



Upper School

Key Stage 4/5

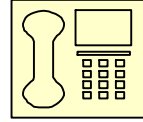


[Information for new families](#)

We hope the information in this booklet will answer some of your questions. Parents are Children/Young People's first and most important educator; a two way flow of information between families and school is vital to the development of a positive working relationship. This will ensure we are able to provide a caring environment which meets the needs of your child: educationally, socially and emotionally. Children/Young People are most successful when there is a positive partnership between parents and school.

The Walnuts School

Admiral Drive
Hazeley
MK8 0PU



Tel: 01908 563885

Email: admin@walnuts.milton-keynes.sch.uk

The information contained in this booklet is in addition to the whole school prospectus, which provides comprehensive information relating to the school's admission policy, ethos and values, staffing and a wide range of issues relating to the school day, education and assessment.

Walnuts is a community residential and day special school for Children/Young People with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD's)

The Walnuts is based at three sites:

1. The Lower School Department at Hertford Place, Bletchley.
Tel: 01908 646119
2. The main school at Hazeley, Milton Keynes.
Tel: **01908 563885**
3. The Sixth Form at Fenny Stratford.
Tel: 01908 379208

At the main school, the telephone will be answered by one of the admin team who would be happy to deal with any enquiries or take messages.



Our Headteacher is Jo Yates and Head of Upper School is Sara Tunnicliffe. Sara is always willing to discuss with you issues about your child's education, behaviour management and welfare.



Classes in the Upper School Department

Secondary Classes

- Upper 1
- Upper 2
- Upper 3
- Upper 4
- Upper 5
- Upper 6



Sixth Form Classes

- Sixth Form
- Sixth Form 1



Key Workers

In upper school, for any concerns, the class teacher should be parents' first point of contact. In some classes, a member of staff from your child's class may be named as your child's 'key worker'. The role of the key worker is to help ensure your child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. They will help your child become familiar with their new class and to settle in. The key worker will continue to build a settled and secure relationship with your child and continue to be their key worker for the rest of the school year. The teacher or key-worker will keep you informed about daily progress and ensure that a positive relationship develops that benefits both you and your child.



Positive relationships

We want our Children/Young People to feel safe and happy so they are able to develop their full potential socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. We aim to provide a secure and caring environment that supports each child's need for a broad and balanced curriculum. We want our parents to feel welcome and involved from the beginning of their child's school life.

We aim to work closely with all parents. We will listen to your views and seek information about your child so we can build upon your child's experiences, knowledge, understanding and skills and thus provide appropriate opportunities to meet your child's needs.

We hold Parents Evenings every term, and also hold a yearly Annual Review to look at what is working well (or not) for your child, what support needs to be put in place and to set new targets and update the Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education and Health Care Plan as necessary, this is usually held within 12 months of the last annual review date or the date of the finalised statement or EHC.

Home visits

Your child will have been introduced to their class and staff on their transition visit. However, if you would like a teacher to make a home visit, please ask.



Starting school



Starting a new school is going to be a big step for your child and will involve change. Children/Young People with autism can find change challenging, change can equal anxiety.

First session at school

- The length of stay for your child's first session will be negotiated with you, they may need a transition period also.



- Every child is different. Some Children/Young People are happy to stay all day, others may need some time to settle in.
- Staff will use this time to work with your child. Using information from yourself and school observations, at the end of the first half term you will be invited to meet the staff to discuss how your child settled in.

Parent Support Groups

The Walnuts hold a Parents Friendship and Support group for both the main site at Hazeley and the Lower School Department. This is an informal group providing an opportunity to meet with other parents. There is also a fund raising group called 'Friends of Walnuts'. You are warmly invited to be part of these groups.

At the main school we hold a parent support group specifically for parents with Children/Young People at the main school, to which you are warmly invited. It is a chance to meet and chat with other parents and Walnuts staff on an informal basis.

Time of school sessions

9.00a.m. - 3.00p.m.

Arrival:

On arrival the Children/Young People will go straight to their class. As many of our Children/Young People may have spent some time travelling to school, time is made available for toileting and 'unwinding' before lessons commence.

Staff will read the home/school diary to inform them of any information you want us to know about to help us settle your child into the school day.

End of school day:

If your child has school transport, staff will ensure your child is safely put on the bus along with equipment to go home.

If you are collecting your child, please note that car parking can be a difficulty, please be patient.

Relative or friend collecting:

In the interests of safety, please let us know if someone other than yourself is going to be collecting your child. Providing us with written permission and a photograph can help us prepare your child about who will be collecting them.

Absences:

If your child has to miss school through illness or a medical appointment, please let the school know as soon as possible.

If your child has transport it is your responsibility to phone and cancel the transport arrangements for the duration of the absence.



Transport:

If you live more than 3 miles from the school, transport will be provided by the local authority. If you have any queries about transport please contact Nikki Rowley on 01908 252526. Whilst we will do everything to help you with transport, it may be necessary while your child is part-time and settling in, for you to collect your child at mid-day.

Uniform:

Uniform is optional at present. However, if you would like an order form, these are available from reception, but will be included in your admission pack.

- Green sweater - Secondary pupils Year 7 onwards
- Black/Grey trousers, jogging bottoms (if more comfortable), skirts
- White Polo shirt

Orders must be accompanied with payment, cheques to be made payable to 'The Walnuts School'.

Book Bags:

A Walnuts book bag can be purchased for you to keep your child's home / school book and other books in. This often acts as a visual cue that it is time to go to school. Cost is currently £3.75.

School Dinners:

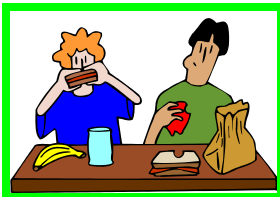
Cost = £2.00 per day.

The school makes its own school dinners and is happy to meet different diets and cultural needs. **Please note we are a NUT FREE school.**



Packed Lunch:

You are welcome to send in a packed lunch for your child. Please be aware that we do not have fridge space for packed lunch boxes – so please ensure an icepack is put in the lunch box to keep it cool. **Please remember not to include any NUT products.**



Snack:

We provide a range of daily snacks, both healthy and motivating. In the older classes, pupils also shop for and help prepare snack. We ask parents to make a voluntary contribution of £10 each half term towards the cost. This money also covers the ingredients used in cookery lessons.



Medicines in school

We only administer medicine prescribed by a doctor. All medication has to be in its original packaging with instructions on how to store and administer.

- Children/Young People with epilepsy or a regular prescribed medication will have a care plan drawn up that is agreed between the home, school and health professionals.

School makes a lot of additional demands upon your child. If they are not well, they are unable to cope with the demands of a school day; which can delay them getting better. In fairness to other Children/Young People and staff, please keep your child at home if you suspect they are unwell.

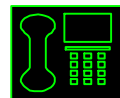
Children/Young People with diarrhoea and/or sickness are asked to stay at home for 48 hours to help them get better and prevent the spread of the infection. This is in line with Local Authority guidelines.

Toilet training

Toilet training will be undertaken in consultation with families when appropriate. We are happy to discuss this with you and support you with any necessary symbols. We apologise in advance, but we cannot wash soiled underwear, these will be sent home in a sealed bag.

Accidents at school

Unfortunately accidents do happen, even with close supervision bumps and falls can occur. All accidents will be appropriately treated by a first aider. This will be recorded and you will be informed the same day. If a serious accident occurs and your child needs to go home, the school will use your contact numbers to contact you immediately. It is important that you can be contacted at all times. Please keep the school informed of any change in telephone numbers.



What will the Children/Young People be learning? Key Stage 4 and 5

The range of students' needs and abilities at the Walnuts is very broad, and we endeavour to teach according to the specific needs of each individual. Students are placed in classes as appropriate to their age, but also taking account individual needs, abilities and personalities. Our overarching aim is to provide the students with the skills they need to lead as happy, fulfilling and independent life as possible once they leave the Walnuts school.

The curriculum is consistent with the requirements of the **Foundation Learning Tier**, and is based around the three areas of **Functional Skills** (English, Maths and ICT), **Personal and Social Development** and **Vocational Skills**. Additionally "enrichment" of the curriculum comes in the form of e.g. Expressive Arts, PE, various visits into the local and wider community, sensory activities, board games, thinking skills etc. Wherever possible, student choices are taken into account when planning the curriculum.

External accreditation is via Asdan Personal Progress for learners operating below Entry Level 1, Asdan Personal and Social Development for learners operating at or above Entry Level 1, OCR Functional Skills at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3. In a very few cases inclusion and /or examinations for certain subjects may be taken at school or at the Hazeley Academy.

As students progress through Key Stage 5 into the Sixth Form, they will be based at the Fenny Stratford site, where an increasing emphasis is placed on preparing them for life after school and selecting the most appropriate leaving pathways. Vocational studies at Moulton College are provided throughout this period and wherever possible periods of work experience are undertaken.

Life Skills and Independence Skills become the priority as the curriculum becomes more community based, and Numeracy, Literacy and ICT skills are increasingly taught within this context. Independent Travel Training is emphasised where appropriate, as is exploring future options at e.g. Milton Keynes College, Moulton College, other FE providers or Social Services provision.

For students with very complex needs, all the above principles still apply, however they may require a more highly structured teaching environment within school, with less time spent in the outside community. Nevertheless we still aim to develop the necessary independence skills for their future placements.



Sixth Formers - After a very successful Xmas Fete



Young People out in the community

Motivation and Children/Young People's motivators

You will be asked before your child starts school about what items your child likes to play with, use, tap, look at, spin etc. This information is used to establish a communicative connection to your child, to help them develop an awareness that they need to communicate their needs to someone else. At Walnuts we use motivators to entice Children/Young People to engage with adults as a first step to building upon and extending their communication skills. Not all of our Children/Young People will use spoken language but we use a range of different augmented systems such as PECS, signing and a range of technological devices e.g. Big Macs, I Pads, Go Boards and similar equipment.

Interdisciplinary Therapy

Interdisciplinary Therapy:

At The Walnuts, the Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapist set targets, write reports and deliver therapy collaboratively. This collaborative way of working is supported by the SCERTS (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support) approach which is being introduced across The Walnuts this year. SCERTS is designed to help families, educators and therapists work cooperatively as a team. Therapy targets are written jointly by both the Speech and Language Therapist and the Occupational Therapist and are incorporated into each pupil's IEP. Programmes to help pupils achieve their targets are then incorporated into the school day by classroom staff. Progress towards achieving targets is monitored and reviewed by the pupil's lead Therapist at least termly.

New pupils are assessed predominantly through observation and discussion with the class staff; this will be shared with you at the time of your child's annual review. The therapists will contribute to the annual review process for your child by providing a report.

In most cases this report will contain a summary of the therapy your child has received during the year with relevant therapy outcomes and provision recommended. New starters and those students who have transitioned from Lower to Middle or Middle to Upper school will receive a more detailed therapy assessment report at the time of the annual review. Therapists will not attend annual reviews unless it is agreed by the Head of Department, class teacher and parent in advance.

Occasionally, if this is an identified need, pupils may be identified for individual or small group work with a therapist or assistant therapy practitioners under the guidance of the therapists. However, for many of our pupils it is the consistent implementation of strategies across a child's day that will have the biggest impact.

PECS:

PECS stands for the Picture Exchange Communication System. This 'system' can be used to help children with some spoken language to structure and extend what they want to say (augmented) or act as an alternative communication mode for those children with little or no spoken language. The use of PECS does not inhibit a child's ability to acquire spoken language. The speech and language therapists at Walnuts work as part of a multi-disciplinary team to support all staff in the delivery of speech therapy for your child. PECS may be included in your child's speech and language targets, please speak to the class teacher to discuss this further. At the Main School, Helen Davy and Dinah McCarthy – Speech and Language Therapist and Speech and Language Therapy Assistant, would be happy to speak to parents about their child's needs.

Children/Young People with English as an additional language

In our school we have many bilingual Children/Young People and staff. These are some of the languages spoken: Bengali, French, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Lingala, Polish, Somali, Swahili/Kiswahili, and Urdu.

At the Walnuts School we encourage parents to continue to use their home language in their family environment. This is fundamental in maintaining positive connections within the family. Speaking home language will help to support a full and rich communication within the family. As the child's home language develops, the linguistic skills they acquire will be transferred to the new language and their understanding of the way language works will be strengthened.

INDIAN DANCE DAY



Not all Children/Young People with Autism will develop spoken language. But for all basic communication skills it is important to grow up in a relaxed and competent language environment.



Research shows that being bilingual has its advantages. Children/Young People who are bilingual tend to be more aware of others, are more creative and are better at problem solving. (EMASS literature)

SHARING FOOD AT EID



A recent research report of a survey of bilingualism in autism spectrum disorders shows that Children/Young People with autism who were exposed to different languages were acquiring the languages

they were exposed to. There is evidence that bilingualism can benefit Children/Young People's overall academic and intellectual development. (International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, January 2012).

VISIT TO THE GURDWARA



Language and culture are inextricably linked, so using the home language of the culture a child grows up in will give their experience more meaning and will help the child in making sense of the world. School need to support the use of home language as far as possible by acknowledging the cultural and language experience a pupil has through culturally relevant resources and displays. Any involvement of parents and family in the school setting to help achieve this is welcomed by all at the Walnuts School.

AFRICAN DRUMMING



Children/Young People learn through their experiences. We celebrate different festivals throughout the year enriching those experiences through play and learning activities, food tasting, trying on different clothes, music and art activities as well as visits. We are always interested in parents/carers getting involved and helping out, both within school and the Residential House.

We would really welcome all communities getting involved; this could be through special cooking days, where parents/carers could help our Children/Young People cook foods from their own cultures. We also have a parent support group which welcomes all involvement, as well as a Friends of Walnuts Group.

Equal opportunities

We endeavour to provide each child with the same opportunities irrespective of race, gender, religion or social class. Through our work we aim to challenge all stereotyping and prejudice and to promote harmony between Children/Young People.

Equipment and resources the school supplies

1) Home/school diary

This is a book to help keep you informed about your child's school day and to help the communication between home and school.

At the end of each week or sometimes daily, your child's teacher or key worker will write in this book to give you the key points about your child's day at school/ and ask you questions/or pass on information.

It is helpful to staff if you too can write each day in the book informing staff of your child's progress at home so we can celebrate with you and integrate such progress into your child's schooling. It is also helpful if you can inform us about changes and whether we need to be aware of factors that affect your child's behaviour e.g. not sleeping / eating as well as they used to. Your child's teacher is also happy to talk to you about your child. Please use the home / school book to arrange a meeting or telephone call so a convenient time for both parties can be agreed. Staff meetings, courses and other appointments means that teachers are not always immediately available but they will get back to you as soon as conveniently possible. Further information about the curriculum/trips and special events may also be included. Any confidential information is sent in a sealed, separate letter. Any significant information from parents is brought to the attention of the Head of Department.

2) Library and reading books

We hope that all of our Children/Young People will develop a love for books, stories, pictures and facts. For this reason we will at

times send home a library book at a suitable developmental level for you to read with your child. To begin with the expectation is simply to share the story, for your child to learn to spend time looking at a book in the company of another person. Learning to respect the book (not tearing pages out or scribbling in the book), learning to turn the pages appropriately, open the flaps / look at the pictures – you can help your child to point to an item in the picture that you name, learning to look and listen until the end of the story. As you can see there is a lot to be gained by you reading regularly to your child, we hope that you will take this opportunity and record in the recording booklet how your child responded to the reading session.

When the Children/Young People are ready they may also bring home reading scheme books, words and letters. Not all of our Children/Young People will learn to read but together we can encourage them to develop a love of all books.

3) [Visuals](#)

Many Children/Young People with autism find the use of visual symbols can clarify the spoken word when used contextually. As we all are aware learning does not begin and end at the school gate. So as not to confuse your child we will be seeking to work closely with you and share information about symbol use. Staff will endeavour to get symbols printed off for you as soon as possible but please be aware that you might be in a queue.

4) [Information / courses / workshops.](#)

The school invites all new parents to participate in the Early Bird Plus course, designed by the National Autistic Society. This is a specific programme, designed to meet the need of parents whose Children/Young People have recently had a diagnosis of autism. It looks at the characteristics of autism, visual structure and development of communication and behavior management. We usually run the course every term and will invite parents to information meeting about the course. It involves you attending a number of workshops in school and a home visit. This is an

excellent first programme that helps you explore how together we can all best meet the needs of your child.

Additional information about special events, visitors, concerts etc will be sent out to you as the occasion arises. If you have an email address and are happy to have information sent via email, this ensures that letters do not go astray between home and school and helps keep costs down.

Equipment your child needs

- A) Coat— preferably waterproof.
- B) A pair of wellies - (Please be prepared for your child to get wet and muddy. We encourage the Children/Young People to experience a range of activities and play experiences both indoors and out. This includes being out doors enjoying all types of weather.)
- C) Change of clothes bag - Your child will need a draw string bag with a change of clothes; they do not have to be uniform items but please include vest, t-shirt, trousers / pinafore, socks and if toilet trained: pants / knickers.
Children/Young People enjoy water/messy play and often get very wet despite aprons.
- D) P.E. bag - Your child will be encouraged to change for P.E. for hygiene reasons but also to practise their independent dressing skills. They will need: a pair of shorts and a t-shirt, again, please name all items.
- E) Swim bag - A swimming bag, swim trunks or costume, towel, and swim nappy/pad (if your child has toileting difficulties).
Swimming kit will be sent home, to be returned for the following week. Classes will not swim until after the October half term. The first half term will be used to help settle the Children/Young People into class routines.

Swimming takes place on different days for classes.

- F) **Home—school bag** - You can provide your own bag or you can purchase a purpose made home -school bag from the school office at the cost of £3.75. The bag will be used to transfer the home- school diary, reading book and any letters to and from school.
- G) **Nappies/I ncontinence Pads** - I f your child requires nappies/incontinence pads, you need to regularly supply the school with these and also baby wipes would also be appreciated. Staff will inform you through the home / school book when your child's supply is running low and needs to be replaced. Rashes do occur from time to time - if you want staff to apply creams please send the cream in its original container with a written permission slip from yourself.
- H) **Sun hat & sun cream (summer term)** - To protect your child from the hot sun we will encourage the wearing of hats. Not all Children/Young People with autism can tolerate a hat on their head. For this reason we ask you, during the hot weather, to apply sun cream before your child arrives at school. We are happy to re-apply sun cream if you supply the cream and appropriate permission slip. We cannot use a generic sun cream on your child - only the sun cream you supply.



Please ensure that you label all of your child's clothing and any other items / equipment that belong to them.

What can you as parents do to prepare your child for school?

There is no easy answer to this question as every child is different and may be at a different point on the autistic spectrum as well as at a different age and different point of development. Below are some pointers you might want to think about – not all of them will be applicable to your child.

- Prepare your child for their first visit. Look at the school book together; get out the school uniform, the book bag or any item that will be regularly associated with school.
- Before starting at the school, write a list of things your child likes and dislikes and help your child to show the staff the toys / motivators they like to use / play with at home.
- Encourage your child to sit in a car with the seat belt on. If you can, do a few 'dummy runs' to school in your car so the 'visual route' becomes familiar.
- Routine is very important to Children/Young People with ASD's. This can be a strength but also a limitation in that the child can be less flexible about change. BUT a general routine of getting up at a regular time, with regular meal times, play times and bedtimes can help give structure and meaning to a day.
- Children/Young People with ASD's can need help to learn to share attention with someone else. It is helpful if your child can learn to attend to the adult agenda, e.g. set aside some 'special time' each day when you ask your child to share an activity with you i.e. singing action songs, looking at a book, building a tower together – an activity you decide rather than your child.

- Introduce sharing and turn taking in e.g. at the dinner table sharing out the vegetables, pouring out drinks. Turn taking when playing e.g. lotto or taking turns to bounce on the trampoline etc.
- Introduce the concept of 'waiting'. We all have to wait at certain points in a day, e.g. we have to wait at traffic lights, wait in a queue in the shop, wait at the Dr's surgery etc.
- We often go for walks around the school and to local parks – help your child by doing the same, teaching them the importance of staying with you.
- It helps if your child recognises the sound of their own name and can respond to it when called.

Early skills that we will be working on at school:

- Helping your child learn to recognise his / her own possessions.
- Teaching your child to dress/undress independently
- If toilet trained – how to request the toilet.

It would be helpful if you could work on these areas too.

There are many other things I'm sure you can think of that applies to your son /daughter. Trust your instinct and share your experiences with other parents, you can learn so much from each other. Come along to parent meetings that the school hosts and meet other parents.

Additional Information

Walnuts Care is a separate, standalone not-for-profit company that offers extra-curricular activities to the children at our school.

It organises a Play scheme for all pupils:

- One week at Easter and three weeks during the summer.
- Demand for places is high, whilst every effort is made to meet demand, you may not be offered all of the sessions you request

Walnuts Care also organise packages of respite care. This is where you pay for an experienced and qualified member of staff to work / play with your child after school and / or at weekends.

Please contact Jerry Aldous, Manager of Walnuts Care on:
Tel: 01908 662288

Social Worker:

Please discuss with the Head of Upper School.

Children with Disabilities Team:

The Children with Disabilities Team works with families who have children with a disability. We offer a range of services including short breaks, liaising with other professionals and supporting transitions. The service is decided through assessment with a team member, yourself and other professionals involved with your child. Our aim would always be to try to keep the child with their family.

The team has a duty worker who you can talk to from 9.30am - 1pm each working day. The telephone number is **01908 253617**.

Useful contact information

Duty Telephone number:	01908 253617
Emergency Social Work Team:	01908 265545
Carers Milton Keynes:	01908 231703
Autism Helpline:	0845 070 4004
Parent Partnership, Milton Keynes:	01908 254518

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/autism

Advice and support for people with autistic spectrum conditions in Milton Keynes.