

## The Old Post Office C.I.C. Statement of Purpose



*The Old Post Office C.I.C. believe that all children have the right to feel safe, happy and engaged in their learning. Through our support, we hope to support all the square pegs who are struggling to fit into the round holes of the education system.*

Over a few years, a group of experienced, qualified teachers, school leaders and SENCos came together often to discuss the issues they were witnessing in schools on a daily basis. They were seeing teachers trying hard to meet the criteria of 'quality first teaching' with large classes, large numbers of children with complex and special educational needs, and a cramped curriculum. We observed budgets being stretched and how this affects staff and children to provide the best learning experiences for children. We saw many children being removed from mainstream schools to be educated at home because parents wanted something more creative for their children, wanted to remove their children from being within a class where others were suffering from the pressures of the modern age, and leaving because their child's behaviour was affected by the teachers being unable to meet their needs in the classroom.

We felt we had seen a gap that we could potentially fill, between all the other options for education – mainstream, special, private school and elective home education. We wondered how we could support the growing numbers of anxious children who were struggling to attend and thrive in their educational setting; we couldn't see where they could be supported, especially with external agencies being stretched and therefore offering long waiting times for the help these children need. We designed a purpose-built venue that could accommodate most of a child or young person's sensory, emotional, social, mental health and academic needs. We provide a neurodiversity-affirmative education.

We set out with a vision to identify and meet children and young people's needs. Through small group and individual work, we have provided a bridge for children and young people who are not currently in school; this bridge can take them back into school with the requisite skills to make their reintegration successful, or it might lead them to a different setting. We work with the whole family to identify the barriers which the child or young person has faced and plan a way to remove these or provide strategies to negotiate them. We work with the family to help their child or young person's needs be recognised and the right support put in place so that they can continue their educational journey feeling engaged, curious and ready to learn.

We feel that our provision is unique, this makes it very hard to simplify a description of 'what we do'. We listen, we provide safety, we can be trusted, we observe, we are curious, we are calm, we remain positive, we can wait, we recognise difference, we value equity and inclusion, we respond to need, we are constantly flexible, we nurture, we are open, we will always be there.

*The sons of the great horseman, Harvey Smith, loved to pull their old donkey around the orchard and Harvey wanted them to become international show jumpers like himself. He brought them a swanky pony, it threw them off, they went back to the donkey. Harvey had learned an important lesson. Harvey sold the pony and brought another swanky pony, but this time he asked the owner to turn it out in a field for 6 months. The pony grew hairy, fat and lazy and Harvey knew it was time to introduce the pony to the boys. The hairy pony was much like the familiar old donkey; the boys towed one another around the orchard on it and felt safe and happy. Eventually, they went faster on the pony and were ready to jump; when they were ready to go to a competition, Harvey told his groom to clip off the hair and make the pony look smart. Beneath the hairy, slow pony had been a pony that could take the boys to greatness. Our tutors are like that pony; we start out very unlike a conventional teacher with our educational skills well hidden. We remain slow and calm, with low expectations, until that child or young person is ready to go faster and take on the hurdles in front of them! Harvey's sons did go on to achieve greatness, and we feel that the children and young people that we work with are also capable of reaching their potential, and maybe more, with the right support.*

