



North Lakes

● care ● education ● therapy

Kirby Moor School is an independent specialist school where we work primarily with pupils who have difficulties around their social interaction, emotions and/or their mental health. These difficulties can manifest in behaviour which can be challenging to those around them. Our pupils range in age from 7 to 18.

Kirby Moor School

We base our school ethos in the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive School Approach. This carefully informed approach helps our pupils to feel valued and included in our school community, whatever their previous experiences of schools have been .

Our curriculum

Key Stages 2 and 3 – Pupils in school years 2 to 9 are taught through the National Curriculum at a level which best matches their ability. Older pupils also have additional timetabled sessions for careers guidance; younger pupils have careers awareness built into the other subject teaching, life skills lessons and out of classroom learning.

Key Stage 4 – Pupils in school years 10 and 11 have access to a range of accreditations so that, when they leave us, they are best prepared for their independent futures. Pupils also have additional timetabled sessions for careers guidance, life skills and out of classroom learning.

Pupils study for accreditations in: GCSE or equivalents, Cambridge National Awards or certificates, Functional Skills Awards, ASDAN Short Course Awards, Entry Level Certificates, AQA Units of Accreditation and Vocational Awards.

Many KS4 pupils begin to work with local colleges or in work experience situations to help their preparation for greater future independence.

All pupils have additional programmes in school which help them to develop the skills they need in relation to their future aspirations, social skills, resilience, emotional regulation and self esteem.





Communication with parents, carers and professionals

Formal termly reports are sent to parents/carers, local education authorities and social workers.

Annual reviews and PEPs give a formal opportunity to show how a pupil is progressing.

Over the year, parents, carers, social workers and LEA representatives celebrate the achievements of our young people with them at school.

The school day

9:00 Registration

9:10 Lesson 1

10:00 Lesson 2

10.50 Morning break

11:05 Lesson 3

11.50 Lunch

12:45 Lesson 4

13:35 Lesson 5

14:25 Afternoon break

14:40 Reading session

15.00 Golden Time/ Reflection Time

15:30 End of school

Pastoral support

Weekly 1:1 pastoral programmes of support help students to learn social, emotional and self-regulation skills.

Greater emotional understanding and regulation prepares pupils for their future independent lives and to achieve greater academic success.

An open-door policy of support and multi-agency working has led to significant positive changes for pupils.

Resilience sessions include topics on: reflection, empathy, attention, sociability, emotional regulation, self-esteem, independence, adult co-operation, collaboration and honesty. These sessions with the Pastoral Lead help pupils to achieve goals and make helpful choices.



Transitions & college links

The school has well established links with local colleges. We dedicate great attention to our transition programmes for pupils. Our approach, with our young people and the student support teams in the colleges, ensures pupils are prepared for the move.

The process for our staff starts when pupils are in year 9. We plan for the pupils at a level which they are capable of achieving.

Careers lessons, meetings with the Pastoral Lead and sessions with an advisor, help focus our young people on achievable yet challenging goals for their futures.

The practical element begins in year 10 with pupils visiting colleges and finding out about the courses they may enjoy. Entry requirements are explored as well as looking at what continuing support would be needed once at college.

In year 11 a series of visits, college sessions (in lesson and social times), talks with student support teams and the more formal requests for support through EHCPs occur.

For pupils who are moving back to their own local areas and away from Cumbria, we mirror the same support. We arrange a series of meetings coordinated with home contact or semi-independent/supported living/new foster carer visit days.



A student in a green shirt is kneeling on a blue carpet, painting a large, stylized tree cutout on a wall. The tree is made of cardboard and has a brown trunk with white and grey patterns. The student is holding a yellow paintbrush and is in the process of painting the trunk. The background wall is blue with a yellow sun cutout and white clouds.

“The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils become highly skilled in accurately evaluating their own behaviour across the school day. Pupils wear their uniforms with pride.”

Kirby Moor main site

The pupils are taught in small groups designed to meet their academic ability and specific Special Educational Needs.

The pupils on this site are often nearer to a return to a mainstream school or are preparing for post 16 placement in a mainstream college.

The Kirby Moor main site seeks to mirror a mainstream school but in a much smaller setting with a great deal more support in place.

There is a Nurture Unit for those pupils with more complex needs.

The pupils at Kirby Moor main site who do not need the additional support of the Nurture Unit undertake subject specialist classes as part of their full timetable.

The site has specialist Science, Maths, Computer Science, Art, DT, Humanities and Music classrooms in addition to more general teaching spaces. Pupils enjoy Physical Education lessons as well as out of classroom learning opportunities such as mountain biking, walking, climbing and team building events.

Pupils enjoy lessons in addition to their National Curriculum or Accreditation based subjects such as life skills, careers related learning and out of classroom learning.



Kirby Moor teaching approach

Every class has a maximum of 5 pupils and is led by a qualified teacher and learning support assistant. The specific needs of pupils are met by developing and implementing Individual Learning Plans.

Speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are the focus of all teaching and learning, aiming to narrow any gaps our pupils may have in their knowledge and understanding.

Pupils gain self-respect and self-confidence by experiencing success. All pupils gain accreditation at a level suited to their ability.

“Within a short space of time, teachers help pupils find their zest for learning. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They talk about how teachers make them think hard and make learning interesting and fun.”

Pupils are grouped according to emotional literacy and academic ability. Similar ability groups ensure the curriculum is delivered at a level the individual pupil needs.

The staff are experienced in working with pupils who have encountered negative experiences at previous educational settings.

Positive encouragement and learning experiences are reinforced in every area of the school to enable every young person to feel included and very much a part of our school.

We instil a sense of pride and belonging for every young person to encourage a positive experience in education and give them aspirations and goals to achieve both now and in the future.



Herdley Bank site

This dedicated learning environment aims to stimulate each pupil's readiness to learn and make social, emotional AND academic progress through incremental steps.

Here the pupils are aged 7–18 and they enjoy a highly nurturing and rural environment. The focus of teaching is on encouraging pupils to be ready to learn.

Creative approaches are taken to engage pupils by utilising diverse resources and learning spaces (inside and out); this enables teaching staff to match learning objectives with individual abilities and meet each pupil's emotional and educational needs.

Building up personal resilience levels in pupils underpins our teaching methods. The children at Herdley Bank benefit hugely from positive encouragement.

Who we teach

The pupils at Herdley Bank tend to need further support to develop their Emotional Literacy. Here our more vulnerable pupils can excel.

We adapt the education and the learning environment to meet their specific needs. Staff have expertise in working with children with more complex needs and those with a combination of difficulties:

- Autistic spectrum condition: children displaying signs or traits of autism (with or without diagnosis)
- Asperger's or high functioning autism
- Attention and concentration difficulties
- Attachment disorders & anxiety related difficulties
- Young people deemed hard to engage due to mental/emotional health needs including 'school phobia'

We educate pupils who may have experienced childhood trauma or disruptions in their care giving and/or schooling. This often results in complex attachment difficulties and social, emotional and mental health needs.



“Quite rightly, the school has earned a reputation for turning around the lives of pupils when no one and nowhere else can. Parents are delighted by the positive difference the school has made to their children.”

Herdley Bank teaching approach

Every class has a maximum of 6 pupils and is led by a qualified teacher and learning support assistant. The specific needs of pupils are met by developing and implementing Individual Learning Plans. Many pupils have additional interventions led by various other specially skilled adults in school.


Speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are the focus of teaching and learning, with the aim to narrow any gaps our pupils may have in their knowledge and understanding.

Pupils gain self-respect and self-confidence by experiencing success. All pupils gain accreditation at a level suited to their ability.

Pupils are grouped according to emotional literacy and academic ability. Similar ability groups ensure the curriculum is delivered at a level the individual pupil needs.

The staff are experienced in working with pupils who have encountered negative experiences at previous educational settings. Positive encouragement and learning experiences are reinforced in every area of the school to enable a young person to feel included and a part of our school.

“Teachers are adept at developing personalised pathways for pupils so that they fill gaps and acquire knowledge and skills relevant to their own circumstances, while learning to work as part of a group.”



“Pupils make rapid progress across the curriculum. Pupils’ academic success is particularly strong in English and mathematics. Within a short space of time, pupils start to catch up in a range of subjects.”





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