

Normal Like Me

Education, Law and Public Health
Services



‘ACORN PARK SCHOOL’ SEND FAILURES REPORT THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Is Acorn Park School a failing school or is it simply being mismanaged?

Report Author:

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Specialist SEN Research Services 2021

Janet Willicott, the founder of Normal Like Me, holds a wealth of expertise in all matters SEND, Combined Public Health Campaigns, Rare Disease Strategies, Scientific Research, Legal Representation. Advice & Support

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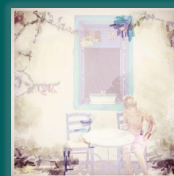
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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and participants. Normal Like Me, is publishing the report as a contribution to support the Department for Education, and its Notice to Improve, issued to Acorn Park School – on the 24th of September 2020, Ref: 926/6152.

Please contact the Researcher / Author for further information, or visit our website:

www.normal-like-me.com



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author wishes to thank all her participants, who have bravely come forward with their lived experiences and evidence. Their input into this report has been beneficial for all parties concerned.

Normal Like Me Ltd., are especially grateful to Ms Boller [B.Ed (Hons)] (Respected and Recognised Teacher, Educationalist and Public Speaker of over 30 years) who collated the participants sensitive data.

We are furthermore grateful to all the research participants children and young people, for their input, voice and for telling us about their perspectives on issues relating to their school.

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”**

~ Margaret Mead ~

To conquer the struggle, one needs to accept the flight, rather than the pugnacity thereof!

Nothing Changes if Nothing Changes.

~ Janet H Willicott ~

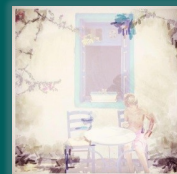


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PRIVATE RESEARCH REPORT ON ACORN PARK SCHOOL FAILINGS

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APS	Acorn Park School
ASD	Autism Spectrum Diagnosis
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CIEH	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
CND	Controlled Default Nurturing
CPPD	Continuing Personal and Professional Development
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DfE	Department for Education
ECHR/ ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EHCP	Educational Health and Care Plan
FTT	First Tier Tribunal
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICO	Information and Commissioners Office
NFA	National Fostering Agency
NHS	National Health Service
OFG	Outcomes First Group
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PH	Public Health
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RS	Reporting Samples (Participants)
RSPH	Royal Society for Public Health
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TA	Teaching Assistant
TA*	Thematic Analysis
μ	Symbol for Population Mean / Samples
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Child Rights Commission
UTT	Upper tier Tribunal



Reasons for Report

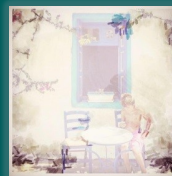
Is Acorn Park School a failing school or is it simply being mismanaged?

The author was contacted by a participant in this report, back in 2020. The individual participant raised a list of serious concerns as to the nature and complexity surrounding APS (Acorn Park School) and the hierarchy of new management, who had very little time for their concerns. The participant went on to mention the constant and continuous high staff turnover, lack of thorough communication, instant school changes without prior warning, and the total disregard of parental concerns with reference to discussing their child's EHCP. They went on to detail, that APS was failing to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their child, when attending APS. The participant, who wished to remain anonymous at the time, further expressed their worry about their child's EHCP not being adhered to.

The author agreed to investigate matters, then feed back when and where necessary. Upon investigation APS appeared to be, on the surface of it, a fabulous nurturing school for SEND children and young people, who have complex needs arising from ASD (Autism), Learning Difficulties and or any other diagnosis and or co-morbidity that impacts education and or health. The green nurturing fields appeared to allow children the space to run freely, especially for those needing sensory breaks.

The small class sizes and dedicated staff, were every SEND parents dream; a distinguished nurturing and differentiated curricular, appeared to offer the education so desperately needed. The website reviews were what the author expected. So why was this participant feeling as they did? The Ofsted reports yielded some further insight, in highlighting a pattern of maladministration or struggling senior leadership. However, being optimistic the author fed back, that it was likely the new management would alleviate their concerns.

Drawing some minor conclusions, and just before returning the investigative findings to this participant, explaining of why at times Ofsted report certain findings, the author received another anonymous call. This call was from another participant, with no links and or ties to the first participant.



Their evidence was detailed, specific and alarming. The two participants, were independent from one another, living in different boroughs, with children of vastly different ages. They too were concerned about the new management, the lack of effective and thorough senior leadership communication, a high staff turnover, the lack of a proper differentiated curriculum, that the pupil’s voice was disregarded, and that there seemed to be a culture of fear. There was an incident with one of the children, however the parents were not immediately informed of this serious incidence. Furthermore, they added that they felt fearful of reporting issues and fearful of complaining; when complaints were filed, they were told they were complaining too much, and within the APS, their complaints policy allows for complaints to be disregarded were there too many made.

More importantly, the continuous and constant data breaches made by APS staff, further allow allows justification for this report.

As any good researcher would say, ‘is there more evidence and are there any more willing participants to impart their story’?

Trust: what is trust, the oxford dictionary details: “*noun/trust/ as the belief that somebody/something is good, sincere, honest, etc. and will not try to harm or trick you.*”

It is reliable to state, the United Kingdom’s Education ‘System’ is struggling at present, and more specifically there is a SEND crisis. The author wishes to express, that this SEND crisis has already become a crisis stuck in the abyss of failure. So how would parents/participants trust me with their evidence, when there is a culture of fear surrounding APS?

The author has a history of breaking down barriers, using a balanced and just approach across many schools and local authorities when extrapolating the truth, in order that the child and or young person, is fully supported with their SEND needs. The author seeks to determine the exacting issues and why they become too complex, especially as these issues are easy to remedy.

Winning the trust from the report participants took time, lots of reassurances, and most importantly a dedicated listening ear, for the purposes of listening, rather than replying. One by one, participants came



forward with their stories, boundless evidence, and documenting their pain when detailing their children having to endure constant disruption. Over the investigation time period preparing for this report, some participants decided to withdraw their evidence and story (data), as they feared their children would lose their placements, such is the culture of fear at APS.

The author regularly holds SEND sessions and imparts how parents ought to follow due processes thoroughly, especially when navigating SEND failures. The author supports schools, local authorities, organisations, parents and children/young people UK wide, and is a respected member of her profession.

In total, over 20 participants bravely came forward. However, because of the culture of fear at APS, the author was left with [13 μ] plus (4) samples, or RS (Reporting Samples); the additional (4) samples felt the need to withdraw on the basis of fear, in that their children would lose their placements at APS. Once the participants felt they could trust the author, the author then set about unpicking the failures using a ‘thematic analysis methodology’, to determine the exacting and recurring themes of failure, which in effect produces the qualitative data.

For this report, the author has decided to keep the reporting style in lay format, affording accessible reading for all members of the public including children and young people with SEND, thus offering the chance to see their concerns being taken seriously.

The author, advocates with a health first approach, in that the report aims to highlight the impact on health or what the participants (parents and children / young people) have suffered through their lived experience. It is imperative that the failures are addressed appropriately.

It is to be known, the United Kingdom has two main duties,

- **First Duty:**

- The first duty of the government is to keep citizens safe and the country secure.

- **Priorities**



Our goals are to:

Cut crime and the harm it causes, including cyber-crime and serious and organised crime, manage civil emergencies within the remit of the Home Office and protect vulnerable people and communities.

• **Second Duty:**

○ Abide by 9 The Health Principles [1946]

- CONSTITUTION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION THE STATES Parties to this Constitution declare, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, that the following principles are basic to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples:

1. Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
2. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.
3. The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security, and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.
4. The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.
5. Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger.
6. Healthy development of the child is of basic importance; the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential to such development.



7. The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological, and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.
8. Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public is of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.
9. Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples, which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures.

Therefore, any organisation, charity, business, school (maintained and or private), including responsible bodies and individuals, must all adhere to keeping safe children and young people.

The author has a duty of care to protect the public, under her fellowship granted by the RSPH (Royal Society of Public Health), and in doing so she calls for this report to be taken seriously.

The participants have given the author explicit consent, in that she documents their evidence through a thematic analysis, highlighting the common themes of failure by APS.

All participants will remain anonymous.

Furthermore, it is hoped that this report will be used alongside the Notice to Improve:

SECTION 114(5) OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008

NOTICE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION

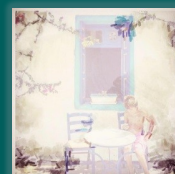
IN RELATION TO

Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk, NR16 2HU

(“the School”)

WHEREAS

The Secretary of State for Education, being the keeper of the register of independent schools in England².



(i) has taken into account a report in respect of an inspection of the School by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills which was conducted on 25 to 27 February 2020; and

(ii) is satisfied that the independent school standards, as prescribed in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, specified in the Annex to this Notice are not being met in relation to the School.

NOW THEREFORE

In exercise of the power conferred upon him by section 114(5) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Secretary of State serves the following Notice on the proprietor of the School:

(1) the independent school standards set out in the Annex to this Notice are not being met in relation to the School; and

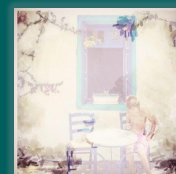
(2) the proprietor of the School is required to submit an action plan³ to the Secretary of State specifying the steps that will be taken to meet the standards, and the time by which each step will be taken, on or before 24 October 2020.

<redacted>

Independent Education and Boarding Team Date: 24 September 2020

[The Secretary of State is required to keep a register of independent educational institutions in England under section 95(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. “Independent educational institution” is defined in section 92(1) of that Act as an independent school and an independent provider of part-time education. Independent providers of part-time education are not currently regulated so effectively the requirement under section 95(1) is for the Secretary of State to keep a register of independent schools. ³ An action plan is defined in section 114(4) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.]

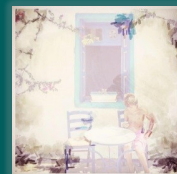
Concerningly, APS have not published this Notice on their website. This report has been compiled at the request of the remaining participants, who have given their consent for their evidence to be used. Whilst further imparting, APS regularly state: “If you don’t like our school, and if you feel your time here is up, then inform the LA and seek alternative placements.” More alarmingly, the phrase, “Like it or lump it” is a common statement that is used, when the participants / parents seek transparency or rigorous resolve.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”
[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

The author wishes to place on record, that she did contact APS for other matters, however she was met with disrespecting and aggressive tones, and screamed at by a senior leadership member. Moreover, the author reports in her own lived experience, having communicated with APS, the truth has been stretched. In addition to this, the author confirms that having spoken to both senior leadership staff members, there are documented conflicting statements, highlighting that communication is ineffective and neither thoroughly robust nor transparent.



SEND

What is SEND:

The UK Government states:

“Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child or young person’s ability to learn.

They can affect their:

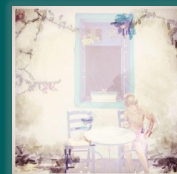
- behaviour or ability to socialise, for example they struggle to make friends
- reading and writing, for example because they have dyslexia
- ability to understand things
- concentration levels, for example because they have ADHD
- physical ability”

The NHS states:

“A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means they need special health and education support, we shorten this to SEND.

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 gives guidance to health and social care, education and local authorities to make sure that children and young people with SEND are properly supported.

If you or a child that you care for needs extra health and education support, an application can be made for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to your local council.



Our work

We work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and organisations such as the Department for Education (DfE), the Department of Health and Social Care (DH) and voluntary organisations to make sure that there is support and services for children and young people with SEND.

We do this so that we can:

- make sure that children and young people are at the heart of everything we do
- improve the care and support that people get
- make sure that people’s care and support is the same quality wherever they live
- make sure that the right people know about SEND and EHC plans

We have various groups which help us to make sure that we are doing what we need to in supporting SEND.

These are:

- The children with complex needs and special educational and disabilities group looks at our work with other organisations, as well as making sure we are doing everything we can do to support living an ordinary life for children and young people with SEND.
- The SEND assurance sub-group leads our national work and supports us with policies and strategies.
- The SEND data and evidence sub-group works with data relating to children and young people with SEND, identifying need and finding what works best to support them.
- The SEND communications and engagement sub-group develops and improves communications across the NHS and other organisations, making sure that people have the most up to date information on relevant legislation, developments and best practice for children and young people with SEND.”



The Council for Disabled Children states:

“Education & Learning

Education is a fundamental human right. As much as any other child, disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) are entitled to an education that pushes them to reach their full potential.”

Independent Schools Council states:

“Special Educational Needs and Disability

A range of specialist provision is made available to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in ISC schools.

There are a few ISC specialist schools that cater wholly or mainly for children with SEND. Over 1,350 of ISC’s mainstream schools currently cater for at least one child with SEND.

A range of specialist provision is made available to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability in ISC schools including:

- Specialist support by educational psychologists
- Speech and language therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Individual and group learning support
- Out-of-hours support
- Access to alternative curriculum options
- Learning mentor support (behaviour)
- Specialised units for learning difficulties”



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

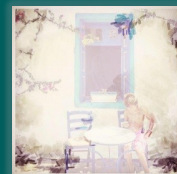
Acorn Park School States:

“Our aims and values

At Acorn Park our vision is for every child to be safe, nurtured and supported to succeed. Our mission is to care and educate our children, empowering them to reach their full potential to think big and dream bigger! Our values are to act as the central principles and widespread truths that impact on our practice, how we collaborate as a team, how we build our core methods and how we present our mission.

Within Acorn Park our aim is to Care: we are courageous, in advocating, educating, and caring for every child, confident in our purpose to promote kindness and respect. Strive: we are striving for a better future by always doing our best with the young people we work with. Our inventive efforts support children at Acorn Park to aspire to healthier futures. Grow: We help our young people fulfil their personal growth and build positive relationships. Our young people are empowered to reach their full potential.

Thrive: We uphold the belief that by being reliable and consistent in our therapeutic practices, by advocating for our young people and promoting the setting’s values they will thrive on the next step of their life journey.”



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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ACORN PARK SCHOOL

ACORN PARK SCHOOL

<https://www.acornpark.org.uk/>

Acorn Park is owned and operated by

Acorn Norfolk Limited.

(07448673)

Acorn Norfolk Limited is a fully owned subsidiary of Options Autism, which is part of Outcomes First Group, a provider of children’s services in the UK.

Acorn Norfolk Limited

owned by

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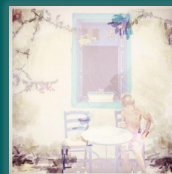
Previously Liquidated as

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THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

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<https://www.greatplacetowork.co.uk/workplace/item/3159/NFA+Group>)

and

NATIONAL FOSTERING AGENCY

Trading as

NATIONAL FOSTERING AGENCY WEST LIMITED

(04665971)

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

NFA Group combined forces with Acorn Education and Care to create the UK’s leading and largest Children’s care provider. NFA Group and Outcomes First Group created a unified Group, a Group which, has become a vital part of local communities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

All Supported & Partnered By

OFSTED

Parent View

<https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>



History

The author has lifted this information directly from APS’s Website. The author furthermore states explicitly that she is not a forensic accountant; however where possible, she has documented within this report, a whole host of associated limited companies all registered to the same address, as that of APS. The Business Structure alludes to or in partnership to and with APS, is listed within this report.

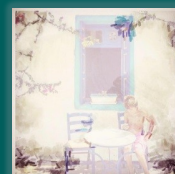
Companies House details most of the various associated company information, however as the author is not a forensic accountant, she cannot comment further, apart from taking notes that some of the associated companies have not filed their annual statements / returns. This in no means an indication of any wrongdoing, however this information is documented on a government website, along with the profit trends that APS detail.

APS’s Founding Statement, Approach and Aim, is found below. For the purposes of this report, the author has highlighted APS’s key words in bold, that directly contradict the key words/themes found in the thematic analysis, which details the participants key words or failures.

“Acorn Park is an independent, specialist day and residential school that caters for children and young people aged 6 – 19 years who have communication and learning challenges associated with Autism. We are a fully integrated community made up of a range of professionals from different backgrounds employed to meet the diverse needs of the young people and families that we support.

*We have a **deservedly good reputation with parents and placing authorities** for meeting the needs of children and young people across the Autism Spectrum including those whose behaviour can be challenging.*

*Our methodology is underpinned by an **understanding that children on the Autism Spectrum are more likely to have happy and fulfilling lives and if we support the development of their autonomy and wellbeing by giving them effective ways to communicate and building their capacity to cope with the demands and challenges of their lives.***



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Thrive Approach

The Thrive programme has truly been embedded into the school community and the language and ethos of Thrive has given the school its own unique and ‘thriving’ identity

Acorn Park School’s Thrive team consists of one Thrive lead, three fully licensed practitioners and four practitioners.

*Thrive practitioners’ complete sessions with students who require time out of their classroom to share a special time and to **build positive relationships with others**. The sessions allow for the necessary play and arts-based activities to be conducted away from the main, predominantly cognitive based learning that is the focus of the main classrooms. The sessions allow for an additional resource for students who are struggling to access their main classroom. The lower school has a bespoke Thrive based curriculum, this has enabled the students to have access to Thrive based strategies throughout their school week.*

It must be noted, that although APS’s website, still details, the use of the *Thrive Approach*, it is no longer applied within the school’s teaching day. APS now use what is called Boxhall, which is an approach used with the class. (Confirmed by a participant’s evidence [LA and APS - meeting minutes] when discussing matters for their child’s wellbeing and safety.)

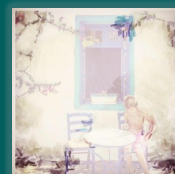
Something Different?

We recognise that for some children to achieve their potential, parents and professionals have to spend a little more time and energy putting together a support package that is going to be meaningful and effective. For children and young people whose needs are more complex we have created bespoke provisions which aim to build a personal curriculum to develop a child’s communication, emotional regulation, independent living skills and access to the community.

The school offers day placements and 38 week or 52-week residential placements.

Ethos

We recognise that effective learning takes place where there are strong relationships between adults and children and between each child and their peers.



How do we do this...

- ***Create enabling environments that promote the wellbeing of each individual in a safe and secure setting in which they can live, work, and develop their potential***
- ***Unlock the potential of the young people who live and learn at Acorn Park, so they are able to live fulfilling and productive lives***
- ***Develop in each young person a greater understanding and awareness of themselves, their community, and the world in which they live***
- ***Build on the strengths and celebrate the achievements of all our young people***
- ***Teach all students new personal, social, and practical skills that will help them in later life including providing opportunities for work experience and involvement in accredited learning where possible***
- ***Develop communication skills and use language (whenever possible) with confidence to communicate effectively, using Information and Communications Technology and preferred modes of communication***
- ***Develop the appropriate skills to participate in a suitably differentiated, broad and balanced curriculum including the National Curriculum***
- ***Develop self-confidence and capacity for emotional regulation, communicative competence, independence, pride in self and in their school, and an interest in their activities***
- ***Establish an effective and mutually supportive working partnership between home and school***
- ***Establish Acorn Park School as an exceptional provision in the education and care of young people on the Autism Spectrum***



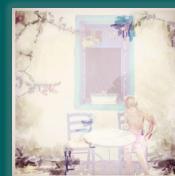
Our Approach

We are a fully integrated community of professionals who use evidence based practices to increase quality of life for children on the Autism Spectrum and their families. Acorn Park are building their community around 3 core beliefs:

- 1. The Team Around The Child: We believe that a child’s needs are best met when a multi-disciplinary team joins works closely together. We want to enable children and their families to achieve their own ambitions whilst overcoming the challenges that are impacting most upon their lives.***
- 2. Supporting children to be active participants in their lives: We enable children to become more involved in their lives by teaching skills which enable them to initiate communication and to regulate their attention, arousal, and emotion levels. This might be in their classroom, in their home or in their communities – we support children wherever their needs are the greatest.***
- 3. A social model of disability: We are joining a growing number of professionals who believe that Autism should not be viewed as “impairment” or a “deficit” but as evidence of neurodiversity within our society. This means that we believe that learning is a genuine partnership between children and adults so, when we set children goals, we also set the adults who will be supporting them goals too!***

Our approach is built to achieve the priorities outlined by the National Research Council (2001). Namely:

- Social communication and socio-emotional development are of highest priority***
- Underlying principles and values based on theories of children’s learning and language development***



- *Children’s Goals are developmentally appropriate and based on functional needs recognising individual differences*
- *All aspects of child’s development seen as interrelated and **interdependent on interactions with others***
- *Progress is measured by success in daily routines and experiences*
- *Parents considered as experts and partners*

We know how important the environment can be to support learning, socialising and recreation so we try to ask children and parents on a regular basis how they want to see their school and homes develop.

During your child’s first 100 days we help them to settle into their new school and/or home whilst building a picture of your child’s strengths, interests, ambitions, and challenges. these include:

- *Where their communication and learning challenges are having the biggest impact on their lives*
- *Emotional and environmental triggers and behaviours*
- *Level of flexibility or rigidity and adaptability*
- *A profile of a child’s social communication skills and their capacity for emotional regulation*
- *An understanding of a child’s sensory sensitivities*
- *Strengths and challenges in daily living skills*
- *National Curriculum levels*
- *Levels of fine and gross motor skills*



Each new student has created for them a communication, learning and lifestyle plan based on the information we have at this point which is then monitored, reviewed, and modified, as necessary.

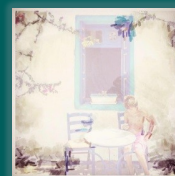
Since the ‘new’ Head of School (Deputy, Senco and or Acting) and new Head of Service (Principal) took over APS, there have been some changes, one of which the participants feel stronger about, at that is the school uniform and it being mandatory.

Whilst APS state:

“From September 2021, school uniform will be mandatory for all our pupils up to the end of Year 11. We know that some of our learners experience sensory challenges with fabrics and will work with you to find solutions. Our school uniform gives a sense of community and identity. As many of us wear clothing that is appropriate to our jobs and occasions, we feel that school uniform gives a message that school is a place of expectation and creates a more serious and purposeful environment.

At Acorn park, we provide a pack of school jumpers, polo shirts and fleece and additional items can be purchased from the school office. We also hope to introduce a PE uniform for some pupils from September. Although it is a long way away, we wanted to communicate this change as soon as possible in order to prepare pupils. We will be doing work in school around this in the summer term. The majority of pupils already wear our uniform, and this has already improved behavior and attitudes to learning.”

The author wishes to bring to attention of APS, the following: Those pupils (children and young people, who have a diagnosis of, in particular ASD), have what is called phenotypes associated to ASD. Phenotypes are referred to in lay terms as behaviours or expressions, these phenotypes are set per the individual’s genome protein encoding construct, thus no amount of uniform wearing will change these behaviours or expressions.



The author will not delve into behavioural neuroscience, however, phenotypes, or expressions of behaviour are often related to unmet need, and or inability to express emotion and or discomfort. Behaviour is frustration, and or related fear conditioning, Sean Commins, states: “Humans are thought to be able to express and recognise six different types of emotions, to include happiness, sadness, disgust, surprise, fear and anger.”

Many different theories have been hypothesized, and philosophers agree that physiological and behaviour responses are always a construct for emotion. However, being able to express fear is very rare, as Commins again states. Research into behaviour or behaviour of fear conditioning, on a particular paradigm known as *Pavlovian fear* conditioning, details that ‘stimuli’ allows neural circuits to be identified. Commins details the noise levels, rustling of leaves, etc., could give rise to alarm, so for this report, forcing a mandatory uniform policy onto children and young people who have profound and complex ASD, could only increase their anxiety, due to the nature of how a uniform can and could restrict those with ASD and their sensory needs

The assumption in an APS ‘newsletter’ that states, ‘pupils who wear our uniform, show improved behavior and attitudes to learning’, is wholly misleading.



Business – Enterprise Hierarchy

Whilst every effort has been taken in keeping this report up to date, the author states that at time of publication, it may be likely that anyone member of the Executive Team of the Outcomes First Group may or could resign, and so the hierarchical structure may show differently to that detailed on Companies House website.

It is to be noted, that the information contained within the Outcomes First Group or Companies House, about the Executive Board, Senior Executive Directors and or Staff Members, does detail all specific profiles, qualifications, and experience publicly.

The participants of this report question, if there is such a wealth of highly profiled experienced and trained executive members, why then is APS still failing?

The author asks the same question and has detailed in bold, the exceptional experiences of each member, which indicates a juxtaposition, or wholly different position, as to why the APS remains on NOTICE.

OUTCOMES FIRST GROUP

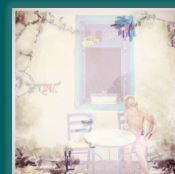
Trading as: OUTCOMES FIRST GROUP Ltd. (9162759)

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

David Leatherbarrow

Chief Executive Officer

David joined OFG Group as CEO in August 2018, arriving from Bupa Dental UK where he held an MD position. David has extensive experience working with **local authorities** during his time in the **healthcare** industry, which also includes spending just under six years as COO at Oasis Dental Care. Prior to joining Oasis, David held senior operations roles at leading brands in both the leisure and retail sectors.



Jane Worsley

Managing Director for Adult Care and Education

Jane has responsibility for all our adult services and **education as well as continuing to develop our whole life strategy for those we support.**

Jean-Luc Janet

Chief Finance Officer

Jean-Luc joined OFG Group in 2012, initially as **CFO of Acorn** which was acquired by the Group in 2016 when he became Group CFO. Prior to joining OFG Group, Jean-Luc worked in different senior management functions in the medical and care industry for over 12 years, including as an **adviser to the NHS and Government on investment projects.**

Mike Blakey

Quality Director

Mike is our Group Director overseeing the quality of our fostering, **schools**, and residential services. Mike is a former **inspector of schools, children’s centres and teacher training** and he previously worked on behalf of **Ofsted** and several overseas **inspectional bodies**. **Mike is a leader of education and children’s services with a proven track record of rapid service and school improvement.** Mike’s experience spans **education and children’s services in local government, health, and social care in the statutory, private and third sectors.**

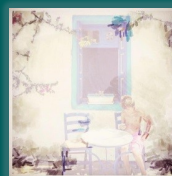
Richard Cooke

Group Commercial Director

Richard has over 15 years’ experience of working within the **care, education, and mental health sectors both in the UK** and globally. Prior to joining **Outcomes First Group** in March 2016, he was the Business Development Director at **Options Group** and has also previously worked for Priory Group.

Richard Power

Managing Director Acorn Education and Care



Richard Power joined the OFG Group in 2018, previously having worked in sectors ranging from **healthcare** to financial services spanning both UK and global companies.

Sharon Platts

Learning & Talent Director

A separate Learning and Talent department has been created, which will be led by **Sharon, who will work to create a world-class training function as well as ensuring we are able to support all our colleagues to realise their career aspirations within OFG.**

Steve Christie

Managing Director - Fostering

Steve has worked at senior level across a number of sectors, the last six years being involved in **Healthcare**. He also spent six years working with **local authorities providing critical services** and support.

Suzanne Robson

HR Director

Suzanne joined OFG Group in 2009 and has been with us ever since, watching us grow and develop from a pure fostering business into the multi-divisional service it is today.

Tim Loughton (MP)

Quality Committee

Tim **Co-Chairs the APPGs for Mindfulness and Children**. He is **Vice Chairman of the All-Party Groups on Youth and Care Leavers**.

Baroness Mary Watkins

Quality Committee

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock is a British Professor of Nursing. She currently is emeritus professor of healthcare leadership at Plymouth University and Deputy Vice Chancellor of the university.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

Jenny Whittle

Quality Committee

Mrs. Whittle was the **Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education Learning & Development** from June 2009 until January 2011, when she was appointed **Cabinet Member for Specialist Children’s Services**.



Category of School

Acorn Park Autism School is a specialist autism school for children with an EHCP and a diagnosis of Autism/Asperger's Syndrome. In addition, there may also be additional needs presented such as:

- Moderate to severe learning difficulties
- Challenges with emotional regulation that may lead to problematic or challenging behaviours
- Challenges in developing effective communication skills
- Difficulties with social interaction and building relationships
- Little or no awareness of danger and keeping safe
- A requirement for 1:1 support throughout waking hours.
- Other needs supported through a multidisciplinary approach
 - Principal: Mr Peter Marshall
 - Boarding Provision: Yes
 - Type: Independent School
 - Religious Character: None
 - Local Authority: Norfolk
 - Region: East of England

In most cases, SEN departments of local authorities will send referrals or placement enquiries directly to the school or to the regional admissions manager for consideration. Parents and carers can choose to name Acorn Park on their child's EHCP. When a local authority agrees the school can meet need, they will liaise with the school on the behalf of parents/carers.

Acorn Park will carefully review every referral, consider if they can meet needs based upon the information presented in the EHCP, and where appropriate, the supplementary reports and assessments that can accompany a referral. The school will also consider the classroom spaces that are available, alongside the current cohort within the school and our homes, when the referral is for



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residential placement. We may also visit the child, either in their current placement or at home, in order to continue to assess potential suitability for placement at Acorn Park School.

APS - Specialist Environment

We have a range of facilities at Acorn Park which support the way that children learn, socialise, and play together. These include a range of outdoor recreational areas with climbing frames and gym equipment, grassy areas for outdoor play and our extensive grounds give our pupils opportunities for bike riding and go-carting. For many children, these open spaces allow them to develop a sense of freedom within a safe and supervised environment.

One of our pupils' favourite areas when it is cold and wet outside is our indoor heated play barn which can be used all year round for games, sports, and trampolining. Pupils are particularly fond of the enclosed large soft play area with its interactive sound and music equipment and a large ball pond.

We also have a number of specialist resources to meet the needs of children at Acorn Park School. We are equipped with 2 sensory rooms in the children's home and a sensory integration room in the school which is used by our Occupational Therapist.

Acorn Park Community has continued to grow, with the addition of the Care Farm with a variety of animals! Our dedicated 'outdoor specialist teacher' provides children with opportunities to learn skills associated with caring for animals and learning from the natural environment.

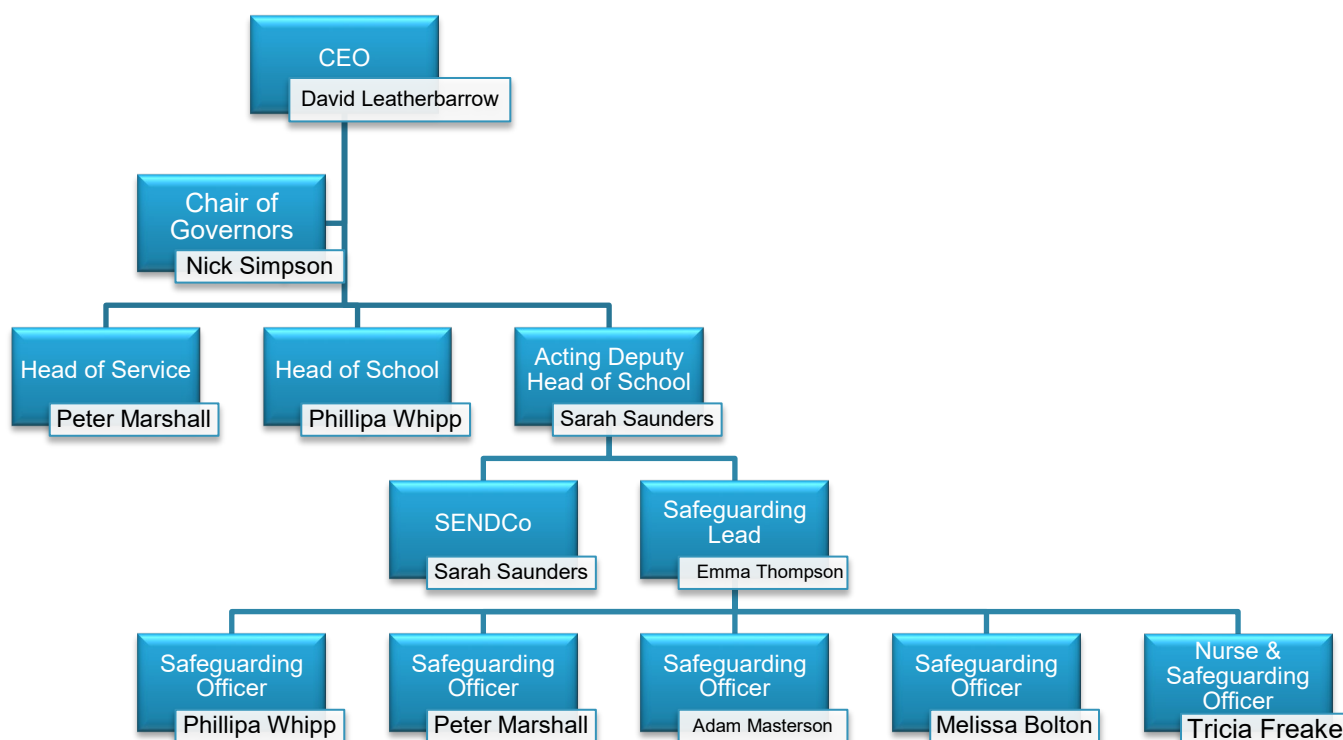


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Hierarchy of Responsible Senior Leadership – Staff Members



Hierarchy 1

It must be known that Nick Simpson is the Chair of Governors and the (Regional Director). Any complaints raised against the Principles/Heads of Service and or Heads of School, are to be submitted to Mr. Simpson.



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The author points out, that although all the research undertaken in terms of the above hierarchy, [Senior Management, Senior Leadership] it ‘appears’ updated [1st February 2021] and or is in concurrence with the views of the participants. However, it must be known, that this hierarchal structure can and does change. The participants are confused, the author is confused, as she has been privy to her own correspondences with the school and has furthermore been privy to her participants evidences, that highlight ever changing staff titles and or positions.

The everchanging staff titles are a common occurrence. For example, in email signatures, senior staff titles change on a weekly, and or monthly basis; teaching staff titles have been known to change day by day. The author demonstrates this, by way of two graphics, which are a day apart. For this report, the **dates have changed** to protect staff, for example graphic 1 was sent to a participant on the 8th of August 2020 and then graphic 2 was sent by the same staff member on the 9th of August 2020 - the title of the staff member has radically changed. This is not a one-off occurrence. This is in fact happening all the time. This causes confusion, frustration, and lack of transparency and or basic communication compliance. Best practice does appear to be lacking.

Further evidence available on request.

Higher Level Teaching Assistant
Email: [REDACTED]
Acorn Park | Andrew's Furlong | Mill Road | Norfolk | NR16 2HU
Office: 019538 88656
Web: www.acornpark.org.uk



Graphic 1: (HLTA Signature Same Person)

Class Teacher
Email: [REDACTED]
Acorn Park | Andrew's Furlong | Mill Road | Norfolk | NR16 2HU
Office: 019538 88656
Web: www.acornpark.org.uk

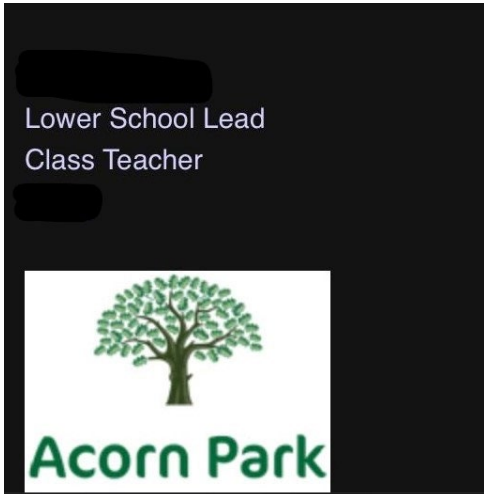


Graphic 2: (Class Teacher Signature Same Person)

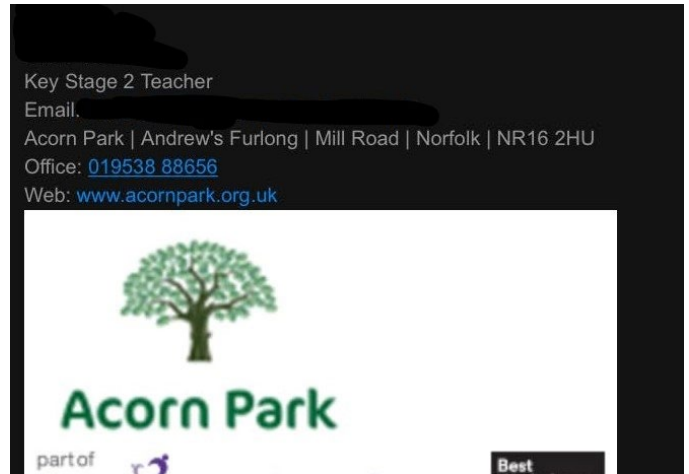


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Graphic 3: (10 November 2020 - Lower School Lead Signature Same Person)



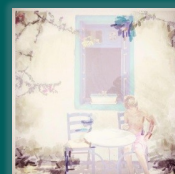
Graphic 4: (13 November 2020 - KS 2 Teacher Signature Same Person)



Graphic 5: (3 December 2020 - Acting Head of School Signature Same Person)



Graphic 6: (13 December 2020 - Head of School Signature Same Person)



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[Redacted]
Deputy Head and SENCo


Acorn Park
Acorn Park School
Andrew's Furlong
Mill Road
Banham
Norfolk
NR16 2HU

[Redacted]


[Redacted]
SENCO
Email: [Redacted]
Acorn Park | Andrew's Furlong | Mill Road | Norfolk | NR16 2HU
Office: 019538 88656
Web: www.acornpark.org.uk


Acorn Park
part of
 

Graphic 7: (7 December 2020 – Deputy Head and SENCo Signature Same Person) Graphic 8: (17 December 2020 – SENCO Signature Same Person)

Participants are continuously left feeling perplexed, as to why there are so many changes; from Acting Head to Safeguarding Officer, and or when a Teaching Assistant becomes a Safeguarding Officer in a day. Teachers seem to go from HLTA's to Teachers in a 24-hour period. The author reports, that this part of the research left her feeling overwhelmed, by the constant changes. This is a safeguarding risk.

Moreover, 'Learning Managers' are assigned to different parts of the school, for the purposes of overseeing the Formal National Curricular and Semi-Formal Curricular management delivery of said, however the participants ask, "what are learning managers, and why are the staff doubling up and or trebling up on so many different roles?" Why are staff members at APS wearing so many differing hats?

A Participant states: "In September, XXX started as a TA and then got promoted to Class Teacher by mid-October, and thus their signature changed to Teacher." Then another Participant stated: "TA's are doing teaching rolls." The Participants then found out separately, that XXX had not been qualified. Hence signature / job titles reverting back to something else.

Parents never know, from one day or week to the next, what positions or titles APS staff are awarded, given, or allocated. Whilst the author confirms that staff positions can and do change - (promotions, demotions) - it is the accelerated and frequency of such at APS, that rise to concern. APS's website remains outdated at the time of writing.



APS as a specialist school, must therefore be reminded that these frequent changes not only impact the lives of parents, more importantly these rapid changes, cause incredible and often detrimental emotional harm to the lives of their pupils. It is a widely known fact, that those diagnosed with ASD, struggle with constant change.

“Unexpected changes are often most difficult to deal with. Autistic people may not be comfortable with the idea of change but may be able to manage it better if they can prepare for changes in advance.” – NAS (National Autistic Society)

The Acorn Website (1st February 2021), further details the following:

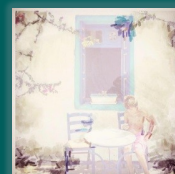
*“Acorn Park has its own dedicated management team, under the leadership of Interim Head of Service Wallace Robinson. [Mr *Robinson is no longer at APS] The management team is complemented by Group support functions covering Quality and Compliance, Admissions and Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, and IT. * [Please see Right to Rectification in Notes, p.109]*

*Oversight of the school management is provided through three Assistant Directors of Education, who are employees of **Options Autism**, responsible to the divisional **Managing Director, Richard Power and divisional Finance Director, Helen Lecky.***

*The **Finance Director** is a statutory Director of Acorn Norfolk Limited, in conjunction with **David Leatherbarrow, Chief Executive Officer of Outcomes First Group and Jean-Luc Janet, Chief Financial Officer of Outcomes First Group.***

Key decisions are referred to Outcomes First’s Board, consisting of the Outcomes First CEO and CFO, an independent Chairman and three Non-Executive Directors. In addition, the Group continues its robust governance through two established compliance-based sub committees with remits for Quality and Audit respectively and whose members are independent to the Group’s management team.”

It is to be further noted, that Senior Staff Members and or members of the Senior Leadership Team, are not all employed by the same ‘company’. For the purposes of this report, this author will not delve



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

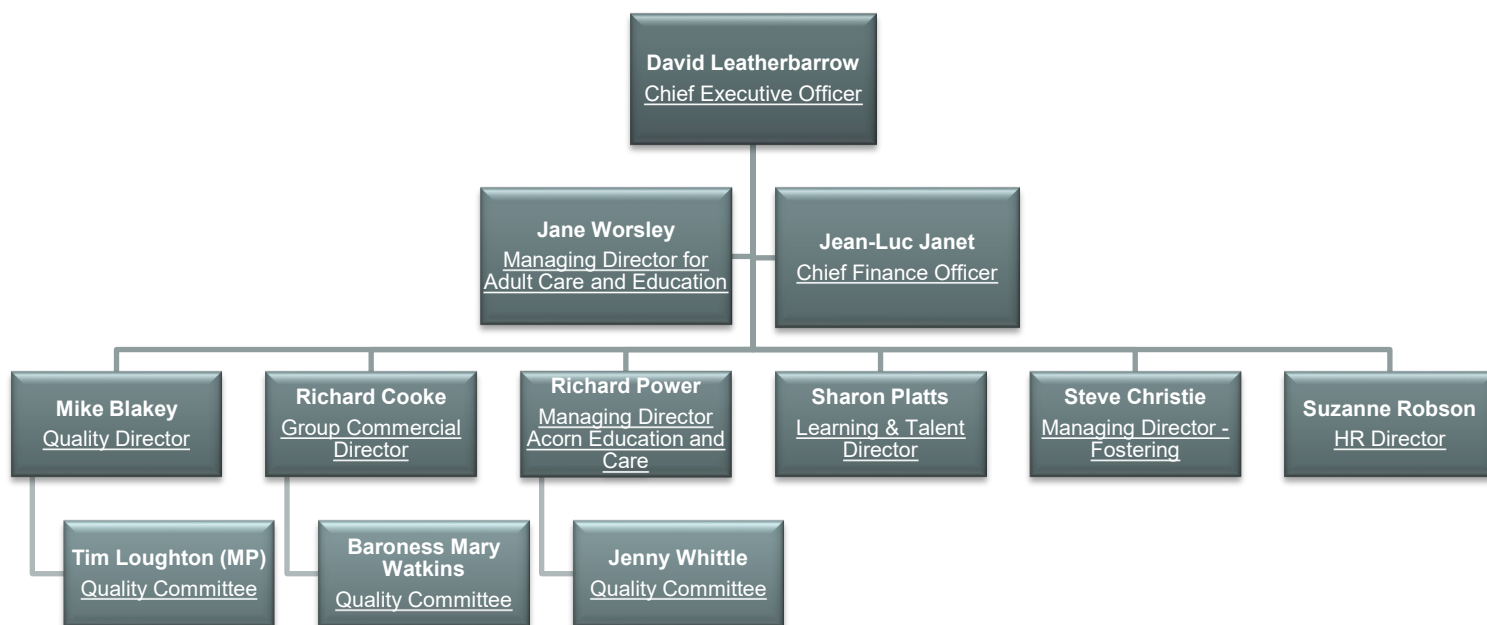
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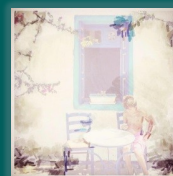
into the corporate strategy of who has employed who, however, it does raise concerns, in the way of the Senior Leadership Team having conflicts of interests with each other and then having allegiances to their respective employer, within the structure of the higher structure of this 'Merged Business Enterprise'.

The right of reply, would ultimately have to be sought from the following:

David Leatherbarrow, CEO (OFG), Nick Simpson Chair of Governors and Regional Director (OFG), Peter Marshall Principle and Head of Service (OFG) and Phillipa Whipp, Head of School (Options Autism).



Hierarchy 2



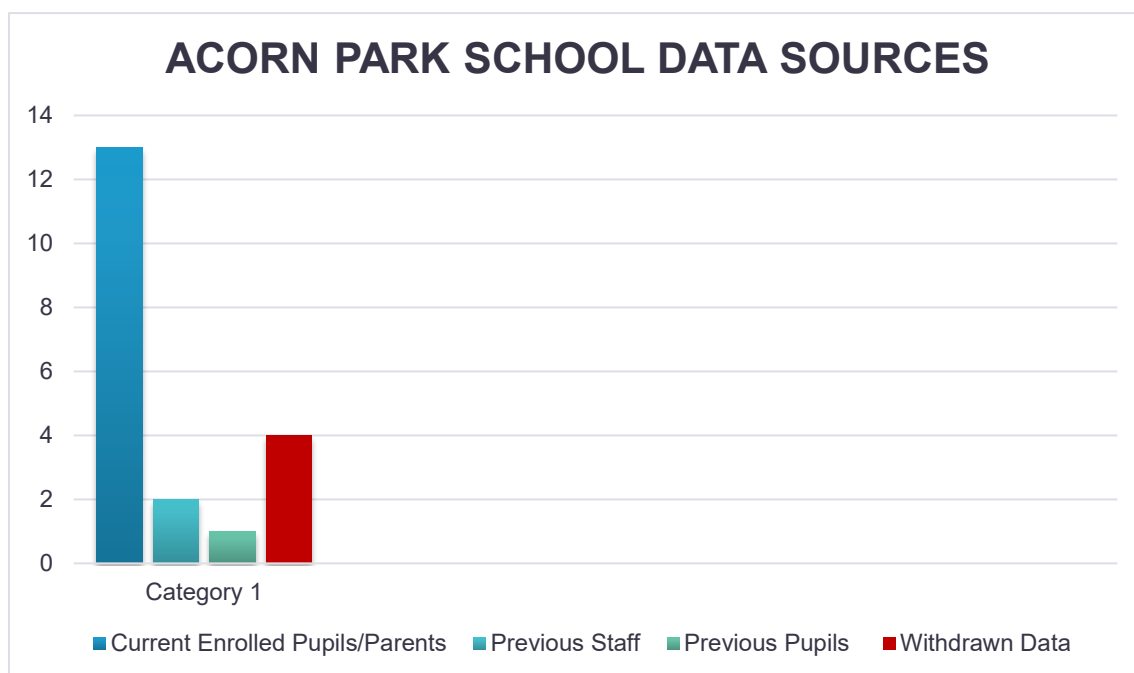
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DATA SOURCES

The Reporting Sources (RS) / Participants and or Parents, Members of the Public, are herein referred to as [data samples μ] for the thematic analysis. The members of the public, are a collection of previously enrolled pupils and or previous staff members. The author again states, that all participants are anonymous.



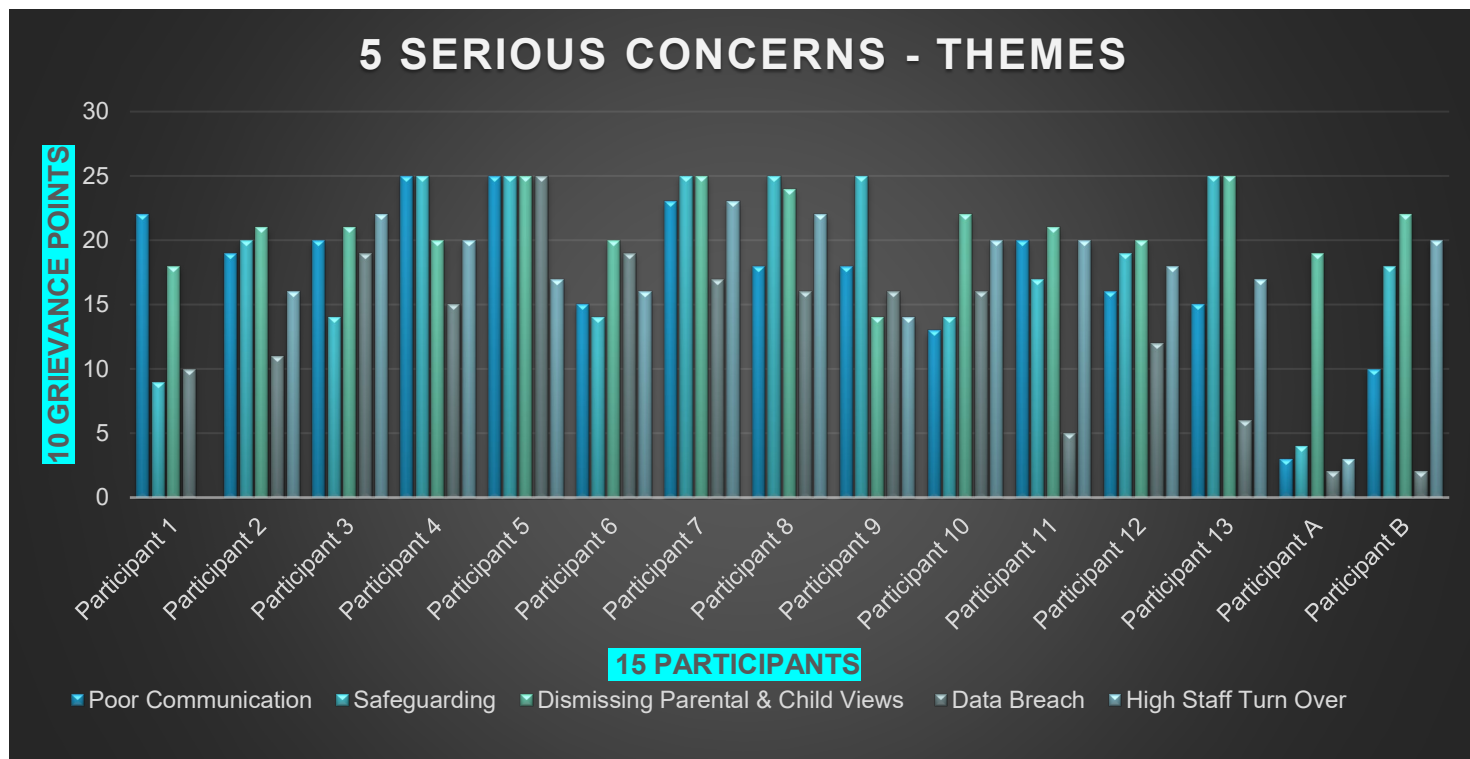
Graph 1: Participants



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

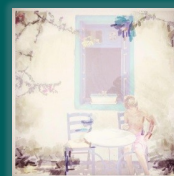
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Graph 2: Identification of 5 MAIN Concerns

Each participant’s evidence sheet was collated to a maximum of 10 grievance points each from their submitted lengthy concerns, varying from 14 reported issues to as high as 25 complex concerns. This data then formed the base line of concerns. The author filtered out the repetition of experiences, to highlight only serious concerns/breaches. The 10-point grievance axel formed the maximum value from where the author determined the reoccurring themes. Further analysis, against each participant, yielded 5 main themes of concern and or grievance.



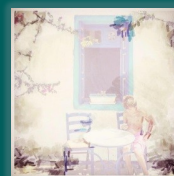
BACKGROUND

Name	Acorn Park School
Ofsted Inspection I	<u>Inadequate</u>
Inspection Date	25 February 2020
Address	Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Norwich, NR16 2HU
Phone Number	01953888656
Type	Independent (Special)
Age Range	6-19
Religious	None
Character	
Gender	Mixed
Number of Pupils	84 (79% boys 21% girls)
Local Authority	Norfolk
Website	https://www.acornpark.org.uk

Acorn Park School opened in May 2005. APS, like any other UK and or global school, has had its ups and downs for the past 10 ten years. APS has had its fair share of changing ‘hands’, Staff, Head Teachers, Heads of School, Senior Leadership Teams, and or Corporate Enterprise take overs and mergers, to name but a few. The author states on record again, that she is not a forensic accountant, nor is she a forensic or strategic business analyst; however, it was stated by a participant, that Ofsted may have mentioned in passing and in a strategy meeting, about the (Record of Visit), the concern surrounding the rather alarmingly high influence of ‘enterprise involvement’.

Sourcing direct comments and or views form a variety of post holding previous staff members, proved tough, as, the previous staff members, were afraid that they would end up losing their current positions, such is the fear of culture that runs through APS.

To highlight the multileveled, confusing ‘enterprise’ construct, previous staff members, are still struggling to determine who manages or holds their teachers’ pension pots. They have all enquired about their pensions, but are faced with blank answers, as the reply is mostly, as ‘APS/OFG/OA, has



changed so many times, it was extremely difficult to know which financial trading company held which pension where, and the various financial payroll controllers, could not confirm if their pension pots had moved when the enterprise had and or was changing hands.

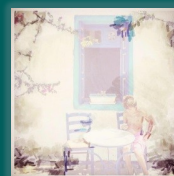
The Professional participants interviewed, were not aware of each other being questioned, and were asked vastly different questions, in order that each gave an accurate snapshot of *their* experiences. Again, staff members all revealed the same concerns, as reflected in the various Ofsted inspection reports.

Safeguarding concerns surrounding vulnerable children not taken seriously, staff views and concerns never taken seriously, and when staff complaints were submitted, they were reviewed by the members the concern was about. Staff complaints never being fully investigated and never filed correctly. Children and young people’s needs not being considered a top priority. Data breaches were of major concern, as sensitive data was shared with other Local Authorities.

Current and previous staff members, feel and felt that most of the Senior Leadership Teams who were and are placed in post, were or are either out of their depth, weak style of management, lacking in experience and are or were in post, as a means to run APS as an enterprise for other purposes.

Staff current and past, feel and felt there was and is a culture of ‘bonuses’ and fear. If one makes a collaborative improvement suggestion, they were or are told to leave or simply ‘no’, that is not how APS operates. Eventually staff leave or stay silent, as job loss is real, as they state: “Morals, can’t pay the mortgage.”

Staff (current and past) feel they have been backed into a corner, from a top-down pressure, and were they to stand up and speak about the failings, current pupils could end up with no school. So, they try and manage as best they can. They are not recognised, and not even respected, they all highlight that the provision is poor. They want to whistle blow; however, such is the culture of fear, they feel, they could end up destroying the lives of the children, they want to safeguard and protect. The majority of APS policies are outdated, and not fit for purpose, yet are left as a means to show ‘best practice’.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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Previous staff members, feel, that their concerns are filtered out, and never fully reach the CEO. However, the executive board know that APS is failing, yet chose to sidestep the elephant in the room.

Moreover, it is noted, that both Norfolk and Suffolk Local Authorities know of the continued failings, but chose to not take appropriate action, as they themselves are not any better, and thus, it would be seen as the ‘kettle calling the pot black’ were the Local Authorities to intervene.

Why are staff leaving in droves? Previous staff members were tasked to turn APS from an ‘inadequate school’ to one where ‘outstanding’ was the sealed sign at the front entrance. However, the realist time frames to ensure the turn around and improvement measures / actions plans to be implemented and maintained, was and were never realistic; because as soon as the plans looked good, or processes appeared to be working, the executive board pushed for more pupil take up, this meant the progress made, was halted. Staff feel and felt that the outcomes for measured progress are outdated and not in line with current legislation.

The author has tried to calculate the mass walk out of previous staff members, however for accuracy or report reflection, the number of staff members who left, when the current senior leadership team took over the management of APS, was in the estimated region of 40. This does raise, even more concerns that must be taken seriously by The Department for Education.

Any concerns that children and young people report, are told to take the concerns to ‘safeguarding’, as safeguarding can resolve any if not all issues. It is felt that APS is managed to ensure profits first, rather than meeting the needs of the children. The quality of teaching staff is now at an all time low.

For the purposes of this report, the author has taken a brief gleam over a 10-year history. The author will not be making reference to past concerns, due to the nature of not being afforded sufficient enough time to interview past pupils and or staff members and owing to the fact this report is urgently needing to be submitted to the Department for Education, for the purposes of ensuring the safeguarding of children. The author therefore summarises below, by means of brief snaps shots of material found to be credible:



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“Pupils enjoy coming to school. They love the open spaces. They like tending the animals on the premises. Pupils value the small groups and friendly staff. They feel they are treated as individuals. Pupils say that staff and other pupils are accepting of each other. They all feel part of one community. Yet, despite these positives, the quality of education they receive is poor.”

“Most pupils behave well, some do not. A few pupils take too long to settle down to work. Some staff seem unwilling or unable to challenge these pupils’ poor behaviour. Pupils do not like the frequent staff changes. They say that this makes learning more difficult. Newer staff do not always understand pupils’ needs.”

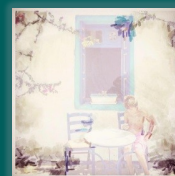
“Significant changes in leadership and staffing have been unsettling for pupils and staff. Both would like more stability. Staff have not been led well. Pupils have found it hard to cope with the lack of continuity.”

“Leaders’ monitoring of the quality of education is superficial. Weaknesses have not been addressed quickly enough. Staff are well meaning. However, some lack essential subject knowledge and behaviour management skills.”

“Despite the lack of direction from leaders, a core group of staff have coped remarkably well. They provide a nurturing environment that helps pupils to develop both socially and emotionally. Their well-sequenced lessons ensure that pupils make good progress. In these subjects, pupils achieve well, as seen in the external qualifications they achieve. However, the overall quality of education pupils receive is too random. These hotspots of good practice do not mask the underlying weaknesses that exist in the school.”

“All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Some of the requirements listed in these plans, often the therapeutic provision, have not been met. The effectiveness of other interventions to support pupils is not evaluated well. Staff do not know which interventions are effective or why. New leaders are in the process of completing a full audit of this provision. The planned ‘well-being’ hub aims to ensure therapy teams are centrally located and on hand to meet pupils’ needs.”

“The members of the proprietorial body are aware of where weaknesses exist. They have overseen significant changes to the school’s leadership. However, their previous monitoring had not highlighted the scale of the problems quickly enough. A new leadership team and chair of governors have been



brought in very recently. They all bring a wealth of leadership skills and essential experience to the roles. Their assessment of the school’s effectiveness is accurate. They have pinpointed failings and quickly established what needs to be done.”

“Leaders’ plans to address these significant failings are comprehensive. They have been costed and shared with staff. Actions to improve are built around long-term, sustainable solutions. It is early days, but parental comments already highlight the positive changes their children have seen.”

Evidence of concern has been raised, of previous and current staff members, dating from 2015 to the present time and who have documented on a well-known employment website, their lived experience of what is, was and or is like to work for APS. Whilst the author makes it known elsewhere in this report, that she cannot confirm the credibility of said statements and or reviews, the reviews however, offer up the exacting themes as to those of the participants within this report.

Concerns:

- Safeguarding
- Communication
- High staff turnover
- Needs of the children and young people are not considered
- No thorough support

Positives:

- Children and Young People are wonderful
- Free Food

What is evident, are the dates of positives comments and concerns, that run alongside Ofsted reports.



Culture of Fear:

What is Culture of Fear, *Furedi* states: “the growing contempt for objective truth and transmissible knowledge is the sign of a deeper malaise within society - a loss of trust in rational thought and a flight towards "social inclusion", where this means, in effect, mob rule.”

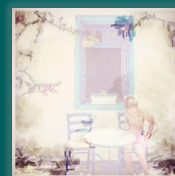
Both participants and previous staff members have within them a deep fear. A fear, that if they talk out, they will either [*lose their job*] or the parents are told [*like it or lump it your child's placement will be withdrawn*] and or follow the complaints process.

Participants further report, as evidenced by their correspondences, that, when they have spoken up, their children are pushed out. They tried to seek effective remedy and or resolve, through talking, correspondences, meetings, or complaints processes, even retorting to use the courts, however, when they voiced their concerns over safeguarding or APS meeting their children's needs, the 'like it or lump it' phrase is a common rhetoric. Where are parents to send their vulnerable children? The Local Authorities are aware of the continuing concerns, so when a local government, cannot step in, the fear increases.

The complaints process is then followed, however the 'clauses' within the complaints policy, then sets up the parent to fail. The complaint(s) are then seen as vexatious and or 'if you complain too many times' (only because the initial complaint has not been fully investigated), we won't respond. More worryingly the complaints are overseen by the very people/staff that the complaint is about. The parents have very little success of their complaint being upheld and or fully resolved. It is furthermore reported that the participants who were having their stage two complaints reviewed, were often being investigated or reviewed by the panel consisting of APS staff and from Staff from with OFG.

APS – must be reminded of the following:

Wednesbury unreasonableness



In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”
[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

A standard of unreasonableness used in assessing an application for judicial review of a public authority's decision. A reasoning or decision is *Wednesbury* unreasonable (or irrational) if it is so unreasonable that no reasonable person acting reasonably could have made it (*Associated Provincial Picture Houses Ltd v Wednesbury Corporation (1948) 1 KB 223*). The test is a different (and stricter) test than merely showing that the decision was unreasonable.

Moreover, APS, need to be reminded of being mindful with their expectations and communications, especially with SEND parents, who often lead extremely stressful lives. However, some parents may also need communications differentiated, so as to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications, as parents may also have disabilities of their own.

APS applying a policy, to in effect deter a parent from filing a complaint and or insisting that a complaint be fully investigated, would be considered unreasonable. Especially, if the initial and or subsequent complaints have not been resolved, either in a timely manner and or by the appropriate staff member.

The APS website details, that only 8 complaints were filed between 2016 and 2020. The participants struggle to concur; most notably were the reader to refer to the Ofsted Reports, they would depict a suitable difference.

Complaints

We take all complaints seriously. We have a full complaints policy and procedure which is available from the school office or for download below. Initial complaints should be made to the Head of Service, Peter Marshall on 01953 888 656. If the complaint is concerning the Principal please contact Nick Simpson, the School's Chair of Governors, (Regional Director) via email nicholas.simpson@ofgl.uk

Academic year 2016/17 – 4 complaints

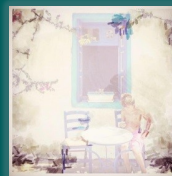
Academic year 2017/18 – 1 complaint

Academic year 2018/19 – 1 complaint

Academic year 2019/20 – 2 complaints

Graphic 9: Published Complaints Data

The author has gleaned over the various review websites, that offer ‘staff members’ (current and or previous) the chance to leave a review of their experiences of being employed at a particular school. This report will not focus on those reviews, as the reviews themselves cannot be factually determined



or verified. However, they do shed light on the themes than have been exposed through the thematic analysis.

Such is the culture of fear, the author has had to offer explicit and repeated reassurances that this report will remain anonymous. The author moreover, does note that she can understand how both parents and previous staff members must feel, as the level of hostility when seeking clarity from APS, is met with aggressive and volatile replies.

In an ever-changing climate, be it social and or financial, and now with the pandemic interference and the unstable employment market, staff members may choose to keep quiet, and or parents simply have to like it or lump it. Other local specialist schools are full, and the Local Authorities are left unable to successfully mediate because of the structure of private / independent schools. It seems whistleblowers often have to take the risk of losing it all, in favour of morality.

The participants, who have courageously submitted the data/evidence herein, are left feeling ‘what if speaking out will get me into trouble, what if my child loses their placement.

The author further confirms that the majority of participants herein, have all stated that they have had to record their phone calls, meetings and or reviews for the purposes of documenting and or detailing valuable and specific evidence for personal use; in particular, when holding to account those senior leaders who have promised effective resolve but only to find there has been backtracking. The conversation recorded, to that of which senior leaders purposed to have stated, is vastly different when the transcription has been perused.

The author confirms, that she too has had to record her conversations for transparency purposes, when having to determine truthfulness, having been offered two conflicting positions by senior leaders.

Recording of calls and meetings:

“Parents are often told that they are unable to record their interactions with professionals, but is this backed up by published policies? The Information Commissioner regards the content of a



meeting to be the personal data of the subject of the meeting rather than that of those in attendance at the meeting. The Data Protection Act 2018 does not apply to individuals recording data for their own personal or family use. The Care and Quality Commission has published guidance on using overt and covert recording and states that it would be unacceptable for someone to refuse to treat someone because they are being recorded. The Harassment Act 1997 states that it is an act of harassment for any person to pursue a course of conduct to persuade a person not to do something which they are entitled to do.

The Information Commissioner is in the process of updating its guidelines, but until it has completed these, some documents still reference the previous law. In most cases the principles behind the legislation have not changed so these guidelines can still be used, but if you are in any doubt or you need to rely on this information it would be recommended to contact the ICO for further advice and clarification. <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

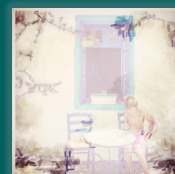
Guidance from the Information Commissioners Office to help people determine what is personal data, and how to determine who the data belongs to. Pages 17-20 discusses the question of if the content of a meeting belongs to those taking part in the meeting or the person whom the meeting is about.

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1554/determining-what-is-personal-data.pdf>

The Data Protection Act 2018 states that data used for personal, family or household affairs is exempt from the principles of the Act. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/section/21/enacted>

The CQC published guidance for those thinking of recording care, both overt/covert and audio/video, and explains how it would use information sent to them which was gained that way. On page 7 it states that it would be unacceptable for any member of staff to refuse to treat, or care for someone properly, if they knew that recording equipment was being used.

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/stories/using-hidden-cameras-monitor-care>



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 states that it is an act of harassment for any person to pursue a course of conduct to persuade a person not to do something which they are entitled to do. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/40/section/1>

The Transparency Project published guidance about the recording of social workers by parents where there is local authority involvement with the family. The guidance is intended to be used by parents and their advisers and representatives, and by professionals – who might include social workers, social work managers, independent reviewing officers and local authority lawyers. <http://www.transparencyproject.org.uk/guidance-on-parents-recording-meetings-with-social-workers/>

CAFCASS is a social work service representing children and young people in the legal system, and publishes guidelines for how its social workers will operate. Pg 19 discusses parents recording interactions with social workers. <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/about-cafcass/policies/>

The author calls upon the Department for Education to support these participants, in that they are afforded reassurance that they will be listened to.



Ofsted Reports:

ACORN PARK SCHOOL

URN: 135066

Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, NR16 2HU

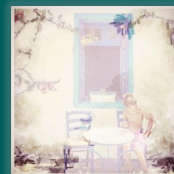
1. Outstanding
2. Good
3. Requires Improvement

4. Inadequate

Activity, reports and ratings

1. 25 February 2020
Standard inspection: Inadequate
PDF – Published 04 June 2020
2. 09 May 2018
Standard inspection: Good
PDF – Published 15 June 2018
3. 26 April 2016
Standard inspection: Requires Improvement
PDF – Published 13 June 2016
4. 05 February 2015
Monitoring inspection
PDF – Published 27 February 2015
5. 24 June 2014
Emergency inspection
PDF – Published 30 October 2014
6. 03 October 2012
Standard inspection: Satisfactory
PDF – Published 24 October 2012
7. 24 January 2012
Monitoring inspection
PDF – Published 09 February 2012
8. 07 July 2009
Light touch inspection
PDF – Published 31 July 2009
9. 05 May 2005

Upon investigation, the author confirms that APS does not document or detail its ‘Ofsted Reports’ on their website, or rather their ‘Ofsted Reports’ are not readily available. Were any member of the public trying to peruse their website, for their Inspection Status, it would prove difficult to ascertain their exacting link, page and or tab for their Ofsted Rating. However, after spending considerable time trying



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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to find the link to ‘Ofsted’, the website eventually does allude to its Ofsted Report, by referring to it as the following:

Acorn Park School Inspection Report 2020. The website only offers one report, which was the last inspection. Were members of the public trying to measure the schools progress, it would prove difficult, unless they knew to go onto the official Ofsted website to find the schools Ofsted Inspection Chronology. As referred to else where in this report, the website does not detail its more up to date Inspection Notice, issued to APS on the 24th September 2020 by the Department for Education; in which the DfE, gives APS a warning to improve. The Notice here below, details the reasons in which the DfE, requests a detailed Action Plan of improvement.

I can confirm that the Regional Director / Chair of Governors, submitted an ‘action plan’, however it is not known what the action is or was and if it is indeed achievable. More worryingly, Senior Leaders of APS did not even know of their log in details, when trying to submit their action plan within the Ofsted’s Portal.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

NOTICE:


Department for Education

The Proprietor
Acorn Park School
Andrews Furlong
Mill Road
Banham
Norwich
Norfolk NR16 2HU

Dear Proprietor
Acorn Park School

We wrote to you on 03 June 2020 to explain that we intended to issue a notice under section 114(5) of the Education and Skills Act 2008 but were not going to at that point. As we explained, we did not issue the notice at that point because we believed that the need for regulatory or enforcement action in relation to your school was less pressing while only a small number of children were present in the school under the pandemic lockdown arrangements.

We have asked all schools to encourage all pupils to return full-time from the start of the autumn term. In this context, we now believe it is necessary to progress regulatory action. I refer to the inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) that was carried out at the above school under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 on 25 to 27 February 2020. You will see from the enclosed report that Ofsted noted serious regulatory failings.

Taking account of the report the Secretary of State is satisfied, pursuant to section 114(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, that any one or more of the independent school standards¹ is or are not being met in relation to the school.

In these circumstances I enclose a Notice, served by the Secretary of State for Education under section 114(5) of the 2008 Act, requiring an Action Plan which details the steps that will be taken to meet all of the standards set out in the Annex to the Notice and the time by which each step will be taken, to be submitted by 24 October 2020.

¹The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/9283)

IEBT
Level 3, Riverside
Bishopgate House
Fieffmans
Darlington
DL1 5QE

E-mail
registration.enquiries@education.gov.uk

Ref no: 926/6152
Date: 24 September 2020

The action plan should also include an update the matters set out in our earlier letter of that set out security issues your latest actions regarding the security matt

You are reminded that the independent school standards require that a copy of the inspection report is sent to parents and a copy is published on the school's website or, where no such website exists, is provided to parents on request. This will be checked at the next inspection.

The Action Plan must contain reasonable timescales for implementation within which the necessary action will be taken and it is expected that the implementation dates given in the Action Plan should not extend beyond 24 December 2020. A template and supporting advice is enclosed which may help you in drawing up a satisfactory Action Plan.

The deadline by which the Action Plan must be received by me is 24 October 2020. If this date is not met, the Secretary of State may remove the school from the Register of Independent Schools or may impose a requirement restricting the school's operations (from a date following the period during which you may appeal).

I must warn you that the Secretary of State may reject an Action Plan, and in these circumstances the Secretary of State may remove the school from the Register of Independent Schools or may impose a requirement restricting the school's operations (from a date following the appeal period).

If an Action Plan is accepted, Ofsted may be asked to visit the school again to check that the school has fully implemented the plan and that it is fully meeting the independent school standards.

You may wish to note that this letter, the enclosed Notice and Annex will be published shortly on the Gov.uk website.

Yours faithfully

Independent Education and Boarding Team

SECTION 114(5) OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008
NOTICE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION
IN RELATION TO
Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk, NR16 2HU
("the School")

WHEREAS

The Secretary of State for Education, being the keeper of the register of independent schools in England² –

(i) has taken into account a report in respect of an inspection of the School by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills which was conducted on 25 to 27 February 2020; and

(ii) is satisfied that the independent school standards, as prescribed in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, specified in the Annex to this Notice are not being met in relation to the School.

NOW THEREFORE

In exercise of the power conferred upon him by section 114(5) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Secretary of State serves the following Notice on the proprietor of the School:

(1) the independent school standards set out in the Annex to this Notice are not being met in relation to the School; and

(2) the proprietor of the School is required to submit an action plan³ to the Secretary of State specifying the steps that will be taken to meet the standards, and the time by which each step will be taken, on or before 24 October 2020.

Independent Education and Boarding Team Date: 24 September 2020

¹ The Secretary of State is required to keep a register of independent educational institutions in England under section 95(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. "Independent educational institution" is defined in section 92(1) of that Act as an independent school and an independent provider of part-time education. Independent providers of part-time education are not currently regulated so effectively the requirement under section 95(1) is for the Secretary of State to keep a register of independent schools.
² An action plan is defined in section 114(4) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

ANNEX TO NOTICE
Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk, NR16 2HU
("the school")

The following independent school standards, as prescribed in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, are not being met in relation to the school:

PART 1: Quality of education provided

1. The standards about the quality of education provided at the school are those contained in this Part.

2.(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if—

(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and

(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work—

(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.

3. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—

(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;

(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;

(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;

(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;

(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress; and

(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

PART 3: Welfare, health and safety of pupils

6. The standards about the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school are those contained in this Part.

9. The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that—

(b) the policy is implemented effectively.

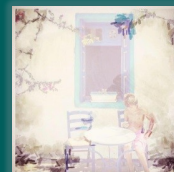
PART 8: Quality of leadership in and management of schools

34. (1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—

(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and

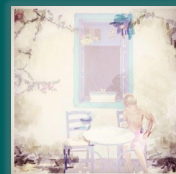
(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Graphic 10: Improvement Notice



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]



THEMATIC ANALYSIS

What is Thematic Analysis: “[TA] is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. Through focusing on meaning across a dataset, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. Identifying unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item is not the focus of TA. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about, and of making sense of those commonalities.”

However, what is common is not necessarily in and of itself meaningful or important. The patterns of meaning that TA allows the researcher to identify need to be important in relation to the topic and research question being explored.

In this report, the author of the research asks: **Is Acorn Park School a failing school or is it simply being mismanaged?** There are several reasons why TA is used for research underpinning, mainly around that TA is flexible and easily accessible. Braun and Clarke (2012) go on to state: “TA provides an entry into a way of doing research that otherwise can seem vague, mystifying, conceptually challenging and overly complex. It offers a way into qualitative research that teaches the mechanics of coding and analysing qualitative data systematically, which can then be linked to broader theoretical or conceptual issues.”

The author of this report was first commissioned to draft and prepare a simple report for the Independent Schools Inspectorate and Ofsted’s attention, where highlighting the participants serious concerns was a priority, however, what was to be a simple report, has turned into a rather **urgent** need to submit an in-depth report, asking the ISI, Ofsted and the Department for Education for immediate intervention. Qualitative Analysis for this type of report would take months, and months the author did not have, safeguarding children’s needs are her top priority, so using the third (Covid-19) Lock Down wisely, thematic analysis was the most relevant form of data capture in terms of speed and lived experiences.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS – ACORN PARK SCHOOL FAILURES

REPORTING SAMPLES	REPORTED GRIEVANCE AND LIVED EXPERIENCES	MAIN THEMES
PARENTS AND PUPILS PARTICIPANTS		
SAMPLE		
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of consultation, no communication • Staff leaving • Moving classes often • Sudden changes • Childs mental health affected • Dismissed views • Lack of trust in senior staff, school management poor • Parents are treated with adversarial attitude • Child education experience impacted • Fear placement will be withdrawn 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Management – significant changes, with no thorough consultation • Parents were not told of changes • Large amounts of staff leaving, high staff turnover, happy staff do not leave in droves • No understanding of ASD or learning needs • EHCP Provision lacking • School gates left open, staff not in eye line cars are in the near • Children escaping from a secure school, safeguarding concerns not taken seriously 	<p>1. Poor or Lack of Effective Communication</p> <p>2. Serious Safeguarding Concerns</p> <p>3. Dismissing of Parental and</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health of children in decline, especially children who are non-verbal • Parents and children who are unable to use their voices, are ignored, COVID-19 has had an impact, however, management are negative • Unable to communicate with school management, and when one does, management bully parents, 	<p style="text-align: center;">Child/Young Persons Views</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4. Data Breaches</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5. High Staff Turn Over</p>
SAMPLE		
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised concerns with executive staff/board – weak response • Constant staff changes, high staff turn over • Staff have no supervision and have no structured teaching methods • Progress of child, is lacking, no feedback after repeated requested for baseline assessments • Attitude of staff during COVID-19 is bare minimum • Senior leadership team are fond of untruths • Unlawful restraining of children • Lack of therapy provision • Data breaches are constant • No joined up working between staff and management 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious safeguarding, children absconding • Children are bullied by staff • Communication is very poor • Senior staff do not take responsibility, and do not understand damage they are causing children and families • Fear we will lose placement • We are not heard, the school management ignore our complaints • Senior staff do not understand safeguarding frameworks 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff did not know what to do when children absconded • Constant Data breaches • Staff changing all the time 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority cannot help • Senior leadership favour untruthfulness • Data breaches are serious concerns • Lacking EHCP Provision • Early Intervention not implemented • Mental health of child in decline • Seriously high staff turn over • Concerns are not dealt with at all, brushed under the carpet by executive board members • Fear placement will be lost • Senior staff scream and bully 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication, parents are not unreasonable • Staff members keep changing • Senior staff struggling to implement changes • Children do not have consistency • Staff shortages and lack of support and safeguarding for children who have challenging behaviours • Unreasonable amount of unlawful restraints • Classes are constantly being changed, EHCP support or provision is lacking • Our data is always being breached by senior staff members • Complaints are not investigated thoroughly • If we do not like the school, we can find another 	
SAMPLE		

<p>Participant 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of school placement being removed if spoke up = placement removed • EHCP needs not being met, • Senior staff are lacking professional approach, received an apology, however adjustments were not implemented • Child mental health in decline, as needs are not being met • Change in school management has given rise to child going into crisis, no through communication • Teachers leaving / constant high staff turnover, Executive board members fail to investigate appropriately • Trust and confidence have been broken • Emergency reviews are called, to determine meeting needs • Child struggling with new staff, child's views were not taken seriously, parental views dismissed • Staff lack understanding of ASD and sensory needs, coping mechanisms, young people are expected to cope with constant changes 	
<p>SAMPLE</p>		
<p>Participant 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School complaints biased – investigating themselves for themselves • Senior staff are unprofessional and unwilling to support children, are rude, and have destroyed child's confidence • Serious safeguarding risks • Constant data breaches • Senior staff have no allowances for child and their needs, in particular ASD • Senior staff do not understand educational law • Senior staff constantly are dismissing parents and child views and are always being untruthful • Senior staff have little regards for SEND 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous management were incredibly supportive, caring, and loyal • Acorn park are now inflexible, and their approach has impacted on our children's lives 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant staff turnover • Lack of thorough communication • Parents are always at fault, as senior staff fail to consider their lack of professional approach • Child not appropriately safeguarded, needs are not fully understood • Shortage of staff • Parents are ignored if concerns are raised • New senior management lack credibility • Local authority is aware of issues, yet fail to respond appropriately • Allergies are not understood – life changing, if not followed • Child's behaviours are getting worse, due to constant uncertainty • Health and hygiene process are not strictly followed, causing mental health distress for children 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional are rude • Data being breached all the time • Staff changes happen all the time • New senior staff members lack a clear understanding of management processes • No proper communication • Parents made to feel fearful • Complaints are not investigated • Safeguarding issues are not resolved • Teachers who speak up are forced out 	

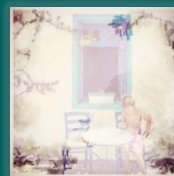
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly having to change information for children, no differentiation of schoolwork 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant changes, severe lack of communication • Specialist school seems to be lack specialism, staff are always changing, school not fit for purpose • EHCP not being followed • Health needs not followed – severe risk • Mental needs not being met – severe safeguarding risk • Senior staff demand that child is to follow school processes – even when they have serious health risks • No access to personal safety room • Parents blamed when senior staff fail to communicate • Attitude of Senior staff hit and miss, staff favour untruths, staff are unprofessional • Child's voice is not heard, parents' views are dismissed, child is not suffering trauma due to unmet needs and safeguarding risks not being met, education / lessons are spikey 	
SAMPLE		
Participant 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel victimized • Our school is not a specialist school, they have no understanding of ASD • EHCP and therapy not implemented • Far too many changes, staff keep changing • Data breaches happen too often • Poor communication • Too many agency staff • Staff are not experienced • Staff members are dishonest • Parents having to constantly follow up teachers for progresses 	

<p>Participant 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff take no responsibility • Mental health of children severely impacted • Too many changes have caused sever anxiety • Child escaping from school – serious risk of safeguarding – risk to life • School staff did not know how to deal with beahviour challenges • Struggling to attend school – due to impact on health • Lack of communication • Staff are untrained or unqualified • Missing education • Lack of support from senior staff members 	
<p>SAMPLE</p>		
<p>Participant A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit first • Unrealistic timescales • No real clear understanding of SEND • Enterprise is too big • Holistic support framework not supported • Bonus scheme are used to grab staff • Top-Down structure, no robust policies • Staff speak out they are offered the door • There must be a parent governing board • Local authority hands tied 	
<p>SAMPLE</p>		
<p>Participant B</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparency • Safeguarding risks not taken seriously • Senior leadership lack knowledge and professionalism • Children and not placed first • Chain of command filters complaints • Senior staff are unsure of how to implement effective change • High staff turn over • Staff are fearful of speaking out • Provision is lacking • Unpleasant working environment 	

ANONYMOUS VIEWS

Expressed Views

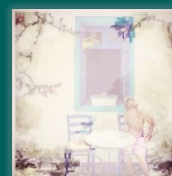
CURRENT POSITION 2021	
Parent 1	<p>Failure: <i>“Main issue for us, is the lack of consistency and communication. Things or processes change without any notice or discussion and are then presented as a done deal. This causes issues with the lack of planning for transitions and even if we object, it is too late for them to change back.</i></p> <p><i>Our child says no one knows them, as the staff are always changing. Our child dislikes how APS do not stick to their word when they say something will or will not happen.</i></p> <p><i>When we chose the school, it was due to the atmosphere. They were caring, inclusive, and seemed like a partnership between the school, the child, and the parents, we were all working to get the best for our child and all the children. The previous staff members were knowledgeable, and their effective communication was really good, and we as a family felt supported.”</i></p> <p>Positive:</p>
Child A	N/A



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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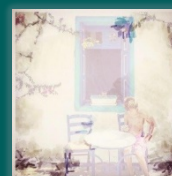
<p>Parent 2</p>	<p>Failure: <i>“Acorn Park operates as a Business, not as a Specialist ASD School, where our children are not put first and foremost in everything they do. Senior Management fail to comply to regulations and continuously fail to meet the needs of the children in their care. They are unable to safeguard the children and continuously make significant changes without warning that are detrimental to the children’s education and well-being. “Main issue for us, is the lack of consistency and communication. Things or processes change without any notice or discussion and are then presented as a done deal. This causes issues with the lack of planning for transitions and even if we object, it is too late for them to change back.</i></p> <p>Positive:</p>
<p>Child B</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Parent 3</p>	<p>Failure: <i>“I am really disappointed. I thought this school would be a great placement for my child to attend. It looked so good. I have had nothing but trouble with APS from the get-go. It is my opinion they take a large amount of money from our Local Authority for my child and do not even meet their needs. The communication was always bad, but now it is far worse. My child disliked this placement from their first day. I also feel the senior leaders do not even listen to our concerns, be it in a professional and or understanding manner.”</i></p> <p>Positive:</p>
<p>Child C</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Parent 4</p>	<p>Failure: <i>“Main issue for us, is the lack of consistency and communication. Things or processes change without any notice or discussion and are then presented as a done deal. This causes issues with the</i></p>



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	<p><i>lack of planning for transitions and even if we object, it is too late for them to change back.</i></p> <p><i>The changes that have occurred would even be too many for a mainstream pupil to contend with let alone a child with autism. These changes have caused uncomfortable safeguarding issues for our child.”</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>“When our child started APS prior to the new management taking over, the previous head and teachers were very caring and supportive to meeting the needs of our child.”</i></p>
<p><i>Child D</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><i>Parent 5</i></p>	<p>Failure: <i>“We are truly saddened to put such negative views into this report, but we have huge concerns with the way this school is being run. It is our opinion this school is being run with a focus of profit before anything else, and also on fear. We have tried to work with the new leadership team, but it appears our concerns have fallen on deaf ears. Our child does not like school anymore which is truly sad.</i></p> <p><i>We were hopeful when the new head of services joined. We hoped processes would improve, sadly they seem far worse. APS was such an amazing, kind nurturing school when the previous management where in charge. We are sad for the staff and the other parents, but most importantly the children who are being let down and which includes our child.</i></p> <p><i>We would like to say that we are shocked that so little is done for the children of Acorn Park School. The previous management were kind understanding and helpful, however, the new management are at the opposite end of the spectrum.</i></p>

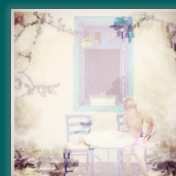


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	<p><i>[They] run the school on fear, push out pupils, and parents that only do what is in the children's best interests.</i></p> <p><i>APS is a school for Children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) including Autism, but it seems they treat the children like they are criminals.</i></p> <p><i>Whose outcomes are first, certainly not the children's. It feels as it's a 'Money over care for Outcomes First'."</i></p> <p>Positive:</p>
Child E	N/A
Parent 6	<p>Failure: <i>"We feel the children lack a stable and predictable school life. We feel the dishonest and uncaring attitudes, poor communication and disregard for parent concerns shocking. It feels the school puts cost before the needs of the pupils. We feel that there is nothing specialist about this provision and we want to remove our child as soon as possible. We feel that EHCP's are not followed and our concerns get disregarded."</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>"When our child first started at Acorn Park School, we felt it was a child centered approach. We felt it was a place our child's needs were met well by a specialist ASD school. Now, it is changed beyond all recognition."</i></p>
Child F	N/A
Parent 7	<p>Failure: <i>"Our child has been at APS for a long time and has made considerable progress until recent changes in ownership/management. Since the change in management, despite several emails and meetings, we feel the school has refused to follow the legally</i></p>

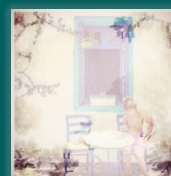


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	<p><i>binding EHCP provisions as well as showing no intention of meeting our child’s needs. We feel we have been ignored, lied to, and had several promises made that were then broken. APS, show little compassion or remorse for such, resulting in our child becoming very unhappy again in the school environment. Despite APS’s policy promising to provide a secure and nurturing environment, our child was left feeling completely unsupported and became increasingly anxious. Furthermore, it seems to us, that APS refuse responsibility and instead blame our child for this outcome.</i></p> <p><i>The new management have ripped the heart out of APS and have replaced it with stone.”</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>“Prior to the change in management, our child went from being a work refuser with frequent meltdowns to a calm, happy, engaging student. Our child was nurtured and flourished under the previous management to the point where they could access GCSE education, which is something we once thought would never be possible. It is so very sad to see.”</i></p>
<p><i>Child G</i></p>	<p>Failure: <i>“There was no support left for the students. It felt like they put money before us and they didn’t take well to anyone of us speaking out against them.”</i></p> <p>Positive:</p>
<p><i>Parent 8</i></p>	<p>Failure: <i>“New management at Acorn Park School, have been catastrophic for our child and they have completely destroyed their confidence. APS behave in a rude, dictatorial, arrogant, and bullying manner with NO allowances or consideration for our child, their diagnosis of Autism, or the Law. They have harassed and have been untruthful to us and are totally inflexible in their approach. Without doubt they have damaged our child’s mental health. Their</i></p>

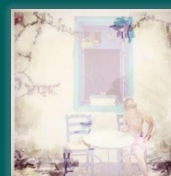


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	<p><i>behaviour/attitude is disgraceful, especially as it is a Specialists SEN school. They are not fit for purpose.”</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>“Our child was aged [...] and had never been in full time education when they started at Acorn Park School. The previous management immediately understood their Autism and with their patience, kindness, and adherence to their EHCP, they then built up to attending full time, they also learnt to read and write and made their first ever friend. APS understood their chronic anxiety and always put their needs first. They worked closely with us as a family and went above and beyond to help our child successfully transition into Acorn Park School.”</i></p>
<p><i>Child H</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Parent 9</p>	<p>Failure: <i>“Our child has a food intolerance. APS has a limited choice of foods/drinks due to their [Citrus...] Policy. Without any consultation, and or thorough information. Without proper warning, APS, made an instant decision to become a [Milk and Water] only School. Our child is now forced to only have water due to them being dairy intolerant. We were told as parents, that it is water and or milk or nothing. This was a sudden change. SEND Children, struggle with sudden change, and at times for medical reasons, water and or milk is not to be consumed. Our child is left, struggling. In the hotter months, this change leads to our child’s health being impacted. A school should not play god with our children’s health. The constant change of staff is very alarming, we are never told about when staff leave or why, we simply see new teachers turning up. This inconsistency plays havoc with our child’s needs. The number of Data Breaches is very concerning. Another child’s information was sent to our home with our child’s homework. A</i></p>

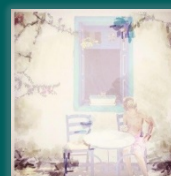


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	<p><i>member of staff had come out and collected the same day.”</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>“On a positive note our child enjoys school and is always happy to go in. Our child’s previous teacher (last year) was very experienced and very good with supporting out child. They offered us loads of communication.”</i></p>
Participant 1	<p>Failure: <i>“Profit first. The executive team have a wealth of experience yet turn a blind eye. Why? Why are staff offered bonus scheme to get pupils on seats, when the school, is still failing? Our collective experiences are dismissed, especially when we offer sound and solid improvement outcomes and or targets. The chain of command needs to look hard at its effective management styles.</i></p> <p><i>Dismissing parental views and taking the views of children as nothing more than fleeting moans, is unacceptable. The most vulnerable in society must be heard. Profit, profit, profit, rather than meeting needs of APS children and young people. Expecting staff to help turn around a failing school, without listening to them, is like enlisting the fire service to put out a fire with petrol. Robust actions plans were not accepted. Time frames were not realistic.”</i></p> <p>Positive: <i>“The children and parents, made every day worthwhile. We got up and looked forward coming into school, not for APS, but for the children and trying to meet the needs, with very little support. Being appreciated by parents who were only too grateful that their school was being properly managed.”</i></p>
Participant 2	<p>Failure: <i>“Communication is ineffective and nonexistent. Senior leaders are out of their depth and do not put the child at the center of their EHCP’s.</i></p>



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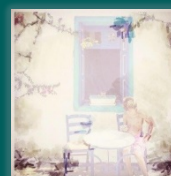
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Profit first, children second. We are not respected, or listened to, result is that we leave with heavy hearts, knowing that the lives of ‘our’ children are still at risk or their needs will not be met. Culture of fear resides at APS.

We cannot work, where senior leaders and the executive board, do not place the child at the heart of their educational plan. Brutal restrains and screaming at children, is not how we would manage a school effectively, ‘I’ was offered the ‘like it or lump it’ option. I am sad to say, had to leave, as no amount of support that I was giving the children would ever be enough to change the culture of APS.”

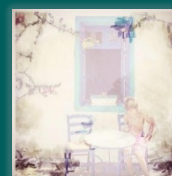
Positive: *“All the children and young people are incredible human beings and have changed our and my life in ways that I, never felt it could. APS Parents are empowering and encouraging pillars of strength.”*



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Participants with the help of the author, calls the Department for Education to consider the following,

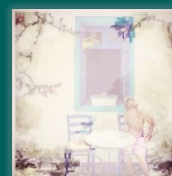
PREFERENCES			
Order of Priority	Options		
		Positives	Negatives
1	Local Authority (Norfolk and or Suffolk are awarded control) – APS becomes a specialist-maintained school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cost Effective, Public Resources saving. ○ Trust and Confidence restored in Local Authorities. ○ Parental Confidence, safeguarded children, and young people. ○ Local Authority will take accountability for safeguarding. ○ Staff and Parents will feel confident to raise concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time Scales ○ Some Disruption to children and young people. ○ Parents trust will be waned. ○ Parents and Children will have to exercise their patience levels.



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<p>2.</p>	<p>OFG – forced to sell APS, to a single Academy Trust. Complete overhaul of Executive Board, Principle (Head of Service), Head and Deputy Heads of School, Chair of Governors to include Senior Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>Initiate a comprehensive Parent Governing Board.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff and Parents will feel confident to raise concerns. ○ Confidence in executive Management of school ○ Overhaul Trust and Confidence raised. ○ Children and Young People safeguarded. ○ SEND Needs Met ○ Provision secure ○ Local Authority to implement and oversee ALL areas of effective management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time Scales ○ More Description for Children and Young People ○ Parents trust will be waned. ○ Parents and Children will have to exercise their patience levels.
<p>3</p>	<p>Close School – withdraw registration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restoration of Mental and Emotional Health and wellbeing, ○ Better learning outcomes. ○ Restoring faith in the children and young people’s ability to enjoy a renewed sense of learning in safe environment. ○ More Staff – job increases, were LA / or another independent Trust to take over APS. ○ [Please see Participants views and comments.] [Management must go, children want to have a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No other local specialist schools within area can accommodate, due to capacity. ○ Loss of friendship and support groups ○ Loss of jobs /staff unemployment ○ Suitable environment is lost. ○ Disruption to children and young people’s lives. ○ Parents trust and confidence in any school could be deeply impacted upon.



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		<p>happier schooling environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New Management have undone all the previous managements hard work. 	
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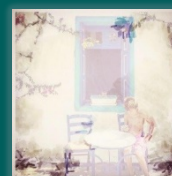
Parents/Participants, Ex and Present Staff members, are to be offered a safe portal or pathway (dedicated email address) to report all their continuing and ongoing concerns, furthermore, Parents/Participants and present staff members are to be offered a comprehensive round table meeting where next steps can be set in motion in a protected environment.

Currently, participants feel that there is little hope, and or option, besides the above. These options would mean to having to choose the lesser of the worse hitting change, to safeguard the lives of their children, whilst also ensuring their educational and learning needs are met.

There needs to be an improved staff to pupil ratio. Staff need to be experienced, professional and well trained. The quality of staff should be a top priority. Parents need to set up a robust parental governing board. There is scope to improve the residential setting, however, APS must first become an outstanding sought-after school.

Local Authorities can save public resources, were they to take over APS. Bring it back into the hands of the public, in doing so, both Norfolk and Suffolk Local Authorities can improve on their Ofsted recommendations, and ultimately, re-introduce trust and confidence with their families, who need to feel supported.

“There needs to be robust and through consultations with experts and parents alike, for APS to stand a chance of success, however as it stands, the current senior leadership encumberment is not meeting the needs of children and young people, whilst equally allowing for the mismanaged of APS to continue.”



If option (2) is sought, the Executive Board, must change, the ‘School Senior leadership’ must be trained professionals, and not business administrators. Head Teachers’ need to follow the Headteachers Guidance to include and uphold the 7 principles of Public Life, be it a maintained and or an independent school. Whist every effort has been taken to keep specific roles and titles within this report at a minimum, the author must highlight to the Head of School and the Head of Service the following:

1. The Seven Principles of Public Life

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the *Nolan Principles*) apply to anyone who works as a public officeholder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

1.1 Selflessness

1.2 Integrity

1.3 Objectivity

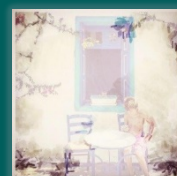
1.4 Accountability

1.5 Openness

1.6 Honesty

1.7 Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



Furthermore, Heads of School, and Heads of Service have the Headteachers’ Standards 2020:

The author copies exactly, the Guidance from The United Kingdom’s Government Publications, in so far that these implicit Governmental Publications have been misplaced:

1. School culture

Headteachers:

Establish and sustain the school’s ethos and strategic direction in partnership with those responsible for governance and through consultation with the school community create a culture where pupils experience a positive and enriching school life, uphold ambitious educational standards which prepare pupils from all backgrounds for their next phase of education and life. Promote positive and respectful relationships across the school community and a safe, orderly, and inclusive environment ensure a culture of high staff professionalism.

2. Teaching

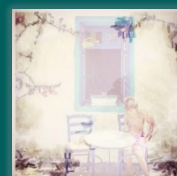
3. Curriculum and assessment

4. Behaviour

5. Additional and special educational needs and disabilities

Headteachers:

Ensure the school holds ambitious expectations for all pupils with additional and special educational needs and disabilities. Establish and sustain culture and practices that enable pupils to access the curriculum and learn effectively. Ensure the school works effectively in partnership with parents, carers, and professionals, to identify the additional needs and special educational needs and disabilities of pupils, providing support and adaptation where appropriate. Ensure the school fulfils its statutory duties regarding the SEND code of practice.



6. Professional development

7. Organisational management

Headteachers:

Ensure the protection and safety of pupils and staff through effective approaches to safeguarding, as part of the duty of care. Prioritise and allocate financial resources appropriately, ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and probity in the use of public funds. Ensure staff are deployed and managed well with due attention paid to workload. Establish and oversee systems, processes and policies that enable the school to operate effectively and efficiently. Ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing, and mitigating risk

8. Continuous school improvement

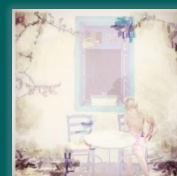
Headteachers:

Make use of effective and proportional processes of evaluation, to identify and analyse complex or persistent problems and barriers which limit school effectiveness and identify priority areas for improvement. Develop appropriate evidence-informed strategies for improvement as part of well-targeted plans which are realistic, timely, appropriately sequenced and suited to the school's context. Ensure careful and effective implementation of improvement strategies, which lead to sustained school improvement over time.

9. Working in partnership

Headteachers:

Forge constructive relationships beyond the school, working in partnership with parents, carers, and the local community. Commit their school to work successfully with other schools and organisations in a climate of mutual challenge and support. Establish and maintain working relationships with fellow professionals and colleagues across other public services to improve educational outcomes for all pupils.



10. Governance and accountability

Headteachers:

Understand and welcome the role of effective governance, upholding their obligation to give account and accept responsibility. Establish and sustain professional working relationship with those responsible for governance. Ensure that staff know and understand their professional responsibilities and are held to account. Ensure the school effectively and efficiently operates within the required regulatory frameworks and meets all statutory duties.

Whilst upholding the due processes for the following:

Appraisal

Equalities issues

Fundamental British values

National Leaders of Education

National professional qualifications

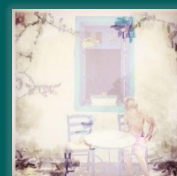
Principles of public life

SEND code of practice

Standard for teachers' professional development

Teachers' standards

Headteachers are leading professionals and role models for the communities they serve. Their leadership is a significant factor in ensuring high quality teaching and achievement in schools, and a positive and enriching experience of education for pupils. Together with those responsible for governance, they are custodians of the nation's schools.



Parents and the wider public rightly hold high expectations of headteachers, given their influential position leading the teaching profession and on the young people who are their responsibility. The headteachers’ standards set out how headteachers meet these high expectations. The standards are an important benchmark not only for headteachers and those who hold headteachers to account, but also for those who train and develop school leaders.

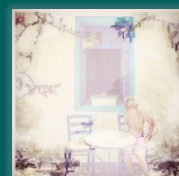
APS could rebut their position, to justify that they are registered as an independent school, with their own set of principles and policies. Therefore it is for this reason, the author highlights, *Public Law Pitfalls for Academies*.

Elderflower Legal firm, (Bar Standards Regulated) states in whole part for legality:

“Despite the rhetoric about autonomy, independence from state control and privatisation, academy trusts are still treated as quasi-public bodies for some purposes in the eyes of the law. Consequently, they are subject to various public law duties in the way they carry out their public functions. Unlike their specific duties derived from legislation such as the Academies Act 2010, Charities Act 2011 or Companies Act 2006, many of these duties are not written down in black and white. Instead, they are derived from principles of administrative law developed by the Courts over many decades. This lack of clarity means it can be difficult for trustees and governors to understand precisely what the law requires in this area. This is a developing area of the law in the context of academy trusts, particularly as the prospect of more enforced academisation polarises views and seems likely to encourage more protest and challenge to the activities of academy trusts. It is important that trustees and governors understand what the public law pitfalls for academies are to avoid falling into the traps. They impart how schools like APS uphold their duties and stay compliant.

The Courts have found that academy trusts are subject to public law because (a) they are carrying out functions of public nature (b) they derive their legal existence from statutory powers vested in the Secretary of State and (c) they are funded mainly from state resources. Consequently, their decisions and actions may be susceptible to judicial review in the Administrative Court.

The courts will not intervene lightly in decisions of public and quasi-public bodies. Claims for judicial review follow a specific procedure – there is a strict time limit of 3 months from the date of decision being challenged (and the claimant must act promptly). The claimant must comply with the pre-action protocol before issuing a claim. He must obtain permission from the court to bring the claim. A judge will determine if there is an arguable case at a



preliminary hearing, usually based on written evidence alone at this stage. If the court grants permission to proceed, the second stage of the proceedings will then go on to consider the merits of the claim. If the claim is successful the court can make various orders – it can strike down the public body’s decision, it can issue a declaration that the decision is wrong and require the decision-maker to re-consider the issue.

Public law duties

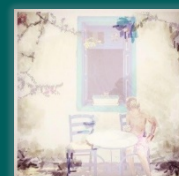
Public bodies must act within their powers and in a fair and reasonable way when dealing with service users and the public. In the context of academies, that means duties towards parents, pupils, staff, and the wider community. Public bodies must reach fair, rational and reasonable decisions about the rights and entitlements of their service users. If they do not comply, their decisions can be subject to complaints, challenges before regulators (such as OFSTED or OFQUAL) adjudicators (e.g., the Schools Adjudicator for admission issues), the Education Funding Agency and ultimately court claims for judicial review. Judicial review proceedings are a way of challenging the decisions of public bodies on the basis that the decision-making process adopted by them is so seriously flawed as to be unlawful.

The principle that academy trusts are subject to public law duties and that their decisions can be challenged by a claim for judicial review was established in a case concerning a challenge to the admission arrangements of a City Technology College (the precursors to academy trusts) in South East London in 1995.”

Sound decision-making is vital

In the context of academies, the decisions which have a public law aspect are likely to be taken by the academy trust board, or occasionally the Chief Executive or Executive Headteacher of a MAT, acting under delegated powers. The usual line of attack against decisions or actions by a public body is to allege one or more of the following defects in the decision:

- *Irrationality or unreasonableness– the decision is so outrageous or absurd that no reasonable person would have made it, or alternatively the decision-maker has failed to ask itself the right question, failed to make proper enquiry into the facts, has not taken into account relevant factors, or has taken into account irrelevant considerations. Linked to this is a growing doctrine of proportionality: the action taken by a public body must be appropriate, necessary, and not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the*

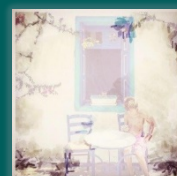


objective. Heavy-handed decisions which deprive someone of a fundamental right are particularly susceptible to review under this principle.

- *Illegality – the decision-maker must understand the law which regulates them. A public body may have acted outside of its powers (known as ‘ultra vires’) – those powers may be set out in legislation or in the governing document (Articles of Association); the body has failed to comply with a duty set out in a particular statute e.g. the requirement to make SEN provision under the Children and Families Act 2014; the body has unlawfully fettered its discretion – e.g. by adopting a blanket policy on an issue without considering the merits of each individual case; the body has failed to provide adequate reasons for its decision; the decision maker has unlawfully delegated its decision-making to another party when it should have taken the decision itself (for example, an unlawful scheme of delegation).*
- *Procedural impropriety – this a defect in the process of decision-making, which breaches the rules of fairness and natural justice: this could include bias from the decision-maker because of an obvious conflict of interest, failure to give someone a ‘fair hearing’ to put forward their arguments, acting inconsistently in two or more similar situations, breach of a legitimate expectation (express or implicit promises made to people, which the decision maker then goes back on; or failure to consult before making an important decision (see more on this later).*
- *Breach of Human Rights – failure to respect the European Convention Rights brought into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998. It has become increasingly common for these grounds to be added into a claim, such as the right not to be discriminated against, right to freedom of expression, right to education, right to private and family life. In this context, the courts often apply a proportionality test – i.e., they have to weigh up the interests of the wider community and the legitimate aims of the state as against the protection of an individual’s rights and interests.*

All this points to the need to think about the public law implications of decisions, policies and major changes implemented by an academy trust to avoid public law pitfalls. Examples of the kind of issues which could become contentious include, changing admission arrangements, a decision to merge or amalgamate schools, changes to SEN provision, uniform policies, school meals arrangements.

An interesting question which has yet to come before the courts is whether parents and pupils might use judicial review proceedings to force an academy trust to comply with certain provisions in their Funding Agreement which



might be capable of conferring rights on third parties (for example, Clause 2.10 which requires the academy to be 'all ability and inclusive', to make available places for children with SEN (Annex para 9), to provide free milk (2.16) and to provide minimum pension benefits for staff (2.7).

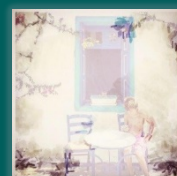
During debates on the Academies Bill in 2010 the Minister Lord Hill said, "I am happy to confirm that parents have always had the power to seek judicial review against either the academy trust for failing to follow its contractual obligations [under the Funding Agreement] or the Secretary of State for failing to ensure that the academy complies with its obligations under the Funding Agreement". We may in future see claims based on the premise that pupils and parents have a 'legitimate expectation' that the terms of the Funding Agreement will be complied with.

The remedy that lay forth, could simply be determined in law by following a judicial review, using Public Law remedy, or that APS comply with its current NOTICE [SECTION 114(5) OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008 NOTICE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION] (Ref no: 926/6152).

The author reports, that the Head of School, stated to her in a telephone call: "We are an independent school and can do what we like." Is it perhaps that the Head of School, does not know about their corrective legislative duties, or is it that they are not trained sufficiently, to know that any school, can be open to be judicially reviewed? Whilst policy implementation is best practice, it does not trump legislation.

It would be remiss of the author to not help herein, in that, she will support all the participants to obtain sound legal advice for next steps, were they are wanting to instruct lawyers for urgent remedy of their concerns.

The Department for Education must be reminded, that under s7 of the Education Act 1996, which sets out the parents' duty to cause their child to receive efficient full-time **education** suitable to age, ability, aptitude and special needs, have every right, to ensure that their children are safeguarded and receiving said education, Parents are then entitled to exercise their duty under s 3(1) Children Act 1989, if they feel, that their children are not being safeguarded:



*“Parental Responsibility is defined in **s 3(1) Children Act 1989** as being:*

“all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property”.

The term ‘Parental Responsibility’ attempts to focus on the parent’s duties towards their child rather than the parent’s rights over their child.

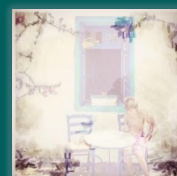
What does Parental Responsibility mean in practical terms?

When certain decisions have to be taken about a child, all those with Parental Responsibility for the child are allowed to have a say in that decision. The decision will have to be about the upbringing of the child. Day to day decisions should be taken by the resident parent or the person with whom the child lives without interference from other Parental Responsibility holders.

In practical terms Parental Responsibility means the power to make important decisions in relation to a child. This can include:

- *determining the child’s education and where the child goes to school. [Keeping safe their children and young people).*

Why then does APS, not adhere to the legislation, why are children and young people subjected to ‘harm’ and or their safeguarding not being taken seriously?



CONCLUSIONS

Is Acorn Park School a failing school or is it simply being mismanaged?

The author asks the reader, to reread the participants views and or statements. The participants within this report, represent 23% of a school with only 84 pupils on roll. The participants are all independent from each other, yet, they all have the 5 main themes of concern in common.

- 1. Poor or Lack of Effective Communication**
- 2. Serious Safeguarding Concerns**
- 3. Dismissing of Parental and Child/Young Persons Views**
- 4. Data Breaches**
- 5. High Staff Turn Over**

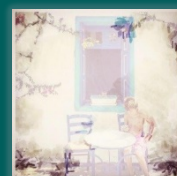
APS is not fit for purpose, the negative views and or statements, are a testament to this. The fear or culture of fear in speaking out, is evident, as several of the participants report and evidence, ‘when we speak out, our children are pushed out, their places are withdrawn.’

APS is not adhering to the SEND Code of Practice 2014 [as amended 2015] and has very little regard to educational legislation and the underpinning of legally binding EHCP’s; children and young people, are not even having their basic educational needs met, their voices are silenced.

The mental, emotional health and wellbeing of the children and young people is being impacted upon, and severely at that, the lack of support, and or provision that has been allowed to continue, is causing irreparable damage.

Resources (aka – taxpayers funds) are being abused, there is no thorough accounting processes of how these resources are spent. The Local Authorities are silent, stuck, between having to fund placements, with very little say on how their residents are supported.

The Parents or Participants within this report and those who are too afraid to speak up, are being bullied, harassed, victimised and discriminated against.



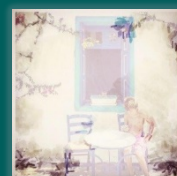
It is evident, in correlation with the Ofsted inspection reports and recent 'Notice to Improve', Acorn Park School, is failing, and it will continue to fail its enrolled children and young people. The Executive Board have had since 2005, to 'improve' APS. The Senior Leadership Team is constantly being changed, often without noticeable improvements. Those senior leaders, who have tried to improve the outcomes of APS, have been met with contempt, for placing the child first.

Outcomes First Group, places itself first, however, who is to be held to account...? The author calls to point, that it is a combined failure by all parties, namely, the [Outcomes First Group], the current Senior School Leadership Team and the Department for Education, for allowing a failing school to continue failing its most vulnerable children and young people. All parties are complicit in this failing. The Children and Young People must be safeguarded.

'In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.' - [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

The rights enshrined in the Convention and its Optional Protocols provide the framework for interpretation. (c) A rule of procedure: Whenever a decision is to be made that will affect a specific child, an identified group of children or children in general, the decision-making process must include an evaluation of the possible impact (positive or negative) of the decision on the child or children concerned.

Assessing and determining the best interests of the child require procedural guarantees. Furthermore, the justification of a decision must show that the right has been explicitly taken into account. In this regard, States parties shall explain how the right has been respected in the decision, that is, what has been considered to be in the child's best interests; what criteria it is based on; and how the child's interests have been weighed against other considerations, be they broad issues of policy or individual cases. 7. In the present general comment, the



expression “the child’s best interests” or “the best interests of the child” covers the three dimensions developed above.’

APS cannot do what it likes, whilst offering up the ‘Like it or Lump It’ rhetoric, APS, have a duty of care, in that they must always remain legally compliant, if not, parents are entitled to exercise their legal right to seek a judicial review

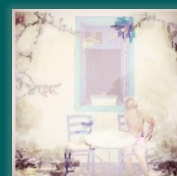
We only need to be reminded that the Government’s first duty is to ensure all of its citizens are safe from harm, *Primum non nocere*, and if the Government is causing undue / avoidable harm, by virtue of not implementing the Health Principles [1946], then why is [it] not held to account, especially when [it] continuously allows its citizens, in this case, SEND Children and Young People to suffer routinely at the hands of those in senior decision making positions?

The departments, organisations, professionals, stakeholders and individuals referred to herein, would not only have to apply Cost Benefit and Cost Effective Analysis Models to safeguard human lives, but they would also need to take on board a new continual professional development pathway in behavioural science, with the aim to help policy makers develop strategies to improve the overall health and educational wellbeing of ALL SEND individuals throughout the UK, so as to manage the public purse with appropriation.

Ignorantia juris non excusat [ignorance of law excuses no one] ~ This legal principle details, that simply being ‘unaware’ of specific legislation, is not a means to be set free of liability, for not enacting upon it. Acorn Park School is not above the law, neither are its staff members.

The Lack of Behavioural Change within Education, Health and Social Care Departments or Institutions, directly correlates to the Exponential Rise in the continued Lack of Accountability.

“Our Government is here to protect us, it shouldn’t be about SEND Families and their Children having to protect themselves from our Government’s SEND failures.” ~JH Willicott (2019)



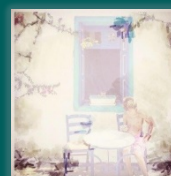
REPORT AUTHOR

Qualifications

1. I was awarded a full Fellowship for services to Public Health (Education, Law and Health) from Royal Society of Public Health, underwritten by Public Health England.
2. I am a Doctoral Student at the University of Middlesex, London, England, UK (PhD – Law, Education and Health – Researching and Establishing why we need an Educational Accountability Act) – supported and funded by the Department for Education to Middlesex.
3. I am a Fellow of the British Institute of Innkeeping (Food, Drink and Health Sciences).
4. I am an Expert Witness for SETD 5 (Registered with the Institute of Expert Witness).
5. CPPD – BSc – Human Nutrition
6. BSc – Combined Science (Sextuple Science Degree)
7. MSc – Environmental Psychology for Education – ceased in favour for an accelerated PhD (Education, Law and Health) 3 years.

Experience

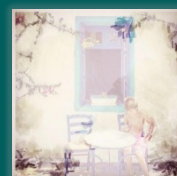
- a. I am registered with the following boards, and or associations:
 - i. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health – Associate (Housing, LA Policy, Health, Environmental Services)
 - ii. British Institute of Innkeeping – Fellow [Services for Food Science Public Nutrition]
 - iii. Bar Human Rights Committee – Member for Services to SEND (Children and Young People – (KidsIndex – UN / EU Children’s Rights)
 - iv. British Education Studies Association (Member and Researcher for SEND)
 - v. Learning Disability England (Academic Support Services)
 - vi. European Human Behaviour and Evolution Association – Cambridge University Research Member
 - vii. Universities Association for Lifelong Learning – Education Research UK (Single Qualifying Researcher and University Qualifying Researcher)
 - viii. British Education and Research Association (Research Member)



- ix. PhD Legal, Public Health and Educational Researcher (Middlesex University)
- x. Post-Doctoral Research Pathway for Legal Neuro-Genetics / Rare Disease (CND)
- xi. NHS / CCG Research Services
- xii. Global Phenotypic Services for SETD 5 (USA, South America, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, Greece, France, Egypt, China, Scandinavia, UK)
- xiii. Furthermore, my services are called for by, but not limited to, Local Authorities, Barristers, Lawyers, Schools, Westminster Health and Education Forums, APPG SEND, Businesses, and Social Worker England.

I have advocated on several legal matters, in the High Court, UTT, FTT, FC, and ECHR and have set one UTT precedent (2018 – Pupils Voice, Psychological Perception, Feelings within school)

- i. [The Human Rights Act 1998, Children MUST have their views, opinions and beliefs heard, including their emotional perception, as ruled by the High Court (the case law: M and M v West Sussex County Council (SEN): [2018] UKUT 347 (AAC).)]
- ii. One Sitting Precedent - permission for the Matter to be heard at the First Chamber ECHR 2016 (UK Local Authority to Collaborate with a Pupil with a Rare Disease) - It is important for Bastian to be heard. Pursuant to the UNCRC 1989. ‘Every Child’s Right to be Heard (UNCRC) Article 12 and all its relevant subtext and subsections pursuant herein.’ Including but not limited to:
 - 1. Article 13 and Article 14
 - 2. Article 18 (Parental Views must be taken so that the Government can support the parents to support the child.)[B Willicott v UK] (2105 and 2016) [(39415/16 B Willicott v UK) - Single Sitting Judge - First Tier - ECtHR - Recommendations to UK/ London Borough of Barnet, Comply (17275/15)]



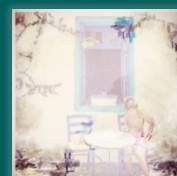
THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”
[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

My Advocacy and Representation Services are fully legally compliant in all matters relating to the above. I am instructed to advocate for my clients.

Definition of advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests, and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy providers work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality, and social justice. (I adhere to the Charter of Advocates) and the Code of Practice 2014.

My Business Normal Like Me SEN Research Services Ltd [Normal Like Me [Registered: 10176663] (2016) - All Rights Reserved. Data Protected: [A8510012] - GDPR Compliance. <https://www.normal-like-me.com> for PhD Public Works.



STATEMENT OF TRUTH

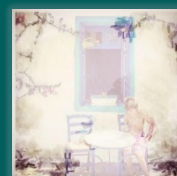
“I believe the that facts stated in this Thematic Analysis Report written and compiled for and on behalf the (Participants - Reporting Samples) Parents whose Children and or Young People attend Acorn Park School, are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.”

1. I am instructed to assist, support and advocate on behalf of the Reporting Parents and their Children and Young People attending (enrolled) Acorn Park School.
2. I am a professional Public Health Specialist (Law, Educations and Health).
3. I have a full clear DBS
4. I am insured for:
 - a. Public Liability
 - b. Professional Indemnity
 - c. Directors and Officers Insurance
 - d. I am a Data Officer (ICO Registered)
 - e. I am registered with the Royal Society of Public Health, I have a Public Health Duty to ensure that members of the Public are protected and kept from Harm, I am to report any and all harm, abuse, neglect, by any and all members of society, to include reporting those in Public Office and Services, Private Organisations and Businesses.

I am commissioned to research, prepare, and present this Report for 15 Acorn Reporting Samples (RS).

There are more participants, however they are too afraid to add their rich data to this report, they remain protected.

The 15 (RS) or participants, are to be respected and admired for their strength, courage, and determination in supplying their rich data, making for this report to be shared with the relevant inspectorate bodies for completeness. Furthermore, highlighting the disproportionate and unjust educational due processes inflicted upon them and their children, within and by a corporate structured education hierarchy, that is already under warning:




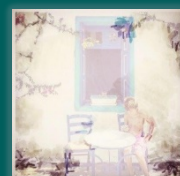
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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

NOTICE: The power conferred upon him by section 114(5) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Secretary of State serves the following Notice on the proprietor of the School:

- (1) the independent school standards set out in the Annex to this Notice are not being met in relation to the School; and
- (2) the proprietor of the School is required to submit an action plan³ to the Secretary of State specifying the steps that will be taken to meet the standards, and the time by which each step will be taken, on or before 24 October 2020.

Name: Janet H Willicott
Signature: 
Position Held: Specialist Public Health and Education
Consultant Advocate FRSPH
Date: 8th February 2021



APPENDICES

Ofsted

1. Inspection of Acorn Park School Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich,

Norfolk NR16 2HU

Inspection dates: 25–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness: Inadequate

The quality of education Inadequate Behaviour and attitudes Requires improvement

Personal development Requires improvement

Leadership and management Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? No

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50151739>

2. Acorn Park School Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 2HU

Inspection dates 9–11 May 2018

Overall effectiveness Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

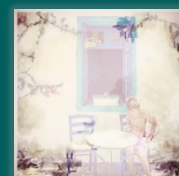
Outcomes for pupils Good Sixth form provision Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2779905>

3. Acorn Park School Andrews Furlong, Mill Road, Banham, Norwich, Norfolk, NR16 2HU

Inspection dates 26–28 April 2016



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

Overall effectiveness Requires improvement

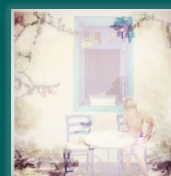
Effectiveness of leadership and management Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

Outcomes for pupils Requires improvement Sixth form provision Requires improvement

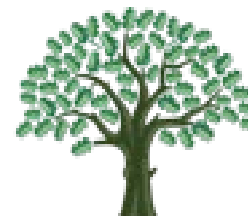
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Acorn Park School:

SEND Information

Report



Acorn Park

CONTENT:

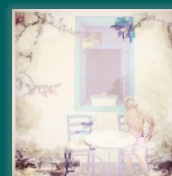
Approved by: Sarah Saunders

Report dated: October 2020

To be reviewed: July 2021 (Reg 6.79)

1. Our aims and values
2. What is the range of need that we are able to meet?
3. How does the school adapt to meet the needs of our pupils?
4. The Curriculum and Learning Environment
5. How do we continually assess need?
6. Identifying Outcomes.
7. How do we assess progress?
8. Support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health Support.
9. Pupil Voice
10. How do we know we are getting it right?
11. Communicating with Families
12. Engagement with other Professionals
13. Working with the Wider Community
14. Professional Development of Staff
15. Joining Acorn Park
16. Moving On
17. Policies
18. Arrangements for handling complaints

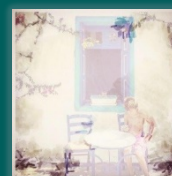
<p>1. Our aims and values.</p>	<p>At Acorn Park our vision is for every child to be safe, nurtured and supported to succeed. Our mission is to care and educate our children, empowering them to reach their full potential to think big and dream bigger! Our values are to act as the central principles and widespread truths that impact on our practice, how we collaborate as a team, how we build our core methods and how we present our mission. Within Acorn Park our aim is to Care: we are courageous, in advocating, educating, and caring for every child, confident in our purpose to promote kindness and respect. Strive: we are striving for a better future by always doing our best with the young people we work with. Our inventive efforts support children at Acorn Park to aspire to healthier futures. Grow: We help our young people fulfil their personal growth and build positive relationships. Our young people are empowered to reach their full potential. Thrive: We uphold the belief that by being reliable and</p>
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 [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

	<p>consistent in our therapeutic practices, by advocating for our young people and promoting the setting’s values they will thrive on the next step of their life journey.</p>
<p>2. What is the range of need that we are able to meet?</p>	<p>We currently meet the needs of 81 children and young people aged 7 to 19 who have a primary diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Condition (ASD/C). We provide residential care for either 38 or 52 week placements for up to 28 pupils. The combination of specialists from education, therapy and residential promotes integrated working team around the child to ensure the best outcomes. All our young people have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which identifies their diagnosed learning difficulties/disabilities and range of barriers to their learning. These include ASD, Social Emotional and Mental Health difficulties, Speech and Language needs and Sensory impairments. We fully comply with Special Education Needs Code of Practice (2014). We ensure that we make all reasonable adjustments so as to comply with the Equalities Act (2010).</p> <p>(Reg 1, 13, 6.81)</p>
<p>3. How does the school adapt to meet the needs of our pupils?</p>	<p>All our pupils have a Pupil Passport which is a one-page profile which identifies the individual needs of the pupil, taken from their EHCP and our observation and assessments of them over time. This includes any adaptations to the curriculum or school environment that need to be put in place. Acorn Park ensures that any specialist needs are met by training and accessing professional expertise. Our education and residential setting work closely with our therapy team within our joint policies to ensure support the needs of our pupils. This development is supported by assessment feeds, our School Development Plan, the Single Equalities Action Plan, Governor Monitoring, and appropriate medical training. A strong Induction programme and continual CPD opportunities ensure staff are trained with current information and up to date practice. Our training matrix means we can make targeted decisions around training linked to Acorn Park’s needs and development plan. Staff attend annual statutory safeguarding awareness and training which is monitored through the annual OFSTED Inspection of our Residential homes.</p> <p>We encourage all pupils to be as independent as possible and they have many opportunities to get involved with extra-curricular activities to support their interests or educational or residential targets.</p> <p>This academic year we are creating a School Council who represent their peers and play an active part in school life. They report to the Governors and give pupils the opportunity to have their say.</p> <p>At Acorn Park the designated teacher promotes the educational achievement of all LAC children (Clause 1 and 3(a)) It is vital that we consider the whole child and therefore staff, families and pupils work closely and collaboratively to ensure this is central to our planning and consideration for the pupils and their families. The Designated teacher also works with the school’s attendance officer, the EHCP coordinators from a range of county LA’s and other professionals such as Children Service’s to ensure that a joined-up approach in supporting pupils and their families is at the heart of all that we do in promoting positive outcomes. At Acorn Park we identify pupils who are on roll as looked after, previously looked after, have special guardianship orders, and adopted to enable us to track and monitor the progress of specific groups of pupils ensuring that pupils are given the best opportunity to achieve their full potential. In addition to the annual Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) review, a Pupil Education Plan (PEP) meeting is held termly. This is attended by members of the education, therapy, and residential staff in the school as well as the class teacher</p>

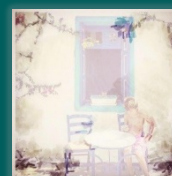


THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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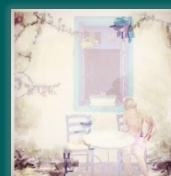
	<p>and then any other staff that it is pertinent to that young person to attend. During this meeting appropriate targets are discussed and set in line with outcomes from the young person’s EHCP. Information of how the wider school promote the educational achievement of LAC Pupil progress is analysed on a termly basis and shared during whole settings pupil progress meetings each term. Targets and progress for pupils who are within any of the groups as identified above are discussed ensuring that all staff are aware, trained and supporting pupils appropriately.</p> <p>As for all young people at Acorn Park, LAC pupils are supported by the education’s Attendance Policy. Plans in place to support attendance are discussed at appropriate Attendance, EHCP Annual Review and PEP meetings. Exclusion is not seen as an effective form of consequence for many pupils though it has a limited use in reinforcing the inappropriateness of some behaviour, particularly physical violence, and ensuring that other pupils feel protected. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Safeguarding, Action Against Bullying and Social Interaction policy. The provision map is used alongside the tracking and monitoring of pupils. This includes a wide range of data benchmarking and capturing that may include academic, SEMH, SLCN, independence, behaviour and physical and sensory. Where needs are identified for pupils the provision map supports the schools focus in ensuring how these needs can be, and are met. This may result in additional interventions being put in place.</p> <p>Interventions can be delivered to whole classes, small groups and on an individual basis. Interventions are made through a referral process to ensure that appropriate intervention is identified for a pupil.</p> <p>All interventions are tracked and monitored, and outcomes are evaluated appropriately for that intervention. Interventions are discussed at the Annual EHCP Review meetings each year the Senior Education Leadership Team (SELT) will review the provision map alongside the year’s data and the school’s development plan and work collectively with staff identify the strengths of Acorn Park’s strategies and recognised areas of need and to develop moving forward.</p> <p>(Reg 3d, 3e, 6, 6.82) LAC (Reg 6.80)</p>
<p>4. The Curriculum and Learning Environment</p>	<p>All pupils have access to a range of learning experiences that reflect and meet their needs. We have two adjacent pathways which are separated by a flexible midline where our young people can move in between depending on their differing level of need.</p> <p>The formal curriculum is broadly based on the National Curriculum, but with a high degree of differentiation and personalisation to ensure it meets the needs of each student. The teaching approach is underpinned by autism strategies, including visual supports and structured teaching. Particular emphasis is placed on the core skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, maths, science, humanities, and computing skills. We recognise that for some children with additional needs that a formal curriculum is not always appropriate therefore at Acorn Park we have identified an alternative pathway with a semi-formal curriculum this follows the nationally successful Equal’s curriculum. This curriculum is aimed at young people with moderate learning difficulties and has been specifically written for pupils working consistently and over time below age related expectations, especially those who struggle with English and Maths. The areas of learning are broken into 12 areas which learners fit into depending on their individual ability, interests and</p>



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	<p>learning journey. Instead of being part of a formal learning maths class they may take part in ‘my problem-solving lessons’ which aim for the highest level of independence for every day life.</p> <p>Whichever pathway we feel is appropriate for our young people they will be taught in class groups, small groups and on an individual basis depending on the activity/task to be done and the needs of the pupils. Class sizes are small with a high ratio of adult support. Throughout the education setting, we have static classes where most lessons are taught within the tutor base by the class teacher. When pupils move onto GCSE, Options, and accreditations, if appropriate, they will experience different learning environments and subject teachers around the school. All classes display a visual timetable and other personalised visuals, the education expectation statements which underpin our ethos. These help to support a total communication environment to ensure children can fully access each learning environment at each Key Stage, as appropriate. Learning experiences are structured to the individual pupils, enabling pupils to have a sense of achievement and recognise that they are making progress.</p> <p>All lessons use a variety of teaching methods to develop individual pupil needs. We use many different approaches as our children’s needs do not suit a one fits all approach. We also have 28 residential places which enables us to work more closely with families and children to develop independence and social resilience. We do regular site walks to ensure accessibility for all is a priority. (Reg 3c, 3d, 6.81, 6.82)</p>
<p>5. How do we continually assess need?</p>	<p>All our pupils have their needs assessed before they start at Acorn Park and these are identified in the pupil’s EHCP. All new pupils are baselined in their first half term to ensure we are working with the most accurate and current information. All pupils at Acorn Park are continually assessed through a range of methods. In cases where we feel that a pupil has newly identified needs we discuss this, in the first instance, with parents and will then involve other professionals and the LA as appropriate. We are happy to meet with other professionals with parents or to provide parents with a written report outlining our concerns.</p> <p>Our young people reside with us at Acorn Park are also closely assessed by using an assessment framework with the person’s safeguarding and wellbeing at the centre. Regular assessment using a conceptual model ensures effective assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child’s developmental needs, including whether they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. • the capacity of parents’ or carers’ (resident and non-resident) and any others to respond to those needs • the impact and influence of wider family and any others living in the <p>1. home, community, and environmental circumstances</p> <p>Any additional support must allow the pupil to remain an inclusive member of the education and residential community unless there is an identified Health and Safety risk which prevents this. We have regular Internal Team around the Child (ITAC meetings), for our young people they are held 6 weekly for residential pupils and are essential as it promotes integrated working between education, therapy and residential. Education ITACs are either organised prior to an annual review or called where appropriate. These meetings allow for problems solving ideas where pupil</p>



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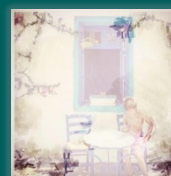
	<p>engagement and progress is monitored and discussed and individuals are highlighted where a concern is expressed. Acorn Park staff have been actively involved in delivering and taking part in training and promoting restorative practice (RP) in the school. Restorative Practice is an alternative approach to behaviour and relationship management. Its approach focuses on learning that can occur within any social context where positive behaviours can be modeled. Acorn Park Leadership Team is made up from members of education, therapy and residential and we meet weekly to discuss the whole setting and individual pupil issues as they arise. We have a daily educational briefing which is circulated to all staff.</p> <p>Education and residential staff have daily handovers so that information is shared have about our young people’s day to ensure that there is continuity in between school and home. This is also the case for our day pupils, handovers are offered to parents on a daily or weekly basis.</p> <p>(Reg 6, 6.82)</p>
<p>6. Identifying Outcomes.</p>	<p>All targets are derived from pupil’s EHCPs with long term targets set from identified needs in the areas of Cognition and Learning, Communication, and Interaction, SEMH, Sensory and Physical (including Independence). These overriding targets then feed into medium (end of key stage) and short term (by next annual Review) targets based on current assessment. Pupils are encouraged to engage with target setting and outcomes for their next step of learning. In static classes these are displayed within the classroom environment, each pupil has one Literacy one Maths and one Personal Target that they are working towards (depending on their curriculum).</p> <p>When a pupil has an identified intervention, a target will be set relating to the assessed need and this will be added to their Individual Education Plan (IEP). These targets are shared with parents to enable them to support pupils at home. The following are some of the interventions we currently offer (subject to identified need of pupils and those priorities in school based on year to year decisions made around impact and outcome through the provision map).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Mentoring • Speech, Language and Communication • Protect Me • TITAN • ELSA • Music or Play therapy • Intensive interaction • Attention Autism • IDL • SCERTS • Psychological therapies • Blanks • English and Maths as appropriate <p>(Reg 3c, 6.82)</p>

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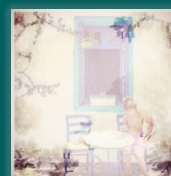
<p>7. How do we assess progress?</p>	<p>We assess progress on an ongoing basis through observation, achievement of targets and in some cases through the use of assessments. All small step progress is recorded and shared with pupils. We use photo evidence as well as work in books and speaking and listening tasks to evidence progress. The assessments that we use are: GL Science, Cat4, IDL English, Reading Plus and TT rock stars. This is without specialised in house testing to identify barriers to leaning.</p> <p>(Reg 3a, 6.82)</p>
<p>8. Support for Social, Emotional and Mental Health Support.</p>	<p>We have several Mental Health Champions at Acorn Park, who include Tricia Freake (School Nurse), Sarah Saunders (Dept Head/SENCo), Tyrone Best (Head of Care) and Liz Heart (Psychotherapy Lead) having members of staff who have the knowledge to support staff and young people with Mental Health challenges promote integrated working between education, therapy and residential. We also have a Family and Pastoral Support team (FAPS) who work to promote knowledge and awareness for staff, families, and our young people around mental health issues. We have also introduced the Boxall profiling system which will enable us to create emotional development targets which we know underpins young people’s ability to learn more effectively. Working on these personalised targets will inform our practice to offer individual mental health and wellbeing and support to meet need. We have high expectations of both work and behaviour. We believe in respecting, valuing, and listening to our pupils. We adopt Restorative Practice approach when supporting our young people as at Acorn Park we believe this powerful tool that uses human emotions and feelings to encourage empathy and help build a culture of caring for one another. Behaviour is said to be the silent voice of the child or adult and RP allows that voice to be heard in a supportive and safe manner. We foster a whole site approach to inspiring and motivating young people to feel valued and to value those around them and work within our two Acorn Park expectations to Always be kind and to always try our best. We recognise that, for some of our young people regulating our feelings and behavioural responses is a barrier to learning and that our curriculums and environment needs to support and reinforce positive behaviour models. We give pupils clear choices and responsibilities to enable and encourage them to develop appropriate social skills. Our FAPS team provide training and advice for pupils, staff, and families to support this. All consequences for negative behaviour are education or therapeutically based. Where a pupil is finding it hard to cope in a class situation we will work with parents and other agencies to put in appropriate support, therapies and/or change the curriculum. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn and should not be disrupted by the dysregulation of others. Bullying is recognised and addressed promptly by talking through the issues and understanding the effect on others. The Therapy and FAPS team, ELSA programmes and our bespoke curriculums support the development of Social and Emotional education and this is delivered in on class, small group, or individual basis as appropriate or we can link to external CAMHS professionals where necessary.</p> <p>(Reg 3e, 3g)</p>
<p>9. Pupil Voice</p>	<p>We believe strongly in the importance of pupils having the skills and confidence to express themselves, either through speech or alternative means of communication. All pupils have lots of opportunities throughout their day in education and in residential to develop these skills and to use them in the following ways: – Lots of opportunities for pupils to talk informally to staff – registration, break and lunch times, during intervention or debriefing time.</p> <p>Pupil feedback in lesson – Lots of opportunities to make choices – Pupil questionnaires – EHCP reviews, Pupil passports, Programmes adapted through Widget.</p>



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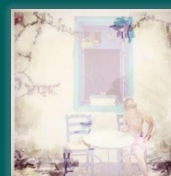
	<p>We also have a School Council and LGBTQ+ group that reports to the senior leadership team and Governors on a termly basis and plays a key role in school. All areas of the school are represented and pupils are keen to be involved and the emphasis in class discussions is that everyone’s’ thoughts and opinions matter. (Reg 8, 6.81)</p>
10.How do we know we are getting it right?	<p>We know this because of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reporting to Governors through our committee structure and termly full Governor meetings – we share reports with respect to attainment and progress, provision mapping, interventions, attendance, exclusions, behaviour, impact of pupil. They also review policies, attend school meetings, and monitor and challenge provision through talking to staff, pupils, and parents. – Four nightly improvement board meeting with a representative from the group quality team in attendance. – The Head of education and Deputy heads carry out regular learning walks and lesson observations, data analysis and book monitoring as do curriculum leads. – EHCP reviews when we discuss and report on progress and provision with parents and pupils. – Through external accreditation – Recognised affiliation with Autism and Emotional development specialist such as: AET, NAS, Nurture UK and have regular meetings specialist meetings with designated advisors. – Our Self Evaluation Form which is calibrated alongside regular external opinions of Local Authorities and through Governor monitoring. – On a three yearly basis Ofsted judge our effectiveness as an educational setting and on an annual basis we have an Ofsted Social Care Inspection of the effectiveness of our residential arrangements, safeguarding, 24 hour curriculum and behaviour. <p>(Reg 3a, 3b, 7, 8, 10)</p>
11.Communicating with Families	<p>We believe that good communication is vital and are happy to speak to parents at any time to discuss progress or any other issues. We consult with parents in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Termly progress reports – Daily/Weekly handovers – Phone calls and email (outside of learning time) – Termly opportunities for parent consultation – Annual EHCP reviews - the expectation is that all parents will attend these, either in school or arrangements are made to do them at home or virtually- – Coffee Mornings on a termly basis where we invite parents into school as an opportunity to share information with them, to meet other parents and to join in curriculum activities with their children. – Annual questionnaires. – Evaluations of events such as transition, coffee mornings etc. <p>(Reg 7, 11, 6.81)</p>
12.Engagement with other Professionals	<p>As an independent special needs provision, we work closely with a wide range of professionals and are able to access services where appropriate. Parents will be made aware if their child is accessing any of these services and in most cases will be involved in the referral process.</p>



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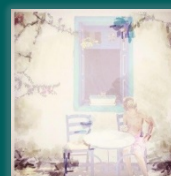
	<p>These include the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educational Psychologist – Clinical Psychologist – Physiotherapy – Psychotherapy/Learning Disabilities Team – Speech and Language Therapy – Occupational Therapy – Sensory Support <p>At Acorn park we promote integrated working between education, therapy and residential and to ensure the best out comes we access Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy based at the school. They ensure that appropriate therapeutic interventions are planned and delivered across the school day. We may also source additional therapies such as art and music therapy for particular children. (Reg3e, 5, 6, 11, 6.82)</p>
<p>13.Working with the Wider Community</p>	<p>As a Special School all our pupils present with SEND, though their needs may be very different. We encourage pupils to work together and support each other and there are excellent examples of this across the school. We also engage with the community through our Life and Work Skills programme and through TITAN pupils regularly access the local shops and other amenities. (Reg 5, 8)</p>
<p>14.Professional Development of Staff</p>	<p>We run a very comprehensive Induction programme for all new staff which includes safeguarding and ensures that we embed a consistent approach and ethos. All new staff have an experienced who provides a friendly face and checks in regularly to make sure the new starter is settling in and has a chance to ask questions until they feel more confident in their role. All staff have appraisals and target setting, through these meetings training needs and wants are identified and feed into the SIDP (School, Improvement and Development Plan).</p> <p>As a result, all staff at Acorn Park are trained in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safeguarding – Team Teach(behaviour management training) – A basic introduction to ASD <p>Further training opportunities for staff cover the following areas: – Medical and Personal care – ELSA (Emotional Learning Support Assistants programme) – Makaton – Curriculum, including training for specific interventions – Specialist interventions – Understanding of SEND including SLC – Extra curriculum activities –forest schools, – Opportunities to network and visit other schools – Opportunities for staff to work together to share good practice Where possible we train our own trainers or invite trainers into school. Whole school training is often more effective than training individuals. Our ASD provision offers very comprehensive training to staff, both through external accreditation and the time to reflect as a team on strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils. There is an expectation that TAs will have their level 2 and preferably a Level 3. As a Special School with a wide range of expertise and as a strategic partner OFG and Options Autism. Training currently being undertaken includes: (Reg 1, 5)</p>



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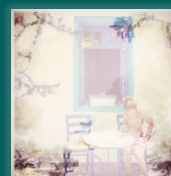
<p>15. Joining Acorn Park</p>	<p>All young people require a diagnosis of Autism to apply to Acorn Park education setting, applications are submitted by your child’s EHCP coordinator. A more detailed explanation of this process can be found on your county’s Local Offer website Here are some of the current county’s local offer pages: Norfolk: https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer Suffolk: https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/send-and-the-local-offer/ Essex: http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/ Hampshire : https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/localoffer.page Bromley: https://www.bromley.gov.uk/LocalOffer Southend on Sea: https://www.southend.gov.uk/children-disabilities/local-offer-send Buckinghamshire: https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/localoffer.page Greenwich : https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200236/children_with_additional_needs/1671/about_the_local_offer Cambridge: https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/local-offer/local-offer-identifying-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-0-25 (Reg 11) In addition to meeting the above criteria, young people must also satisfy Acorn Park of their suitability for a placement by means of an assessment process. Referrals for places are usually received directly from a placing authority; however, parents may also apply for a place for their young person. Acorn Park’s assessment team is made up of a Multi-Disciplinary Team who considers each referral carefully prior to making the decision as to whether to proceed with an assessment. Each referral is assessed through discussion with parents/carers and placing authorities. Observation is also carried out to assess the young person in his/her home and education setting where possible. All relevant reports/paperwork for the young person are acquired and carefully examined before a final decision is made based on all information as to whether a placement is offered or withdrawn. For more information please see our website and search for residential statement of purpose which details each residential house which has its own speciality and skilled team. We encourage visits to view our Education and residential setting and when places have been confirmed we hold transition visits for new pupils. We also send out information to both parents and pupils, including a our guide to Acorn Park. We like to do a home or current placement visit and collect information from everyone involved in the young person’s welfare and learning. We use all this information to write a Pupil Passports before a new pupil starts. Our website gives a wealth of information regarding our offer: https://acornpark.org.uk/ (Reg 3) (Reg 7, 12, 6.81)</p>
<p>16. Moving On</p>	<p>At Acorn Park we have a designated HLTA to support and implement transition works with colleges and careers fairs. Our Post 14 or Transition Annual Review uses person centred planning tools to engage the young person and their family in sharing aspirations for their future and in drawing up a Transition Plan. These focus on education, employment, independent living, and participation in society We work across agencies to ensure education, care and health needs are all articulated in the plan.</p>



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	<p>All pupils are given the opportunity to visit their nearest most appropriate Colleges and parents and carers are invited to accompany them.</p> <p>Through our established relationships with the colleges, we are able to monitor pupils progress beyond Acorn Park and when necessary attend meetings to continue to support them. (Reg 7, 12)</p>
17.Policies	<p>SEND POLICY: All students have an EHCP on entry to the school identifying their special educational needs, aspirations, progress and achievements, provision, and arrangements. The EHCP will be evaluated throughout the year with an Annual Review meeting to discuss strengths, outcomes, and the provision for the student. These Annual Reviews will be conducted with parents, teachers, and professionals to ensure that progress can be evaluated. Interventions and strategies will be implemented to support the student make the relevant progress towards meeting their long-term outcomes. The school offers flexible staffing deployment, which allows students and classes to access additional support staff to respond to additional needs.</p> <p>Positive behaviour Policy: Ensures students have access to the right universal, targeted and specialist support in all areas of their EHCP and academic learning. Strategies and Interventions can be delivered by Acorn Park staff and/or therapists, EPs, OT, and SaLT. Risk assessments, analysis of incidents and behaviour support plans may indicate the need for additional support. These will be recorded using Sleuth database, which ensures that relevant staff are aware and that future plans can be implemented to ensure incidents are avoided if possible.</p> <p>Link to policies</p>
18.Arrangements for handling complaints	<p>If parents have any concerns regarding any aspect of the education residential setting they should, in the first instance, try to resolve these with the Class Teacher or House Manager. Again, we believe in the importance of good relationships and communication so that where possible we can resolve issues before they become a real problem. Most problems can be met at this level but if concerns are ongoing please contact the lead teacher, a deputy head, or head of school or for residential the head of care. The school's complaints procedure is available on request or can be found on our website.</p> <p>(Reg 7, 9)</p>



Press

▪ **EASTERN DAILY PRESS**

Specialist autism school closes after positive Covid tests

https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/education/acorn-park-specialist-autism-school-in-banham-closes-after-pupils-6408394?fbclid=IwAR2EV0D92vrmaKamPRYVCXG_dl63vxFBkDN4yV55sgmH14oLmLIQRXCGpy0

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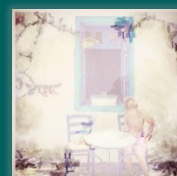
New headteacher at Ormiston Denes Academy after principal quits

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/new-headteacher-at-ormiston-denes-academy-after-principal-quits-905040>

▪ **TAXI POINT**

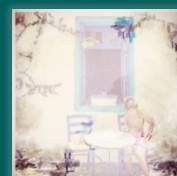
School which caters for children with special needs issues apology after insisting local cab firm on

<https://www.taxi-point.co.uk/post/2019/04/04/school-which-caters-for-children-with-special-needs-issues-apology-after-insisting-local>



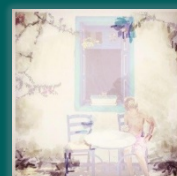
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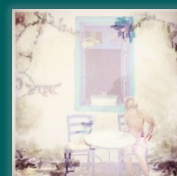
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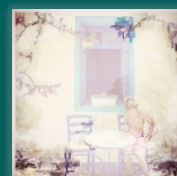
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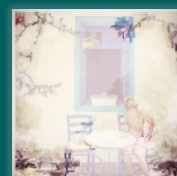


THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 3)]

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NOTES

Right to Rectification

The author of this report is registered with the ICO, as a Data Controller for her research company ‘Normal Like Me’. Whilst Normal Like Me, **does not** have to be registered with the ICO, they choose ICO compliancy as part of best practice and out of duty of care to members of the public, simply due to the very nature of capturing sensitive information.

The author places on record, that she was contacted by a Mr. Wallace Robinson, via electronic means, (two emails) that were very difficult to understand and or make sense of, however, what Mr. Wallace tried to impart was, that his name was mentioned in this report, [p.36].

For transparency, and reference, the author uses verbatim and adds the wording that was used.

Mr. Robinson stated that he did not like the use of the authors phrase or terminology “***[Mr. *Robinson is no longer at APS]***”

He stated that this use of language, could imply or could infer these words to read or be interpreted by other professionals, as something entirely different.

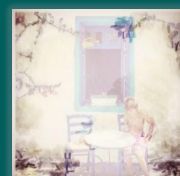
At the time of re-publishing this report, with this additional note of right to rectification, she is none the wiser as to what Mr. Wallace is wanting this to mean.

- a. He left APS...
- b. He is no longer at / is no longer employed at APS...
- c. Other...

Furthermore, he also wishes to place on record, that he has had no part in this report and that he did not offer the author any data or reference points.

The author makes a statement:

“Mr. Robinson, has not played any part in this report.” (Please see statement of truth, p.89)



The author wishes to place on record, that at the time of publication, for the purposes of [reference capture] (Website data), his name was used publicly on the website that belongs to Acorn Park School, therefore, the data used in this report was either with consent, or freely available in the public domain.

The author wishes to state, that none of Mr. Wallace’s data was breached, however, were he to make a complaint, in that, his name appearing publicly, he would have to contact Acorn Park School and request that they rectify this forthwith.

However, at the time of this report being republished, the author confirms that APS, have updated their website, and have removed Mr. Wallace’s name. [19/02/2021]

Moreover, the author places on record, that Mr. Wallace, has been rather delusive and persistent in approach, in that he is constantly drawing attention to himself, when repeatedly gleaming over the authors LinkedIn Professional Profile.

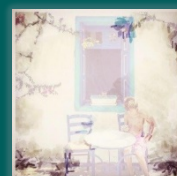
They author, offers Mr. Wallace a right to rectification, on the grounds that he was not happy with her use of certain words, which could be implied by others to read as something entirely different. As of yet, the author does not know what Mr. Wallace means as he has not offered any other alternative.

ICO and use of Right to Rectification:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/right-to-rectification/>

The UK GDPR includes a right for individuals to have inaccurate personal data rectified or completed if it is incomplete.

An individual can make a request for rectification verbally or in writing.



Normal Like Me, has one calendar month to respond to a request. (Request received 15th February 2021), The author has used the Right to Rectify on the grounds, that her words may have been misleading, however, she remains unsure of what her words would need to be amended to read, as she has not been given any other option.

In certain circumstances a company can refuse a request for rectification.

This right is closely linked to the controller’s obligations under the accuracy principle of the UK GDPR (Article (5)(1)(d)).

Checklists

Under Article 16 of the UK GDPR individuals have the right to have inaccurate personal data rectified. An individual may also be able to have incomplete personal data completed – although this will depend on the purposes for the processing. This may involve providing a supplementary statement to the incomplete data.

This right has close links to the accuracy principle of the UK GDPR (Article 5(1)(d)). However, although you may have already taken steps to ensure that the personal data was accurate when you obtained it, this right imposes a specific obligation to reconsider the accuracy upon request.

What does Normal Like Me have to do?

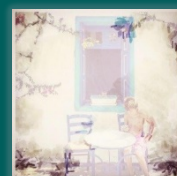
If you receive a request for rectification you should take reasonable steps to satisfy yourself that the data is accurate and to rectify the data if necessary. You should take into account the arguments and evidence provided by the data subject.

What steps are reasonable will depend, in particular, on the nature of the personal data and what it will be used for. The more important it is that the personal data is accurate, the greater the effort you should put into checking its accuracy and, if necessary, taking steps to rectify it. For example, you should make a greater effort to rectify inaccurate personal data if it is used to make significant decisions that will affect an individual or others, rather than trivial ones.

You may also take into account any steps you have already taken to verify the accuracy of the data prior to the challenge by the data subject.

When is data inaccurate?

The UK GDPR does not give a definition of the term accuracy. However, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) states that personal data is inaccurate if it is incorrect or misleading as to any matter of fact.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS ACORN PARK

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What should we do about data that records a mistake?

Determining whether personal data is inaccurate can be more complex if the data refers to a mistake that has subsequently been resolved. It may be possible to argue that the record of the mistake is, in itself, accurate and should be kept. In such circumstances the fact that a mistake was made, and the correct information should also be included in the individual's data.

