



School Prospectus

2009-10

Our Values Statements

At The Bridge we ...

Develop each pupil's communication skills to their full potential, equally valuing all ways of communicating

Provide a tailor made, flexible curriculum which addresses the individual needs of every pupil

Ensure that pupils learn and interact in a caring, happy, safe and secure environment

Provide a curriculum and environment which facilitates and develops pupils' independence

Believe in the importance of friendships and encourage good, trusting relationships throughout the school and in the community

Provide the guidance and support needed to build confidence, self esteem and independence

Involve pupils, their parents, therapists, family and other professionals in decision making

Empower pupils to make their individual mark on the community

Maximise inclusion opportunities within multi-cultural community and peer group settings

About The Bridge

The Bridge is an all age school which has a specialism in developing communication and interaction skills. The pupils who attend the Bridge are described as having either Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). The Bridge is a purpose built school on two sites, a primary and a secondary site. Both of these sites are co-located with mainstream schools. The primary site is adjacent to Hungerford Primary School and Early Years Centre. We refer to this site of the Bridge as the Hungerford Site. The secondary site is attached to Holloway Secondary School. This site of the Bridge is referred to as the Holloway Site. We moved into the Hungerford Site in January 2007 and the Holloway Site opened in September 2007.



The Bridge caters for pupils aged between 2 and 19. Classes are organised according to the age and needs of the pupils.

As of September 2009 there are 146 students on roll. The school is staffed by qualified teachers, teaching assistants, midday supervisors, administration and premises staff. We also have a multi-disciplinary health team working in school consisting of nursing staff, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and health care assistants.

All students who attend the school have a Statement of Special Educational Need or are placed at the school by the Under Fives Assessment Group. In order to address the pupil's special educational needs we provide a broad and balanced curriculum which is based on the National Curriculum and has an emphasis on developing the pupil's communication and interaction skills. We provide a sensory curriculum for those that benefit from this approach.



Admissions

Admission of pupils to the school is through a Statement of Special Educational Need. Whilst parents are welcome to visit the school this visit will not ensure a placement. School placement of students with Special Educational Needs is determined by CEA@Islington (The Local Authority). Most of the pupils attending the school are resident in the Borough of Islington.



Transport

Pupils are provided with transport from home to school and return. The school is not responsible for organising this transport. It is done by a specific department of the Local Authority. Any queries regarding school transport should be directed to the SEN transport department at CEA@Islington. Once children are allocated a place at The Bridge this department will contact parents/carers to arrange the details.



Most students are transported to and from school in buses with other children living within the same area. This does affect the length of the journeys.

All special needs transport has at least one escort as well as the driver of the vehicle. This escort and the driver can be a useful contact for you and help you pass written messages to school when necessary. We would ask you to avoid passing verbal messages through this route and ring school if you wish to pass on verbal information.

If you know that your child will not be attending school, please inform the driver of your school bus to avoid unnecessary journeys.



School Meals

School meals are available to all pupils. There is a choice and pupils are given a menu sheet to bring home so that all are aware of the choices available.

The cost of school meals is notified to parents at the beginning of the school year or as the pupil starts at The Bridge. Forms to apply for free school meals are available from the school office.

Special diets can be catered for, however if these are specific diets, such as gluten free, then this takes a little time to process and the application for a special diet needs to be made early. It is common practice for the accommodation of a special diet to need support from a medical professional.

School meals are usually eaten in the school hall. On the primary site (Hungerford) food is either served at the table or cafeteria style. At the secondary site (Holloway) the food is served in a cafeteria style. We are very conscious that some pupils do not like a lot of noise and accommodate this with quiet eating areas.

Some pupils bring their own lunch. They usually eat this in the school hall with the other children who are eating school meals.

Primary classes sit together to eat their lunch. However in secondary there are no set places at lunch time. Pupils are encouraged to sit with friends from their own class and other classes. There is plenty of support. Teachers and teaching assistants do a duty in the hall and we also employ midday supervisors.

Clothing

The pupils should attend school in clothing which is appropriate to the activities they will be taking part in. This usually means loose fitting practical clothing. It really helps staff in school if all clothing is marked with a pupil's name in permanent marker.

All pupils need to bring to school a warm coat. We often go outside for break times and also do a lot of our work out in the local community. On swimming days kit needs to be sent in from home, unless it is already stored in school. It is also helpful to have a spare set of clothes which can be kept in school in case of emergencies.



Facilities

The Bridge has two new buildings with a number of exciting facilities. All classrooms have withdrawal rooms and computers and ready access to toilets. Staffing ratios vary around school depending on the needs of the pupils in each class, however the staffing level is usually 1:2 or better, that is one member of staff for every two pupils.

The Hungerford Site has a sensory integration room, a white room and a dark room as well as a hydrotherapy pool. There are also specialist rooms for speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, music and art.

The Holloway Site has a soft play room, a sensory room, a specialist art and technology room, science room, and food technology rooms which can be used by ambulant pupils as well as wheelchair users. There is also a fully equipped ICT room.

The hydro-therapy pool is a popular resource with both the staff and pupils. This pool is kept very warm so that it can be used for therapeutic purposes.

On both sites every class has an interactive plasma screen which enhances teaching and learning.

Our outside play equipment is exceptional at the Hungerford Site and caters for the variety of ages and abilities of students we have in the school. As well as conventional playground equipment, we have specially designed play equipment which can be accessed by pupils in wheelchairs. At the Holloway Site we have two play decks. We have a variety of bikes, trikes and scooters available for use on one of these decks, which are very popular with the pupils.

There is an area for more energetic activities, including an area for kicking balls, and also an area for those who choose to be quieter.

Both school halls provides indoor PE and dance facilities and can be sectioned off to provide two areas if necessary.



We have four school mini-buses, which allow us to access activities in the local community.

We also have parent meeting rooms on both Site and on the Hungerford Site have training facilities with large screen projection.



Class Organisation

The classes are arranged according to age. Children are placed in classes according to Key Stage and their learning needs.

In many cases, where it is appropriate for the pupils, students with different disabilities and learning needs mix together for lessons. All staff in the school are provided with training on the strategies that work with the particular

students in their class(es), but also with strategies that work with all students in the school. Staff are particularly skilled at developing pupils' communication and interaction skills.

All pupils will use the varied facilities around school and many of the pupils from these classes also join up with pupils from other classes for some lessons.



Working with Parents and Carers

At The Bridge we operate an open door policy. Parents/carers are welcome to visit at any time, however it is not appropriate for parents to 'drop in' to classes so when visiting parents/carers should request to see a member of the Leadership Group. Appointments will usually need to be made for class visits or meetings with class teachers.

Parents/carers are formally invited into The Bridge to discuss Individual Education Plans and Annual Reviews. This allows us to report on progress and to jointly discuss targets to be working towards.

Parents/carers are provided with a home-school diary. This allows daily communication between parents and their child's class team. Parents/carers can also contact class teachers by telephone, but we ask that this be restricted to before the school day begins or after 3.30pm

Workshops are arranged on specific topics and speakers invited from time to time. A newsletter is sent out with the children on a termly basis and this will include all details of forthcoming events.

At the Hungerford Site a Parent Support Group meets in school every Wednesday morning, 10.00 – 11.30am. At the Holloway Site a Parent Group meets every half term. Professionals from The Bridge and outside agencies are invited to talk on specific topics (which have been requested by parents). This is a great forum for parents to meet other parents, share knowledge and experiences and make new friends. A toy library also operates from the Hungerford Site which can be accessed through the Parents Support Group.

Curriculum

The general principles of the curriculum at The Bridge are that it should be broad and balanced, relevant and differentiated according to each pupil's needs. The curriculum aims to provide progression, continuity and coherence in order to build on existing knowledge and skills.

The curriculum offered to each student is based on their own specific needs. The lessons planned throughout the school day are based on the National Curriculum but modified and differentiated to meet pupil's individual needs. There is a specific focus on developing communication and interaction skills. Specific teaching programmes are also incorporated into the day based on individual need. These might include specific therapeutic programmes, PECS, Intensive Interaction sessions, music therapy sessions, sensory integration, and 1:1 teaching sessions.

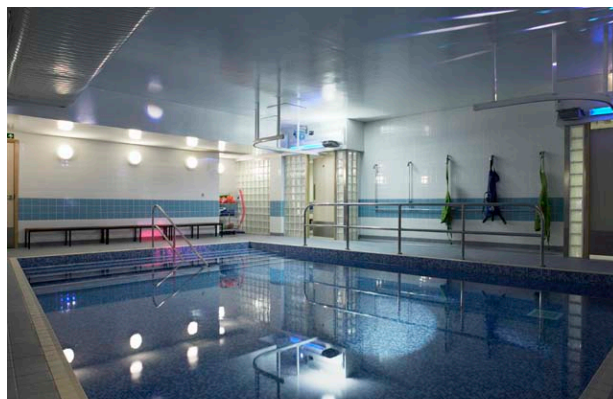


The teaching approaches used and the focus on the curriculum changes throughout the pupil's school life. When they first start school there is a focus on early learning skills, however in Key Stage 4 and Post 16 there is an increased focus on preparing for independence and life after school.

Pupils are disapplied from SATS, however, where appropriate they will be entered for external qualifications in their latter years at school. These will primarily be qualifications which are based on portfolios of evidence and experience.

Particular areas of the curriculum to note are:

- Sport
- Swimming
- Religious education
- Sex education
- Collective worship
- ASDAN
- Extra curricular activities



Sport

The Bridge has very good facilities for sport and PE and the secondary students have access to Holloway School's brand new sports hall and all weather pitch. The school halls are used for PE lessons and there is also a sprung dance floor for dance lessons. PE lessons also take place in local community venues.

Swimming

Every student in the school has the opportunity to swim. Most swim once a week. We use the swimming pool adjacent to the Holloway Site and are supported by qualified instructors. For those students who benefit more from a hydrotherapy pool, they will access the school hydrotherapy pool (at the Hungerford Site).

Religious education

Religious education begins by developing the idea of ourselves within a wider community. Over the years pupils are at The Bridge they will look at and gain some understanding of a range of religions. There will also be visits arranged which relate to religious education.

Parents may ask to withdraw their child from religious education activities if they wish.

Relationships and sex education

Relationships and sex education is an important aspect of the overall curriculum. We deliver sex education to all secondary students. There is coverage of sex education through the Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship curriculum and ASDAN.

Prior to a series of lessons on sex education being delivered parents will be informed. Students may be withdrawn from lessons at a parent's/carer's request. Parents/carers are encouraged to come into school and look at the materials that will be used when the lessons are delivered.

Collective worship

Assemblies at The Bridge take place at the end of the day on both the Hungerford and Holloway Sites. These are usually whole Site assemblies, but there are also times where classes hold assemblies in their classroom. Again pupils may be withdrawn at a parent/carer's request

ASDAN

ASDAN is an awarding body for Key Stage 3, 4 and Post 16 students. Our curriculum for secondary students focuses on using knowledge and skills in real life situations and preparing students for life after school. ASDAN can be used to accredit this work. Assessment is through the presentation of a portfolio. Accreditation can be given at a range of different levels.

ASDAN is a widely recognized qualification and the work accredited by ASDAN is often continued at Further Education Colleges.

Extra Curricular Activities

We are very keen to be seen as an 'Extended School' offering activities out of school hours. Some of these are provided by the staff in school, others are provided by partner organizations. Parents are informed of any extended day activities and we are actively exploring means to increase the number of these activities.



Communication and Interaction

The Bridge is a specialist school for Communication and Interaction. At The Bridge we try to implement the notion of a total communication environment. This means that whatever a child's communication needs are we will try to develop, address and support them using a full range of additional support.

Strategies which staff have training in at school and are routinely used are:

- Moderating teacher language
- Makaton signing
- Use of symbol systems
- Symbol supported text
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Alternative and Augmented Communication (AAC)
(including the use of electronic voice devices)



Teachers use language at a student's receptive communication level to aid their understanding. We have found that if teachers use complex sentences then some of the pupils do not understand any of what has been said to them. However, if this language is moderated and limited in length and content it can give the pupils the best possible chance to understand what has been said to them.

Makaton signing is used routinely to support language with all children, not just those who use signing as a means of communication themselves. It is commonly recognized that the use of Makaton can enhance a pupil's ability to understand what is being said to them.

Similarly symbols used to support text can help children who are only just reading or not reading to interpret something that is written down. For consistency at school we generally use a computer programme called 'Writing with Symbols' supported by the PCS symbol package.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is used with many children who are at the very early stages of communication. This system uses symbol cards but teaches children the importance (and how to) communicate with someone else.

Augmented and Alternative Communication encompasses all of the above strategies. It also covers the use of electronic voice devices or 'talkers' as they are often referred to. We fund a specialist in this field to come into school as necessary to assess pupils who we feel would benefit from talkers and develop their use of these pieces of equipment.

We are constantly looking to develop the ability of our pupil's to relate to other people, both adults and peers. We use a range of strategies to do this.



Inclusion

Inclusion is seen as an important aspect of the curriculum at The Bridge and inclusive experiences are offered to all of our students. These experiences range from community visits and mainstream pupils volunteering in classrooms to whole class visits to other schools, to supported and unsupported individual visits to other mainstream schools for lessons.

We are fortunate to be co-located with Hungerford Primary School and Holloway Secondary School. We have developed excellent links with these schools and a range of inclusive activities are taking place.

We also have excellent links with many other mainstream schools, both primary and secondary, in the local area who are keen to work with us.



Assessment and Recording

Assessment is a very important aspect of our work at The Bridge and there are a variety of different ways this takes place.

All teachers write lesson plans for each lesson delivered. Objectives are set for the learning of all of the pupils in the group. At the end of the lesson teachers assess and record whether each child has achieved the desired learning objective. This then informs their planning for future lessons.

We also assess and record progress which is written up in an annual report. This report is presented to parents at the annual review of their child's Statement. A meeting is held to discuss the report and the progress the student is making.



As with all schools, we have to report on attainment in relation to the National Curriculum. At the end of each academic year we do a teacher assessment. No tests are involved.

We also record much of the pupil's work using photographs and we keep a bank of photographs for each pupil to show their achievement.

Certificates are also regularly given out to recognise achievement. Originals are sent home immediately, however a copy is kept in school as a record of the achievement.

Behaviour Management

At The Bridge we use positive behaviour management approaches. We reward appropriate behaviour and try to 'down play' or ignore inappropriate behaviour. Sanctions are avoided wherever possible and will not be used with pupils without prior discussion with parents/carers. Good behaviour is rewarded with praise, individualised rewards and certificates.



Where students needs dictate, a Behaviour Management Plan will be written. This specifies the presenting behaviours and the agreed and appropriate response. Behaviour Management Plans are often drawn up with parents/carers and always discussed with them.

All relevant staff receive Team Teach training. This training helps to develop staff skills in defusing challenging situations but also teaches staff how to use restraint if this becomes necessary.



Absence from School

If a pupil is absent parents are asked to inform the school office on the first day of absence. It is extremely important that the school is informed of all reasons for pupil's absence from school as we have to report these figures to the Local Authority.

On a pupil's return to school, it helps tremendously if parents/carers write in the home/school book why the student has been off school and for how long they were off. This provides us with a written record.

We strongly discourage families taking their children out of school during term time for their annual holiday. If in exceptional circumstances this needs to happen then we ask that the appropriate form is completed (available from the school office) formally requesting the absence.

There are a range of policies in school which are available for parents/carers and visitors to look at. Please ask at the school office. Brief information from these policies which is particularly relevant to this prospectus is detailed below.



Emergency school closure

If for any reason there is a likelihood of the school being closed (for example, if large amounts of snow have fallen overnight), parents/carers should check the school website for confirmation.

If for any reason school needs to be closed after the pupils have arrived at school all parents/carers will be contacted. It is most important the school office has current and correct home and mobile phone numbers and alternative emergency numbers so that parents/carers can be easily contacted if school needs to close. Please inform us of any changes to phone numbers immediately.

Child protection

We are required to follow the guidelines on child protection provided by all London Boroughs. The guidelines involve an obligation on the part of the Head Teacher to report unusual or unexplained injuries, or any allegations to Social Services.

All staff who work with pupils in school have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

The School's Child Protection Policy and the Borough's guidance on Child Protection are available on request.



Medicines in school and first aid

The school has a full time nurse. She will deal with any medical needs that arise and will administer medications to children. If the nurse is not at work the Health Care Assistants are able to fulfil this role.

Consent forms for the administration of medication must be completed and signed for medicine to be given in school. If medicine is sent in to school on the bus please inform the bus escort.



School security

The school, has a modern security system which requires the door to be opened from inside for anyone new to the school to be admitted. The play ground has fencing around and is secure.

A fob system is in place for staff to access particular areas such as the hydrotherapy pool.

There are also security cameras on both sites.

Charging for school activities

It is The Bridge's policy not to charge for school activities which are part of our curriculum delivery. This includes transport to local facilities and visits to the museum. However, there will be occasions when parents/carers will be asked to make a voluntary contribution for example, for a visit to the theatre or a trip out. A small contribution may be requested for 'tuck' money.

We will always inform parents/carers by letter of any such activity and will try to provide as much notice as possible.



Complaints

We recognise that complaints can make a positive contribution to monitoring and improving standards.

Any complaint should initially be made to the Deputy or Head Teacher and hopefully the matter can be sorted out informally. If this is not possible then it will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Smoking

The school, as all public property, is a non-smoking environment. All staff and visitors are asked to not smoke within 50m of the school buildings.

Equal Opportunities

We follow the equal opportunities guidelines given by CEA@Islington. We believe that no child or adult should be discriminated against in any way on the basis of sex, age, religion, ethnic background, sexuality or disability. A copy of the school's policy statement is available to visitors on request.

In planning our curriculum careful attention has been paid to ensuring that a variety of cultures and religions are addressed and that access to the curriculum takes into account pupil's disabilities.

Special Needs

The school has a SEN Policy which is regularly reviewed and updated. This provides details of the kinds of special educational needs for which provision is made at The Bridge.

It also summarises facilities, staffing and procedures for assessment and inclusion and policies and partnership beyond the school which enable these to be met.

We have contact with a large number of voluntary organisations and can put people in touch with appropriate organisations.



Outreach

All special schools in Islington have an outreach remit. We have appointed three members of staff to oversee this work.

Schools or the Local Authority make requests to The Bridge for pupils they feel would benefit with some input from a specialist in the field of Communication and Interaction.

This aspect of the school's work is very well thought of in schools across the Borough. Much of The Bridge Outreach Team's work involves supporting pupils in mainstream schools who have autistic spectrum disorders. The staff offer suggestions on the best way to work with pupils. This Service also offers training for both professionals and parents.



Training Centre

At the Hungerford Site we have a training centre as part of the building. This Centre has facilities for conferences and providing smaller seminars and workshops. The Head of the Training Centre plans a programme of activities and courses. These are offered to staff from the school, professionals across the Borough, parents and professionals from outside the Borough.

As well as offering courses on site we also provide bespoke training at other venues. Staff from The Bridge frequently deliver training to others.

Courses and activities offered through the Training Centre are advertised regularly and are shared with parents through the termly newsletter.



Multi – agency Work

At The Bridge we work very closely with a range of other professionals, both from the Local Authority and other services.

The school has designated Educational Psychologists. We also receive support from SENSE.

We are fortunate to have therapists based in school, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

We are also supported by a range of additional therapy providers.

We have regular contact with the Connexions service and social services.

We are very keen to work with other agencies in the best interests of both pupils and families and often arrange multi-agency meetings to enable all agencies to discuss and share the support they are giving to individuals and their families



Students

We encourage work experience students and volunteers to spend time at The Bridge and we have a volunteer coordinator who oversees this work.

The involvement of students and volunteers with The Bridge is a form of inclusion and also gives both these visitors and our pupils a fresh perspective.



Students and volunteers are never left alone with children and are only asked to support with certain tasks. There are some tasks which they would never be asked to do.

We run Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks on all volunteers.

