Engineering. Our clubs change on a termly basis to offer as much choice as possible.

How accessible is the school?

The Observatory School has undergone a series of major upgrades and modifications since opening in 2007. All of our classrooms have disabled access by way of a ramp through an external door; however, wheelchair users would have to travel around the outside of the building to get into some classrooms. All equipment used is accessible to all of our young people regardless of their needs. Our extra-curricular activities are designed so that all of our pupils can take part.

How will staff support my child?

Our teaching team consists of the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Teachers and Teaching Assistants. We also have an extensive pastoral team including a Pastoral Manager and a Pastoral Assistant. We have a number of Learning Mentors who work along our team to support our pupils when required. Our Admin Department has an Office Manager, Personal Assistant to the Headteacher, a Finance Officer and a Receptionist. We have a Computer Network Manager who is also our Examinations Officer. Our school Site Manager and cleaners ensure our school is well maintained at all times.

The Observatory School is committed to continuous professional development for all of our staff to improve teaching and learning for our pupils. This includes whole school training on issues such as ASC (Autistic Spectrum Condition), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and SALT (Speech and Language Therapy).

Our staff are trained in 'Team Teach' techniques which de-escalate and distract from negative behaviour.

There is also a designated TA (Teaching Assistant) in every class.

Individual teachers and support staff are encouraged to attend training courses delivered by outside agencies that are relevant to the needs of specific children in their class.

How will I know how well my child is doing?

When a pupil joins our school, support is provided by our Pastoral Team as well as your child's Form Tutor and Form TA.

Your child's Form TA will keep you updated and call you at least once a week with information about how your child is doing. You may also be invited to meet with them if something special or significant has happened.

Our teaching team will report on your child's progress and effort every term. They may contact you more frequently if they have something exciting to share or if they are concerned about your child's progress. You can also view a weekly review of our pupils work via the school website.

Please be assured that if we are concerned about any area of your child's development or progress at school – you will be contacted and kept informed. If you are unable to attend meetings in school our staff team can visit you at home or at another location by arrangement.

If you have a concern about the information your child's TA is sharing, this should be addressed with your child's Form Tutor. The Form Tutor and Form TA work closely with each other. If you feel the concern is not addressed, you should contact the Deputy Headteacher in the first instance.

How will you help me support my child?

We are committed to the overall welfare of all of our pupils and we recognise the crucial role that parents and carers play.

We have a number of dedicated onsite professionals who provide tailored support where and when it is needed. We are always available to listen and advise you with any concerns you may have.

We are also able to refer you for more intensive support if required, ensuring we help you to support your child.

What support will there be for my child's overall wellbeing?

The welfare of all our pupils is taken very seriously at The Observatory School.

We are an inclusive school; we welcome and celebrate diversity. All our staff believe that healthy self-esteem is crucial to a child's well-being. We have a caring and understanding team to look after all our pupils.

The Form Tutor has overall responsibility for our pastoral, medical and social care of every pupil in their class, therefore this should be your first point of contact. If further support is needed, the Form Tutor will liaise with the Headteacher and/or the Pastoral Manager for further advice and support. This may include working alongside other agencies.

The Observatory School operates a policy for the administration and management of medicines on school site. Our staff have regular training and updates regarding medical conditions and related medication to ensure that staff are able to manage situations for individual pupils.

Breakfast is provided for every pupil each morning ensuring a healthy start to the day. Pupils also have constant access to fruit and water throughout the school day. Our school dinners are cooked fresh to order every day.

Our School Council ensures that our Pupil Voice and opinion are clearly heard. We also have a Head Boy and Head Girl who lead the School

Council. Our Pupil Voice forms part of our school monitoring processes and is very important to us.

Our staff are vigilant to pupil well-being and concerns are recorded on the school's computerised behaviour programme 'Sleuth'. A daily forecast is used to monitor those concerns and appropriate supportive action is taken as necessary.

We closely monitor attendance and take any necessary actions to prevent prolonged unauthorised absence.

Our school has a Learning Mentor, Pastoral Manager and Pastoral Assistant who work with individual pupils who have specific needs or difficulties. They tailor support to the needs of the individual and examples include:

- One to one mental health intervention
- Additional literacy support
- SEN based intervention.

Pupils are supported with their social and emotional development throughout the school day, through curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is integral to our curriculum and to the ethos of our school.

Our staff are "First Aid at Work" trained every 3 years and a significant number of our staff have received training in the use of a defibrillator. The school has a defibrillator on site.

The wellbeing of our pupils is at the heart of everything we do at The Observatory School and we actively work with agencies such as Wirral Children's Services and Wirral Safeguarding Children Board to ensure the safety and protection of all children in our setting.

What specialist services are available?

The Observatory School offers a number of in house services for pupils in addition to those we access through our commissioning of external providers. These include:

Specialist mental health support
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
Education Psychologist support
Attendance management
Travel training
School Nurse
Smoking Cessation (NHS)
Response (Counselling Therapy)
Bullybusters
MST (Multi Systemic Therapy)

Career Connects (formerly Connexions)

New Horizons (projects that ensure our pupils are supported beyond Year 11)

How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom?

Our pupils thoroughly enjoy engaging in learning outside the classroom. Activities can be based around the school site but are often planned offsite. This can be locally, nationally or even internationally based.

Pupils visit a wide variety of local destinations every term to enrich and support their learning experiences.

A number of our pupils over the last two years have been to Iceland, Barcelona, Paris and Madrid on cultural expeditions.

Staff at our school have attended international training events and some have even delivered lessons in Thailand and various European countries.

Links with local industries provide our pupils with real life experiences and introduce them to possible future careers and training. Our pupils participate in work experience placements which are in line with their aspirations for the future. We find that this enthuses and engages our pupils, preparing them for life after leaving The Observatory School.

How will you prepare my child to join your school?

Transition to The Observatory School starts with the initial visits you make with your child. These visits give you the opportunity to ask all the questions you may have.

We advise that you visit our school without your child on at least one occasion, so you can take time to ask questions you may perhaps feel unable to with your child present.

If your child is joining us from their primary school, then we have dedicated days and events for your child to meet all the staff and other members of their new class. We find this often alleviates most of the worries pupils may have. We also have events for new parents to meet existing parents and our staff.

If your child is joining us from another secondary provision, we will liaise with their current school to gather as much information as possible. Our Pastoral Manager will contact you to arrange to meet you (at school or at home) and answer any questions you may initially have.

We always start pupils who join us from another secondary provision on an interim programme of a half day timetable to ensure they settle well and are not overwhelmed.

How will you prepare and support my child in their transfer to a new setting or next stage or education/life?

Rigorous planning and preparation goes into preventing your child from becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). We commission specialist services to provide one to one support for all pupils to help them with the application process and procedures and to accompany them to college and training open days and events.

Our 'Boomerang' project gives all Year 11 leavers a dedicated phone line to call for help or advice at any time during school opening times. Once a term we hold an onsite meeting event for leavers to catch up with us and each other!

Our Pastoral Team keep in touch long after our pupils leave us, ensuring they stay on track.

Who can I contact for further information?

School Ethos / Strategy and Overview / Special Educational Needs / Interventions - Our Headteacher: Mr G Chiswell,
headteacher@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk

Transition / Support and Guidance - Our Pastoral Manager: Mrs A Baird
abaird@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk

Curriculum / Teaching and Learning - Our Deputy Headteacher: Miss Sarah Gower, sgower@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk

Telephone: 0151 652 7093 Fax: 0151 670 0641

What if I have a complaint?

Any concerns you have about your child's provision should be directed to their Form Tutor in the first instance. If this is not appropriate, you can contact the Deputy Headteacher who will arrange to meet you at the earliest opportunity. If you are still not satisfied or the concern is of a nature which cannot be resolved by the informal procedure, then the school will notify you what will happen next.

The school complaints policy is available on our website for your information.