



# The Observatory School

## Our Local Offer

### **Basic information about the school:**

The Observatory School is a mixed 11-16 community specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The site also accommodates a KS2 base for pupils in year 5 and 6 with ASD and SEMH difficulties.

We are place funded for 76 pupils, but we will admit up to 10% over baseline place numbers in certain circumstances where agreed with the local authority.

All young people will have been identified as having SEMH or ASC as a primary need, and have an Education Health Care Plan in place to be considered for a place at The Observatory School (TOS). Where special provision is being considered for a young person, the Local Authority will make a referral for a pupil directly to the school. The Head Teacher and SENCo will work together to consider if the school can meet the needs of your child/ward.

There is a choice of two SEMH provisions available to male pupils within the Wirral. For female pupils, TOS is the only available provision.

Many young people at TOS also have other special educational needs. We list here some of the conditions which pupils have, and which we cater for:

- Asperger's Syndrome
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Social Communication Difficulties
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Irlen Syndrome
- Tourette Syndrome

The school was graded as Good during its' full Ofsted inspection in November 2012, and its' short inspection in March 2018.

### **What support can The Observatory School offer my child/ward?**

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. Since the opening of our four Nurture bases over the last two years, we have

transitioned to a school following the Six Principles of Nurture, whereby all of our form groups have a safe base within which the majority of their lessons are delivered. Lessons for the majority of pupils in the school are delivered by subject specialist teachers; however, we have four Nurture bases that run across each of the key stages supporting our most vulnerable of pupils. Their lessons are mainly delivered by one teacher, following a primary model.

Our staff team is trained in 'Team Teach' and positive behaviour management techniques which de-escalate and distract from negative behaviours. Our classes are small, and each has an assigned teaching assistant who remains with the pupils for each of their lessons, develops key relationships and ensures their needs are met throughout their school day.

We also have a Pastoral Manager, Pastoral Assistant and 3 Learning Mentors who work with pupils to ensure emotional and mental well-being for our pupils, providing therapeutic intervention where required. Onsite Mental Health support is provided when required by specialists, as well as Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Educational Psychologist and Child and Adolescent Mental Health support (CAMHS). We also have an alternative, personalised provision where necessary.

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). 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.

Breakfast provision is available daily, where we provide each pupil with breakfast, whilst also providing fruit and water for pupils throughout the school day. Our school dinners are cooked fresh to order every day.

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

Our teaching team consists of the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, SENCo, Intervention Lead, Teachers and Teaching Assistants.

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 for upper school pupils.

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 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.

The pastoral team will work closely with parents to ensure that they are informed in relation to relevant support services that may be available to offer additional provision or advice e.g. Autism Together, CAMH's.

### **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, SENCo 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.

Our school council ensures that pupil voice and opinion are clearly heard. We also have a Head Boy and Head Girl who lead the school council. Pupil voice forms part of our schools monitoring process 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.

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. 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.

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.

### **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. Some members of staff 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 offer new 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 ensuring your child/ward does not become 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. 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** - Our Headteacher: Mr G Chiswell,  
[headteacher@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk)

**Curriculum / Teaching and Learning** - Our Deputy Headteacher: Miss Sarah Gower,  
[sgower@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:sgower@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk)

**Special Educational Needs / Interventions** - Our SENCo: Miss Sarah O'Sullivan  
[sosullivan@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:sosullivan@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk)

**Transition to school / Support and Guidance** - Our Pastoral Manager: Mrs A Baird  
[abaird@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:abaird@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk)

**Transition to college/Examinations** - Our Pastoral Assistant: Mr Ian McQueen  
[lmqueen@theobservatoryschool.wirral.sch.uk](mailto:lmqueen@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