



# PROSPECTUS

## **Introduction:**

The Shires school is situated in the village of Stretton, which is located in between the towns of Grantham and Stamford. It shares its site with a children's home and all children who attend the home also attend the school. In addition to the residential children The Shires offers 6 day places to local authorities. The address of The Shires is:-

The Shires School  
Shires Lane  
Stretton  
Oakham  
LE15 7GT

☎ 01780 411944

The Shires is part of Acorn Care and Education Ltd. However for administrative purposes it comes under the subsidiary company, Hopscotch Solutions Ltd. The registered address for Hopscotch Solutions is Ltd is the same as that of The Shires School. The company Registration number is 03449322.

The address of Acorn Care and Education Ltd is:-

1 Merchants Place  
River Street  
Bolton  
BL2 1BX

☎ 01204 558038

## **Key People:**

The Shires School is led by Marina Gough, the Director of Care and Education. She has been in post since The Shires opened 9 years ago. The Deputy Director of Care and Education is Charles Tosan and he can be contacted in the event that Marina Gough is absent from work. At January 2016 The teaching team comprises 5 qualified teachers and 3 teaching assistants. The team is managed by Jeff Harper. He has responsibility for the day to day running of the school is and is the first point of contact for parents, placing authorities and other external agencies. He works closely with the Registered Manager for care to ensure that, for those children who are residential, there is a seamless provision which promotes the 24 hour curriculum. Marina and Jeff can be contacted 52 weeks per year via email or via the main Shires' phone 01780 411944. Key email addresses are:-

[marina.gough@theshires.org.uk](mailto:marina.gough@theshires.org.uk)

[Charles.tosan@theshires.org.uk](mailto:Charles.tosan@theshires.org.uk)

[jeff.harper@theshires.org.uk](mailto:jeff.harper@theshires.org.uk)

The Proprietor of Acorn Care and Education Ltd. is the CEO Natalie-Jane MacDonald. She can be contacted during office hours via the Acorn Care and Education Ltd office phone 01204 558038 or her email address which is [n.macdonald@acorncare.co.uk](mailto:n.macdonald@acorncare.co.uk)

The Shires' Governing Body convenes at least once per term and the Chair of this group is Graham McEwan, one of Acorn Care and Education's Assistant Education Executives. The Chair of the Governors can be contacted through Acorn Care and Education's main office. His email address is [g.mcewan@acorncare.co.uk](mailto:g.mcewan@acorncare.co.uk)

### **Statement of ethos:**

The Shires School welcomes youngsters from all walks of life who have autism. The ethos of The Shires is very much characterised by a 'can do' attitude. Staff are experienced in supporting children with autism and understand how and when the environment needs to be adapted in order to maximize the potential of each individual. The Shires' approach is firmly based on a therapeutic model, supporting staff to help the youngsters make sense of the world in which they live.

Staff are well trained and appreciate that the students need to have clearly identified routines and high levels of consistency and continuity. Therefore, life at the Shires is predictable but challenging for the young people concerned, and eminently rewarding. Good planning is fundamental to the success of the school. The adherence to schedules, and the identification of key people who work in the same way, and who understand the impact of change on the young people, characterise policy and practice.

At the Shires a strong focus is placed on helping the children to become independent and to respond flexibly to the demands of the wider world. There is a real balance between supporting students and meeting their individual needs, and stretching and challenging them so that they can better access the wider community.

The school does not have a specific religious ethos. The majority of students come from Christian backgrounds, but The Shires values the multi-cultural dimension brought by students of other faiths, and actively celebrates diversity. The Shires is happy to cater for students who have different customs and traditions within an ethos that is rooted in respect for others.

### **The Admissions and Exclusions Policy of The Shires:**

The school caters for youngsters between the ages of 11 and 19. Admission to the school is usually via the local placing authority although parents can approach the school directly if they wish to do so. The first and foremost criterion for admission is that the student has autism spectrum condition (ASC). Whilst The Shires is very successful in catering for students who have learning difficulties and challenging behaviours, it is unable to accept students with complex physical disabilities because of the layout of the building.

Admission follows process of rigorous assessment. Following a referral from a placing authority, senior members of the teaching team carry out an initial assessment to determine whether The Shires is the best environment for the student. The assessment takes account of whether the proposed student would fit into the existing student population and whether there is a suitable place available that matches the proposed student in terms of age and/or ability and disposition.

The Shires' policy is not to exclude a student other than in the most exceptional of circumstances. Great care is taken at the assessment stage to ensure that the student's

needs can be met, and there is a nominal trial period of around 8 weeks before a final decision is taken about whether the placement becomes permanent. The Shires works tirelessly to ensure that each and every placement is successful, and since it opened in 2005 has not needed to exclude a student either temporarily or permanently.

### **Behaviour Policy:**

The management of behaviour in The Shires is guided by the following principles:-

- ❖ positive behaviour is reinforced
- ❖ good behaviour is rewarded in a way that is appropriate to the needs, capabilities and interests of the students
- ❖ the young people are respected and where possible involved in devising their individual behaviour management plans
- ❖ negative or inappropriate behaviour is dealt with fairly and proportionately by staff
- ❖ sanctions are only used for those students who are able to understand the notion of cause and effect
- ❖ students cannot be expected to be 'well behaved' all of the time

Staff in The Shires are trained in the use of MAPA, a BILD accredited method of Managing Actual or Potential Aggression. This method of behaviour management was chosen by the Shires because it focuses on de-escalating situations and redirecting students rather than using physical interventions. Restraint at any level is used only when there is no other alternative.

The MAPA principles centre around the management of behaviour at different levels – low, medium and high. Low interventions are largely defined as 'touch' usually on the upper arm and usually for reassurance for the student. Medium interventions include light pressure on a student's arms to guide them somewhere safe or safer. High level interventions include restricting a student's movements when to avoid doing so might lead to them causing themselves or others harm. Technically any of these interventions are deemed to be restricting a student's liberty and as such are to be recorded in the restraint log, specifying the level of MAPA holding used.

*The following policies provide additional information and are available on request from the school:-*

- behaviour management policy*
- anti-bullying policy*

### **Information about Education and Welfare Provision for Students who have EHC Plans:**

An Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is the result of an assessment of a child or young person with special educational needs and sets out the education, health and care services that the child or young person should receive. The EHC plan replaced the Statement of SEN in September 2014. Students currently possessing a Statement will be transferred to an EHC plan. The legal test for a special educational needs assessment remains the same as that under the Education Act 1996.

Unlike Statements of SEN which were only available to children and young people between the ages of 0 to 19, EHC plans will be available to children and young people from the ages of 0 to 25. The EHC plan can continue over the age of 19 if the young person remains in education or training and where more time is needed to help them achieve their learning outcomes or make a successful transition into adulthood.

All of the residential students who attend The Shires are in the process of having their statements of special educational need transferred into EHC Plans. Targets within the EHC Plans are used within both the care and education settings to ensure that all students, irrespective of their starting points, make the best possible progress.

On arrival at The Shires, staff closely scrutinise and analyse the new student's EHC plan so that he/she can be placed in the most appropriate class group. An annual review of each student's EHC plan is held in accordance with statutory requirements, and takes account of input about the student's health, welfare, education and care. A termly meeting is held to review each student's individual education plan. The meetings involve parents, teaching staff and carers from The Shires. Monitoring visits from placing authorities are welcomed, and parents have free access to visit their children so that they can assure themselves that their children are safe, happy and secure.

Students with EHC plans, like the other students, attend school on a daily basis for 38 weeks per year for 25 hours per week. Lessons and activities are based around the individual students' needs and take account of targets in their EHC plans.

### **Provision for students for whom English is an additional language:**

The Shires' students tend to have little verbal language because of their autism and learning difficulties and consequently it is very easy to accommodate and meet the needs of a student whose family language is not English. The Shires employs a wide range of staff from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Several staff have English as a second language, and The Shires can use the staff's individual linguistic strengths to communicate with families or family members who have little or no English. Currently staff can offer Polish, Czechoslovakian, Ndbele, Zulu, Shona, Tswana, Zambian, French, Urdu, Afrikaans, Ibo, and Yoruba. If the situation arose where there was no member of staff who could translate and interpret for families for whom English was not the main language, The Shires would work closely with the placing authority to find a means of ensuring effective communication, perhaps by bringing in an external translator as and when necessary.

### **Information about the curriculum:**

The Shires offers a broad and well balanced curriculum that meets statutory requirements and is relevant to the students' needs. Details of the policy can be found in *The Curriculum Policy* which is available on request.

### **How The Shires ensures the welfare, health and safety of the students:**

The Shires is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and the welfare, health and safety of students are of the utmost importance to all staff. To ensure

the students' wellbeing a number of key policies are in place which detail The Shires' procedures and systems.

*These policies are all available on request and include:-*

*safeguarding Policy  
behaviour management policy  
anti-bullying policy  
prevent policy  
health and safety policy  
first-aid policy*

### **How the school has performed in recent years:**

Currently no student at The Shires is entered for GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. However, based on rigorous assessment data, all students made outstanding progress from their individual starting points in the academic year 2014/2015.

Progress data is recorded using a commercial system B Squared. This system enables The Shires to measure even the smallest gains in learning. Teachers make regular ongoing assessments which are used to inform lessons and plan the next stage of the students' learning. Samples of work for each student are assessed on a very regular and frequent basis and are notated so that there is good evidence that progress is continuous and is occurring at the expected rate. Additionally teachers maintain records of achievement which show evidence of the students engaged in a wide range of activities.

### **How the school manages complaints:**

*The school has a complaints policy that is available on request.* In the academic year 2014/2015 no complaints were received.