



WINDLESTONE SCHOOL

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- **Type of school:** Community Special School - day, extended day and residential provision
- **Age Range:** 11 – 16 years
- **Special Educational Needs:** Students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- **Planned Places:** 70
- **Headteacher:** Pete Jonson

Context

Durham Authority has a primary school for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, three secondary schools, of which Windlestone School is one, the Special Needs Alternative Provision (SNAP) programme, and the Stepping Stones project.

Windlestone School manages the SNAP programme and the Stepping Stones project.

The Durham Authority is very supportive towards its special schools, and is committed to working with all its schools to raise standards even further and celebrate their successes and achievements.

Background

The school is the very well established SEBD school which moved from Windlestone Hall near Rushyford into its modern purpose built accommodation at Chilton in September 2006. A school had been at Windlestone Hall since 1957, but it closed in 1983. In 1984 Windlestone Hall School reopened under the leadership of Pete Jonson, as a secondary school for students with social, emotional and behavioural problems.

In September 2006 the school moved into new purpose built accommodation in the nearby village of Chilton. Pete Jonson has remained as the Headteacher. The new buildings and grounds have some unique features, and the fixtures and fittings are of an exceptionally high quality. The staff of the school were consulted throughout the design and build process.

The school caters for students whose social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are of a degree that their needs cannot be met in ordinary schools. Student behaviour is often characterised by one or more of the following barriers to learning:

- anti-social and uncooperative behaviour, which may be reflected in, for example, disruption, failure to observe and accept limits routines and expectations, physical and verbal aggression, and a negative view of adults in authority,
- a poor awareness and/or acceptance of the consequences of behaviour,
- poorly developed social and interpersonal skills,
- mood swings, over activity, and attention seeking behaviour,
- poor ability to cope appropriately with conflict, frustration and pressure, which may be reflected in, for example, disruption within the classroom, and outbursts of temper, and
- poor self-concept, which may be reflected in, for example, bravado, poor ownership of education, low motivation for school work, poor orientation to task and application to work, poor school attendance patterns, and substance misuse.

As a result the majority of students are academically under functioning on admission.

Location

The semi-rural environment and comparative isolation, but easy access to the small towns of Bishop Auckland, Spennymoor, Ferryhill and Newton Aycliffe is ideal. Darlington and Durham City are also within twelve miles of the school. The A1 M is only 3 miles away. Consequently as well as benefiting from all that the countryside makes possible, full use can be made of the educational, recreational and leisure facilities of these small and big towns. The school has three minibuses to help do this.

The school is set back from the road running between Chilton and Kirk Merrington and is on a site of almost thirty acres.

Site & Buildings

The school consists of two single storey buildings. One is the school and the other smaller building is for resident students and staff.

The school is built around "the hub", a large social space where students and staff meet, chat and relax. Immediately off the hub is the administrative wing, Medical Room, students' secure store, Le Café, the Games Room, Staff Room, and Headteacher's Study.

The school has two teaching and learning wings. One houses 5 non-specialist classrooms for English, mathematics, PSHE etc. and the Information Communication Technology Centre, and the other wing houses the Performing Arts Studio, Design Technology Workshop, Art Studio, Science Laboratory, Food Technology Centre, and Rural Science Laboratory. The two teaching and learning wings are connected by a gymnasium, and Independent Learning Centre.

The school has a small working farm with cows, sheep and pigs, as well as a range of poultry. Most students really benefit from working with animals and in the garden centre.

The school's other building houses the accommodation for resident students and resident staff.

Within the grounds there are the normal play areas and games pitches, including an all-weather, adventure play area, and outside learning arena.

The Curriculum

The curriculum of the school is similar to that of mainstream schools, except Emotional literacy is taught discretely to all classes on a daily basis. All the core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum are taught at Key Stage 3 as well as RE, PSHE, and rural science.

At Key Stage 4 students have lessons in English, mathematics, ICT, science, PE, PSHE, careers education, and art and pick from a range of practical options which include design technology, food technology, rural science, performing arts, applied art, leisure & tourism, rural science, PE and building trades. Many students in Year 11 gain GCSEs, or Entry Level Certification.

The school is very successful at enabling students to raise their attainments on admission over expectation, and is regularly in the top 5% of schools nationally to do so.

School Day

Students attend lessons from 9.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. but many like to get to school early so they can breakfast and chat to staff and friends. Breakfast is available to all students between 8.30 a.m., when school opens for students, and 8.50 a.m.. The lunch break is of 50 minutes duration begins at 12.40 p.m..

The school day is divided into 4 50 minute lessons in the morning and 3 slightly shorter lessons in the afternoon, one of which is dedicated to developing students' emotional literacy.

On Fridays there are only 6 lessons and school finishes at 3 p.m.

Residential Provision

The school is able to accommodate 20 students on a residential basis during the week. The accommodation is divided into two 10 bed living units. Each unit has 6 single bed rooms and two twin bedded rooms for students and two staff bedrooms. All bedrooms have en suite facilities for showering, washing and toileting. Although the living units are separate from the school block and have their own kitchens, laundry, quiet room and common room with a television and games, the daily life of the school is largely communal.

The Extended Day

The school operates an extended day so residential and day students can take part in a wide range of extra curricular activities. These include sporting, social, leisure and practical activities designed to assist students overcome their difficulties and widen their experiences. The school also runs a "breakfast club" for non-resident students.

The school has a games room with pool tables and a table tennis table, a common room with its own kitchen and small cinema facility, a Play Stations room, an all-weather games pitch, football pitch, adventure play area and many other on-site facilities. It also has 3 minibuses and a people carrier so that leisure facilities in the community like ice skating, swimming, and the cinema can be accessed.

The Milieu

The school's carefully considered structured environment and ethos contribute to its milieu.

The school's milieu, the interactions between staff and students, is essentially a nurturing one in which students' intrapersonal, interpersonal and social skills develop and barriers to learning are alleviated.

Staff play a crucial role in establishing a supportive milieu in which students feel valued, are listened to, and treated with dignity despite their behaviour. Their past experiences have often had an extraordinarily damaging effect on:

- their self-concept,
- view of adults, and
- their ability to be accepted by others and make and sustain appropriate interpersonal and group relationships.

The quality of the milieu has a dynamic influence on how new students are able to join successfully the established group of staff and students and existing students thrive within it.

At Windlestone School we know our students will make mistakes! Indeed it is by learning from mistakes that our students make the progress they do. The school's milieu has been established to nurture and support our students at all times. Windlestone is not its modern, well equipped buildings and extensive grounds, but "us", the students, their parents or carers, and all the staff. There is one school rule that applies to everyone at Windlestone. It is: **respect**

- respect for ourselves
- respect for each other
- respect for visitors
- respect for the building and grounds
- respect for school equipment

where students and staff are encouraged to show care and consideration to all

- through offering warmth, in a safe and secure environment,
- by developing positive relationships that are valued,
- by enhancing the self-esteem and pride of all, and

by providing a milieu where all have a voice and all are listened to.

The Staff Group

The school employs over 50 teaching, learning and student support, residential child care, administrative, and domestic staff. Although the school has Leadership and Management Teams all staff are regularly consulted about school practice and changes needed to improve practice further.

Promoted posts within the school are aimed at securing the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

The staff group is the school's best resource and the organisation of the school is designed to make the most efficient use of it. The need to enable staff members to develop their skills and knowledge is recognised, and induction, supervision, appraisal as well as in-service training are important to that development.

Working at Windlestone School is demanding but rewarding.

Safeguarding & Promoting the Welfare of Young People

Children achieve their maximum potential in an environment which is safe, secure and supportive of all their needs, including the need to be protected from abuse.

Windlestone School is committed to promoting the welfare of all children by working in close partnership with all relevant agencies and partners in child protection, in accordance with locally agreed procedures and practices, to achieve this aim.

The school implements rigorous and robust recruitment procedures to ensure candidates suitability for working with its students as well as their suitability for the post in question. Moreover, the school has in place secure safeguarding procedures to ensure students well being at all times and address any inappropriate behaviour. It is a disciplinary offence for any member of staff to fail to report actual or reasonably suspected physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of a child or incidences of real or suspected self harm.