



The Willows School Academy Trust

Parent Prospectus

Learning, Achieving, Succeeding



The Willows School Mission Statement

At The Willows School Academy Trust, we are committed to helping our children by:

- Creating a positive and nurturing environment where our children can feel happy, safe, loved and respected.
- Challenging our children to achieve their best.
- Providing our children with opportunities and experiences that may enable them to access mainstream primary education.
- Giving our children the skills necessary to begin the journey towards becoming successful adults.

Welcome to The Willows School Academy Trust

Foreword: Headteacher Mr M Shaw says...

I wish you all a very warm welcome to our special school academy for boys and girls.

Recognition and understanding for all

I am proud to be part of a school that values children as individuals. We strive to recognise individual skills, interests and needs so that each child can achieve their full potential, embodying our school's motto of 'Learning, Achieving, Succeeding.'

A broad and balanced learning experience

Alongside our expert delivery of the National Curriculum, all children at The Willows School Academy Trust can expect access to a wide, varied and balanced range of learning opportunities. Children don't just

excel academically here - sports, art and music skills are developed through an exciting, enhanced curriculum.

An inclusive environment

As a specialist school for children with a range of additional needs, our determination to be a fully inclusive environment where every child can access their learning is our highest priority. Every child attends all day, every day. We have high expectations, and we help all children meet them through a framework of respect, tolerance and compassion.

The Willows Family

At The Willows School Academy, we are not simply a school that serves families in our community - the school itself is like a family. At the centre of our family are the children, who are valued as members of

the school community and are shown by example how we support, celebrate and care for each other - and take responsibility for our actions as individuals.

Dedicated staff

Just as important to our school family are our team of dedicated educators and support staff. Everyone at The Willows works hard to maintain a safe and happy school, where children are encouraged to become enthusiastic lifelong learners.

Parental partnership

Another very important part of our school is you, the parent! As you will see, by reading the many parent and pupil stories within this prospectus, you and your child are very important to us.

You will be encouraged to be an active partner in your child's learning through effective communication, regular updates about learning and progress and homework activities. From the beginning, we will put a strong emphasis on the importance of parental involvement in building strong reading skills from an early age.

Get in touch

We have shared with you just the beginning of our conversation about The Willows School Academy Trust. We look forward to speaking or visiting with families and showing them what we do best. Please call us at 0208 841 7176 so that we may arrange a visit.

Isabelle is now making good academic progress and is settled and happy at The Willows School Academy Trust



Jemma lives in Hayes with her children, Cheylise, aged 19, who is at university, Malakai, aged 15, and Isabelle, aged nine. Isabelle is now in Year Five at The Willows, having joined the school in Year Three. She was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum when she was seven.

Stability at school

For a while after Isabelle started at The Willows, her Mum, Jemma, waited each day for the school to contact her and ask her to pick up her daughter. "I could hardly believe that she had settled in happily and that the staff were not going to keep ringing me up because of her behaviour. Isabelle really loves going to school now and is a

lot easier to look after at home because of the structure and stability the staff at the Willows provide for her," Jemma says.

Unhappy in mainstream

Isabelle started having problems at her mainstream school when she was in Reception, screaming, running out of class, and hitting others. Jemma says: "I knew she was autistic but the teaching staff refused to

believe it and did not get her any help. They ended up cutting her hours until eventually she was attending school for only an hour a day and was kept separate from the other children in a small room on her own."

Dedicated teachers

"At the end of Year Two I moved Isabelle to a different school, but the same thing happened there. This time I asked the Headteacher to exclude Isabelle so she could get the help she needed and fortunately she agreed," Jemma says. "Isabelle was given tuition by specialist staff employed by the local authority at a centre for autism. I was given a list of schools where there were places, but I was reluctant to send her to a special school. However, I was encouraged to go and look round The Willows and, when I visited the school, I felt it seemed just right. I could see the teachers loved what they were doing and listened to the kids and treated them as human beings."

Enjoying learning

Jemma says the first week was hard for Isabelle, who was not used to being with other children. "Socialising was a struggle, even though she was only in a small class, but by the end of the week she was fine. Isabelle has now made lots of academic progress and is ahead of where she should be for her age. She is good at Maths and loves reading. I love the staff and it is great to know there is always someone to speak to if you have a problem. They communicate

well with me and let me know how Isabelle is getting on by writing in her home journal. They understand the struggles that parents of children with autism go through," she says.

New friends

"Isabelle has now made some friends, whereas she never had any friends at her previous schools. She enjoys cooking at school and doing Kung Fu and going swimming. I have recommended the school to others, but a lot of people still think there is a stigma attached to sending your child to a special school. I think you must do the best for your child and I know how much The Willows staff have helped Isabelle," Jemma says.

Compassionate community

"I have never felt as stressed as when Isabelle was in mainstream education. I used to be terrified of the phone ringing because it might have been the school complaining about her behaviour. The Willows feels more like a loving family than a school community. The other parents talk about their struggles and share advice and tips with you and it reduces your stress to hear that other people have gone through the same difficulties."

Children say

Isabelle says: "I love doing cooking at school."



School day: settling in

The school day starts at 8.50am and finishes at 3.00pm.

Arrivals and departures

As a special school, most of our children arrive and depart in pre-arranged taxis provided by their local authority. If you would prefer to bring your child to and from school yourself, this is no problem. Children should be in their classrooms by 8.50am and collected from their classrooms at 3.00pm.

Uniform

We encourage children to wear uniforms at The Willows School Academy Trust because we believe it helps create a sense of community, pride and belonging. Our uniform consists of a school blazer, tie and woollen tank top.

School meals and snacks

The children benefit from a healthy breakfast with choices such as: cereals, fresh fruit and a selection of toasted breads with various toppings. Fresh fruit is provided at breaktimes. Our delicious, healthy and nutritious school lunches are the perfect way for children to refuel at lunchtime. Prepared freshly onsite, all school lunches are free for all children at The Willows. If children prefer, they can bring a packed lunch from home - which they can eat alongside their peers. School lunch sessions last 30 minutes.



Akshaya is now happy and making progress with her education in the caring atmosphere of The Willows School Academy Trust



Krishna and Arulmoli live in Hayes with their daughters, Aradhana, aged 13, and Akshaya, aged 11. Akshaya, who has been diagnosed with autism, is now in Year Six at The Willows School Academy Trust.

Supportive staff

Krishna and Arulmoli are pleased that their youngest daughter, Akshaya, is now happy and settled at The Willows and is being well cared for by the staff. Krishna says: "The Willows is a very good school and we are now less worried about Akshaya because we know she is getting the help she needs. All the staff are very friendly and helpful and we are one hundred per cent confident she is being well cared for."

Specialised help

Krishna says that Akshaya's Reception class teacher at her mainstream primary school recognised that she needed help with developing her communication skills. "After various meetings and medical appointments, Akshaya was diagnosed with autism and learning difficulties. It had taken a long time to get a definitive diagnosis for her and it was then suggested to us that we move her to a school where she could receive more specialised help," he says.

Enjoying school

"We had assistance from the staff at her mainstream primary school to find a good special school for her. We wanted something close to where we live where she would be happy. When we went to see The Willows, we thought it would be suitable because it seemed a very warm and friendly environment. Akshaya settled in well within a few days of starting and began to enjoy going to school," Krishna says.

Reading progress

"We have seen a slow improvement in Akshaya. She is now calmer and less anxious about things and her reading has got a lot better. She is now a lot less hyperactive and will sit for longer doing things, which is helping her to learn. Children with autism can vary a lot in the type of help they need and they are all different and we are pleased the school recognise that," he says.

Staying calm

"We are very pleased that we can see Akshaya making progress now. If she loses a game at home, she will still get anxious for a few minutes, but will then calm down again. This is much better than how she used to be before she started at The Willows. It has been slow progress, but we can see she has improved and it is now easier to calm her down at home," Krishna says.

Music and dance

"When Akshaya first started at The Willows, she benefited from one-to-one tuition but now she can learn in a group. She is very good at Maths according to her teacher, but she still struggles with handwriting. We are pleased that she is happy to go to school and never says she does not want to go. She enjoys music and dance and has brought certificates home that have been awarded to her for her achievements. She earns points for good behaviour and for good work and can exchange them for small rewards from the school tuck shop. She also enjoys doing cooking at school and now likes to help my wife with the cooking at home," Krishna says.

Friendly community

"We would not hesitate to recommend The Willows to other families who have children who need special care. We find that the staff are all very friendly and caring and look after the children very well. We take her to school and pick her up from school ourselves each day and are pleased that the other parents are very friendly. We enjoy chatting with them and meeting them at coffee mornings, where we all share our experiences."

Children say

Akshaya says: "I love doing music and dance at school."



Curriculum: *creative and fun learning*

Engaging and inclusive

We have developed our curriculum based on both the National Curriculum and the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). This enables our children to follow a topic-based learning model that reinforces learning thematically.

In addition to providing an English education as stipulated by the National Curriculum, we also make links with the Centre of Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) to provide a clear focus on building essential literacy skills amongst our pupils.

Reading

The Power of Reading programme develops a child’s love of reading and writing through high-quality texts and creative, engaging activities.

Numeracy

Our numeracy lessons are based on the National Curriculum, and we are committed to providing a real-world, practical mathematical education to children so they can make sense of how maths skills are an essential part of our lives and their development.

Essential skills

In addition to our curriculum, we offer services to help our children develop essential skills and build confidence. Our services include play therapy, speech and language therapy and the provision of an in-house educational psychologist who provides an in-depth assessment of pupils’ learning needs.

It’s our overriding aim to ensure that all children make good progress with their learning and overall development. The aim is that, wherever possible, we should support children to improve their confidence and behaviour so they can thrive in a mainstream school environment.

Areas of the National Curriculum

- English.
- Mathematics.
- Physical Education.
- PSHE.
- Religious Education.
- Music.

The 8 IPC Personal Goals are:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| • Adaptability. | • Communication. |
| • Cooperation. | • Enquiry. |
| • Morality. | • Resilience. |
| • Respect. | • Thoughtfulness. |



Outdoor play and learning

The physical and psychological benefits of spending lots of time outdoors are plentiful. For this reason, our curriculum is strongly linked to outdoor learning.

Spacious grounds

Our spacious grounds allow for plenty of outdoor space. Our outdoor multi-sports area is available at break and lunch times, and there are separate playgrounds for older and younger children. We offer children the opportunity to experience horse riding, gardening, eco school and regular outdoor trips and visits. We also run the daily mile together every day.

Harry is now enjoying learning and making new friends helped by the skilful staff at The Willows School Academy Trust

Michael lives in Watford with his son, Harry, aged eight. Harry has been diagnosed with autism and is in Year Four at The Willows, having attended the school for two years.

Good progress

Michael is delighted with the progress Harry is making at The Willows and with how happy and settled he is at the school. He says: “Starting at The Willows was one of the best things that has ever happened to Harry. He loved it right from his very first day and as a result our home life is now a lot better.”

Unhappy in mainstream

Harry was excluded from his mainstream junior school because of his disruptive behaviour. Michael says: “The staff would ring me and ask me to come and fetch him when he was being disruptive and I would have to leave work and drive a long way to collect him. When I arrived, he would be causing damage in the classroom and all the other pupils had been evacuated. The staff did not know how to deal with Harry and never understood his issues. They just thought he was badly behaved and blamed me.”

Small class

While Michael looked for a new school that could meet his son’s needs, Harry attended a temporary school, where a member of staff recommended The Willows for him. Michael says: “I attended an open day at The Willows and thought the school

would be perfect for Harry and that it had everything I was looking for. Harry went from being in a class of 30 with just one teacher, to being in a class of seven with more than one member of staff looking after them.”

One-to-one teaching

Michael is pleased that Harry is now making a lot more progress academically. “He hardly learnt anything at his old school, but he is now above average in Maths and can read and write well. The big difference is that he gets one-to-one time with a teacher, which has helped him a lot. The staff know how to deal with him and have a time-out place in the classroom that he can go to if he feels overwhelmed. They know how to help him calm down. I can’t even remember the last time he had an outburst,” Michael says.

Homework incentive

The staff keep Michael informed about how Harry is getting on through a communications book and he can use it to write to let them know things concerning Harry. Michael is also grateful that they provide a taxi to take Harry to and from school as it gives him more time to work. “If the pupils do not do their homework, they are not allowed playtime, so Harry always wants to do his homework. He likes me to

sit with him and will remind me that he needs to do it because he doesn’t want to miss his playtime. I think The Willows have been able to turn Harry round because the staff are able to work one-to-one with each child and are trained how to deal with them. The staff also reward the children’s good behaviour by letting them spend some time in the soft play area, or have a treat from the school tuck shop,” Michael says.

Learning social skills

“Now Harry finally has some friends at school, whereas he didn’t have any friends at his old school, and his social skills have improved. It is lovely when I visit the school to see him running about with his mates. I am very involved with the school and like to attend events and meet the other parents and I have got to know some great people since Harry started at The Willows.”

Children say

Harry says: “I love all the clubs and activities we get to do. My favourites are going horse riding and doing cooking club.”



Enriched curriculum: *trips and visits*

Trips

To further enrich our curriculum, all children are offered a range of visits that are connected with work in the classroom. We make visits locally and further afield and invite visitors into the school from the wider community. Parents are encouraged to accompany us on these trips and all children should take part in them. Previous trips have included:

- The Natural History Museum.
- Windsor Castle.
- Offs Farm.
- London Zoo.
- Whipsnade Zoo.
- Model Village.
- Model Railway.

Local visits too!

To build upon children's connections with our local area, we often take them on local community trips. This can include investigating our local infrastructure and architecture for geography, or visits to the local library.

Visitors

In addition to taking the children out to access experiences to enhance their engagement with the curriculum, we invite visitors to the school to provide enrichment activities based on the children's learning packages. Examples include:

- Science week.
- Black History workshops.
- Steel-pans.
- African drumming.

- Dance workshops.
- Yoga.
- Kung-fu.
- Book Man for World Book Day.
- RSPCA.
- Spanish musicians.

A special treat for Year 6 leavers

We offer an annual camping event held in the school academy grounds for our Year 6 children each year. During this event, children will often be away from home for the first time. It gives them a valuable opportunity to build independence and new skills ready for the next step of their learning journey.



Oliver's life has been transformed and he has grown in confidence thanks to the caring staff at The Willows Academy Trust



Nigel and Helen live in the London borough of Hillingdon with their son, Oliver, aged eight. Oliver was diagnosed with Autism, sleep disorder and anxiety when he was three years old. He joined The Willows in Year Three and is now in Year Four. He has been at the school just over a year.

Happy at school

Nigel and Helen feel that the supportive staff at The Willows Academy have given them back their son, who had suffered from the effects of going through an unhappy time at a mainstream primary school. Nigel says: "Now Oliver is settled and happy at The Willows he will get up and go to school

willingly each morning. He embraces all the opportunities the school offer him and takes part in everything. Our home life is completely different now."

Right move

Nigel and Helen decided to move Oliver to The Willows because they felt he was not wanted at his local primary school. "When

Oliver first started school, we thought he would be okay because the school knew about his condition and that he had an EHCP in place, but the staff just didn't understand how to deal with a child with autism. When he kicked off, they would just lock him in an empty classroom on his own," Nigel says.

Out of school

"As soon as there was a problem with Oliver, they would ring me and ask me to collect him. Sometimes they would ask me to pick him up before we were halfway through the morning and then he would be at home all day so he was hardly getting any education. He never wanted to go to school because he had realised that he wasn't wanted there and eventually we had no choice but to take him out. We didn't want to send him to a school a long way from where we live, but fortunately, our local authority case worker was very helpful and suggested The Willows to us. We had never heard of it before, even though it is only two miles from our home, but as soon as we went to look round, we knew it was the right school for Oliver," Nigel says.

Making friends

"The Willows have literally turned Oliver's life round and he is now happy to go to school each morning. He is in a small class of about ten pupils with a teacher and two TAs, who he loves. He has made some good friends and is now a lot more confident and will speak up for himself. When he started

at The Willows, his reading was assessed as being at the level of a five-year-old. A year later he has the reading level of an 11-year-old. He loves non-fiction books with lots of facts in them and soaks up new information like a sponge. Maths is his strongest subject, but he is doing well in everything. The school keep us up to date and regularly tell us how well he is getting on. Oliver is on the school council for the second term in a row and has recently discovered cooking and loves bringing things home that he has made. Before, he would not tell us anything about his day at school, but now he is happy to talk about everything he has done," Nigel says.

Keen pupil

"We literally can't speak highly enough of the school. I am so enthusiastic about The Willows, I am hoping to become a Parent Governor because I want to help in any way I can. Oliver has gone from being a child that was hard to get out of the front door in the mornings to a child who can't wait to get to school and rushes off eagerly to his classroom as soon as he arrives."

Children say

Oliver says: "I love my school because I have some good friends there and the teachers treat me nicely."



Inclusion: *a curriculum for all*

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

As a fully inclusive SEND school, we believe every child has an entitlement to fulfil their true potential in all areas. We provide extensive support to children in all aspects of their lives and development - social, emotional, personal and academic.

All of our children have an EHCP, and many children may be on the SEND register for multiple reasons. Every pupil at our school has an entitlement to fulfil their true potential. This is as true for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) as for any of our pupils. We are committed to ensuring our school is inclusive and supportive to ensure the academic and developmental progress of all children.

Lessons planned to individual needs

In class, the teacher will plan lessons according to the needs of all children in their class and will ensure appropriate differentiation to ensure appropriate access arrangements and challenges for all.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to support all needs and accessibility plans. Where appropriate, teachers will incorporate strategies and resources from our Educational Psychologist and other external agencies.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO)

We have a designated SENDCO responsible for coordinating the SEND educational provision. The SENDCO is Paul Gregory-Hunt, and you can contact him by telephone on 020 8841 7176.

Access

Our school offers a differentiated curriculum for all pupils

- We use resources tailored to the needs of pupils who require support to access the curriculum

- Curriculum resources reflect reality where possible
- Curriculum progress is tracked for all pupils
- Targets are set and are appropriate for pupils needs

The need to provide learning opportunities for all children extends to our highflyers. Many children with SEND concurrently have areas where they are exceptionally talented - so-named 'twice exceptional' individuals. We recognise that all children are individuals with their own specific needs, gifts and talents.

George is enjoying learning and making good progress in the supportive environment of The Willows School Academy Trust



Faye and Joe live in Staines with their sons, Joe, aged 15, and George, aged ten. George is in Year Six at The Willows, having moved there from a mainstream primary school three years ago.

Gaining self-belief

Faye and Joe are delighted that George is now happy at The Willows after struggling at his mainstream primary school. Faye says: "The staff at The Willows have encouraged George to believe in himself and he now realises he can do the work and is learning as he should be. They have taught him coping strategies to deal with potentially stressful situations and he has become much calmer."

Safe at school

Faye and Joe are relieved to have finally found a school where George can feel safe and understood. "When George started at The Willows, the staff said he was about two years behind where he should have been educationally, but now he is just six months behind. He is good at Maths but has struggled with reading and writing. When he started at the Willows, he would write with both hands, but now he just uses one," Faye says.

Unhappy time

George joined The Willows in Year Three, after his previous school suggested he move because he was not coping in a mainstream setting. Faye says: "George would run away from school and so he had to be shut up in a room on his own. The staff weren't trained to deal with this kind of behaviour and we were constantly getting calls asking us to pick him up."

Welcoming staff

George has since been diagnosed with autism but Faye and Joe didn't know this was the issue at the time. After the school's SENCO encouraged them to find a more suitable school, they went to look at The Willows. Faye says: "We liked The Willows because it was small and the staff were very welcoming. We were delighted when they came back to us and said they had a place for George. He settled in well and then stopped trying to run away from school."

Male role models

"George was put into a small class where the curriculum was tailored to him. They would give me a regular call to let me know how he was getting on and I would think they were going to ask me to pick him up, but they were just ringing to let me know how well he was doing," Faye says. "The staff loved George and accepted who he was and they all wanted the best for him. They are very nurturing and have plenty of time to give to the children. We are also pleased there is

a strong male representation in the school and that George has male role models."

Earning rewards

"There are nine children in his present class and the staff tailor the teaching to meet their individual needs. George has made some friends and enjoys playing football and dancing at school. He has also done karate and become a good swimmer. There are consequences for negative behaviour, but there are also rewards for the children when they do well. They earn points for their achievements and can choose a treat from the tuck shop or have free time to do something they want to do," Faye says.

Chance to flourish

"It is a shame that there is such a stigma about special schools because some children do far better in a calm environment that enables them to flourish. I cannot praise The Willows highly enough for what they have done for George. Things were bad for us as a family before George joined the school but they are a lot better now. We appreciate everything the staff have done for him."

Children say

George says: "My favourite thing about school is playing outdoors at break and lunchtime."



Behaviour and self-development: *foundations for the future*

The School Rules

Our school rules are kept to a minimum to allow all children the opportunity to fully understand them and become invested in their value. They are:

1. **We follow instructions.**
2. **We keep our hands and feet and objects to ourselves.**
3. **We are kind, polite and respectful to everyone.**

Achievements and celebrations

Behaviour management is based on a whole school approach on a points-based system. Each child has a total potential daily points total of 15 throughout the school day.

These points can be awarded to children by all staff in return for following the three main school rules, and by engaging in their learning.

Every week, children can visit the school shop to either spend or “bank” their earned points.

Rewards and incentives include weekly points to top-up their points balance, weekly restaurant awards to reward good choices and certificates to be handed out in assembly for public praise and recognition.

Self Regulation

In response to negative behaviour, we work with children to reshape their negative choice. Children are encouraged to use reflection areas and time-out areas in their own classroom, or the classrooms of their

peers. No child will ever be sent home due to negative behavioural choices - this is in recognition of the social and emotional challenges our children face due to their various diagnoses.

Our values

At The Willows School Academy Trust we have five core values that are embedded in the life and work of the school and its community. They are:

- Fairness.
- Compassion.
- Tolerance.
- Friendliness.
- Endeavor.



Tavion is fulfilling his academic potential and feels safe and comfortable in the nurturing environment of The Willows School Academy Trust.



Betty lives in Hillingdon with her sons, Tyrese, aged 13, and Tavion, aged ten. Tavion is in Year Six at The Willows, having joined the school five months ago.

Academic achievement

Betty is pleased that Tavion is now happy and settled at The Willows and achieving well academically. She says: “The staff at The Willows have taught him how to cope with his emotions better and he is now thriving at the school and has even won a Headteacher’s award.”

Unhappy time

Betty says Tavion was unhappy at his mainstream primary school, having initially made a good start there after they moved into the area. “He had made some friends at school but after a while he felt that his friends were deliberately leaving him out. The staff didn’t really understand Tavion and did nothing to help. When he got angry and threw things about, they would try to

restrain him, which made things worse. They could not deal with him and eventually told me to move him to The Willows. I was not given a choice but was told I had to move him,” she says.

Emotional support

Betty says Tavion is intelligent, but he is also very sensitive. “His father died when he was very young and he used to cry a lot when things didn’t go his way. Everything has to be explained to him very carefully. I was relieved that Tavion settled in well at The Willows. There was just one incident in the first few days when he got angry and threw something. The staff rang me about it but did not ask me to come and collect him, which was different from his previous school. The staff there would always ask me to pick him up when his behaviour was causing a problem. But the staff at The Willows dealt with it themselves and since then have not had any occasion to call me about his behaviour.”

Learning to reflect

“Tavion now reflects about what he does and is very kind to other people and will use language more carefully. He doesn’t cry nearly as much as he used to. When he does something wrong at home he will come and apologise to me later and give me a hug. Before if you made fun of him, even in a playful way, he would have been very upset but now he will take it on the chin,” Betty says.

Challenging work

“Educationally Tavion is very smart, and he is doing well in Maths and English. To begin with he found the work too simple at The Willows, but the teachers are challenging him more now and giving him more advanced books and encouraging him to achieve to the best of his ability.”

Understanding staff

“I like the fact that the school is very diverse and that there are children from many different races and backgrounds there. The staff are all very understanding of the children and accept that they are all different and that they have a variety of issues. They are very patient with them. Tavion would never go swimming before, but thanks to the staff, he likes going now and is learning how to swim,” Betty says.

Preparing for transition

“I like the staff at The Willows because they all want to help and support the children in their care and they have done a lot for my son. The main thing is that he is much happier at The Willows than he was at his old school. I am hoping that with the support of the staff, Tavion will be able to make the transition back into mainstream education successfully.”

Children say

Tavion says: “I like going swimming with school.”



Clubs, sport and music

Extensive range of clubs

Research shows that school clubs improve academic performance and help the development of important life skills. Due to the pick-up arrangements for most children at The Willows School Academy Trust, we cannot offer after-school clubs as in a traditional primary environment. Our extra-curricular clubs are offered to all pupils on a Friday afternoon from lunchtime onwards. Our activities include:

- Football.
- Art club.
- Dance.
- Music.
- Free play.
- Soft play.
- Gardening.
- Computers and ICT club.

Sport

We firmly believe that every child should have the right to succeed in a sport of their choice and further their physical development. We want to help our children develop their skills during their time in our school. Exercise is also a crucial part of emotional and personal development and forms a big part of any behaviour management programme. Alongside regular PE lessons, we offer football training and the opportunity to take part in tournaments.

‘It’s a Knockout’

We also host an annual ‘It’s a Knockout’ competition. All children benefit from access to our PE hub, which includes gymnastics, tag rugby and athletics.

Swimming

Swimming lessons are offered to all classes throughout the school year. In Year 6, children will complete a swimming ability certificate to take with them into secondary school.

Pony Riding

Some classes benefit from weekly Pony Riding sessions.

Riding allows the children to make a close connection with an animal and provides an exceptional life experience. that the children really enjoy. It also helps improve balance, gross motor skills and develops core strength.

Music

A vital role in the community

At The Willows School Academy Trust we believe music plays a vital role throughout our community, so we try to make music more than a lesson - it’s something that’s embedded in our daily school lives. We include musical opportunities right across the school curriculum, not only in music lessons.

Singing assemblies

We also hold singing assemblies every afternoon, so we can come together as a community in song and offer musical club opportunities each Friday for musically-inclined children.

Cody and Chay have finally been able to access learning with the help of the kind staff at The Willows School Academy Trust



Carly lives in Hayes with her sons, Cody, aged 12, and Chay, aged nine. Cody has been diagnosed with autism, optional defiant disorder and dyslexia. He has now left The Willows and is in Year Seven at a special needs secondary school. Chay has been diagnosed with autism and is now in Year Five at The Willows.

Making progress

Carly is delighted with how much progress both of her sons made after starting at The Willows. She says: “Neither Cody nor Chay could cope in mainstream primary schools and they were unhappy before they moved to The Willows. Neither of them could read or write, but they soon became more confident and started to enjoy learning.”

Good move

Cody went to two different mainstream schools but neither of them could cope with him. Carly says: “The local authority suggested he moved to The Willows but I was nervous about him going there because when my brother attended the school, I didn’t have a good impression of it. However, The Willows has changed a lot and is a lovely

school now. Cody loved it so much he cried when he left to go to secondary school.”

Calm environment

“The first time I looked round The Willows, I couldn’t believe how calm and quiet it was. I could see the children were happy and were interacting with the teachers. Cody started at The Willows in October and was happy and settled by January. Before, I used to have a difficult time trying to get Cody to go to his mainstream schools. He wouldn’t even go through the school gates sometimes. When he did go in, I used to wait outside because I knew it wouldn’t be long before they would ring and ask me to pick him up,” Carly says.

Enjoying school

“After Cody started at The Willows, he would come home from school happy. Before, when he came home from school, he would say he didn’t want to go the next day. Once he had started at The Willows, he would get himself dressed in the mornings and couldn’t wait to get there. But when he was in mainstream, I sometimes had to take him to school in his pyjamas,” she says.

Friendly teachers

Carly knew Cody was bright because he could remember facts and information, but he couldn’t write his own name before he started at the Willows. She says: “Once he settled, he learnt to read and write and became good at Maths. He is still behind but is continuing to make progress at secondary

school and he is happy there, although he was sad to leave The Willows because he had close connections with the teachers.”

Out of education

Carly says Chay could not cope with the big classes at his mainstream primary school. “He was fine if he was taught one-to-one but the school could not offer that. He felt as though he didn’t fit in and eventually had to stay off school and have home tuition. He was taught for only two hours a day and his tutor worked on his emotional development rather than reading and writing,” she says.

Finding friends

“Now Chay is at The Willows he has made plenty of friends and enjoys playing football with them at break. I think he may be dyslexic, but he is now reading better and is a lot more confident and starting to write. He likes all the teachers at The Willows. I often recommend the school to other families and tell them how much progress Cody and Chay have made there. I urge people who are unsure about sending their child to a special school to go and have a look round The Willows to see for themselves.”

Children say

Chay says: “I like playing with all my friends at school.”

Admissions and getting involved

Admissions

The admissions process at The Willows School Academy Trust is different to that of mainstream schools. On admission, pupils will already have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education and Health Care Plan (EHC plan) that names The Willows School Academy Trust as the school most appropriate to their needs.

Naming the school in which a child will receive Statement/Education and Health Care Plan support is usually done by Local Authorities, with collaboration from parents. This process typically occurs after an agreement has been reached with the Headteacher.

Parents/carers should always visit The Willows School Academy Trust in person before a decision is reached so they can make a personal judgement on its suitability for their child. The final decision of whether to offer a place will be made by the placement panel—made up of members

from the governing body and headship. Parents and carers are expected to fully commit themselves in partnership with their children's school.

Getting involved

The Friends and Family of The Willows

Our PTFA, The Friends and Family of The Willows, is a thriving fundraising community whose aim is to provide enriching equipment and experiences for the children. They offer a varied calendar of activities and events that appeal to children and their families and are a vital aspect of our school community. For information about how to get involved, please contact the school office.

Parent workshops

We run fortnightly parent workshops for parents to promote and facilitate parental involvement with children's educational, behavioural and developmental progress.

Our workshops aim to equip parents with skills to engage with their children and share positive experiences. Some of our past events have included:

- The joy of reading.
- Reading with your child.
- Playing board games with your child.
- Speech and language - improving communication with your child.
- Attendance matters.
- Online safety - being able to access courses.
- The importance of mathematics.

Governorship

Our school benefits from the good support of an active governing body. It's the role of the governors to ensure that the school fulfils its duties and provides value for money in terms of how our budget is spent. The governors challenge the school to ensure that children achieve high standards within the spirit of the agreed school aims.



The Willows School Academy Trust

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