

The Shires:

Progress: RAPID - ALL AREAS

"Often when we have a new pupil, they are a distressed child and we have to put that right for them first. We have to ensure they're cared for well and that they feel safe and secure. We find them activities which will make them calm and happy. Then we can support their autism and try to make life easier for them."

Our relationships with parents are key to the success we have with our children. We're not just about admitting a child at The Shires: we're also supporting the family in managing the break with their child. Sometimes it can feel almost like a bereavement for the family. If we can support the family as well as the child, we have the best chance of the placement succeeding." **Marina Gough, Director of Care & Education.**



"Parents can keep in touch as often as they like, whether it's by text, email, phone, visits or a combination of all of them. Alternatively, we can take their child for a visit home. I want all our children to learn to be as independent as possible and have as much fun as possible growing up doing the activities they most enjoy. It might be going out on trips, going swimming, horse riding, or to a theme park. We risk assess everything and take everything at an appropriate pace."

Amy Merchant, Registered Manager, The Shires.



Independent Educational Psychologist

An independent educational psychologist visits each pupil at The Shires. Their role is to observe, assess, and work with the teaching and care staff to ensure individual initiatives are in place for each student, to ensure the best progress can be made.

"Motivation is always a problem for children with autism, and The Shires works hard to ensure that the pupils are part of a small group, in class, and always kept safe. The Shires has a very good teaching staff and very good care staff who will be with the students to offer a strong supportive environment. The pupils are well looked after and occupy themselves in the best possible way."

Richard Bulkeley, Independent Ed Psych

"Highly effective relationships with families support young people to maintain contact with those important to them."

Ofsted Nov 2015

"Progress is made in all areas of young peoples' lives."

Ofsted Nov 2015

Ofsted: Inspection November 2015

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding*
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding*
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding*

*An **Outstanding** children's home provides, "Highly effective services that contribute to significant improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time." Ofsted.

Ben at The Shires

You can watch Ben's Mum tell their story on YouTube by searching the title or via this link: <https://youtu.be/Wvy8JmVeXuw>



The Shires provides specialist residential care and education for young people aged 11 to 19 who have autism, severe and moderate learning disabilities. The Post 19 provision Millfield, continues to meet the individual needs of adults up to the age of 65.



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ACORN
Better days, Better lives



Ben



"The Shires saved us when we desperately needed help. I dread to think where we would be without them."

Ben's Mum

Ben has severe autism, and his family say when he hit puberty life became extremely difficult for all of them. After a series of meltdowns and crises, his Mum realised that neither of them were safe with Ben at home in Leicestershire. A weekend of crisis was managed with the help of The Shires staff at the family's home.

Life before The Shires

"Ben was diagnosed with ASD when he was three, and has always shown challenging behaviour. As a little boy he would try to pinch and bite and I always felt it was his way of trying to communicate: his little pinches were his way of talking to me.

He has always been a very happy and sociable boy, always very affectionate and loves a cuddle. When he is happy he is a total delight, but as he got bigger things became more difficult.

Ben's always loved to go out but as he got older and became more difficult to manage, we became more and more confined and isolated and stuck at home. Our life revolved around going for a drive, coming home, having lunch and then just going out for another drive. We were very limited in what we could do.

On the whole, although he had his moments, we could cope. And then he hit puberty! When he was 13, there was a series of days when I would get home from work and Ben would attack me. It was quite severe and I was badly bruised. It had become normal for me to be bruised but it got worse. During one incident we had to call an ambulance. Ben was very distressed and started self harming.

There were three days in succession when I had to fetch him home from his previous school and he was in a terrible state. He was attacking me. The police had to be called as well as social services and CAMHS and it was a low point. I reached a point where I didn't feel I was safe to take him home and the school agreed with me.

Moving to The Shires

Ben's move to The Shires started in exceptional circumstances, with The Shires' staff looking after him for an emergency weekend at his family home.

"Social services were trying to arrange an emergency foster placement for Ben, but none could be found. There was nowhere for him to go. It was decided that Ben should stay at home for the weekend with the help of CAMHS (overnight) and The Shires' staff (during the day).

"Ben went out with two strangers for the day and what struck me was that when they came back he was with two friends: he was so comfortable with The Shires' staff.

"The following day they took him out for the day - all day - and when he came back he was happy and settled. On the Monday morning they came and collected him and he moved in to The Shires as a residential pupil.

We only got through the weekend with support at home from The Shires' staff." **Kathryn, Ben's Mum**

"I think the staff at The Shires are amazing: they really do understand him." Mum



Transformation

"The change in Ben was wonderful and it happened almost straightaway. He was very comfortable at The Shires immediately.

"Right from the start, I have visited every weekend: I spend a couple of hours on a Saturday and Sunday with Ben and take him out or spend time with him at The Shires.

"I think the staff at The Shires are amazing: they really do understand him. He's obviously very comfortable with all of the staff.

"The open space at The Shires works for him. It's a nice country house which is quiet and peaceful. Ben can be a very noisy child, but he doesn't like other people's noise. At The Shires there is always somewhere for him to go to get away from other people's noise.

"Because it's the right environment Ben was able to relax, and as soon as he relaxed, the "nice Ben" started to come back.

"On day one he came out of nappies and his toilet training happened straightaway which is amazing."

"Ben's going out again enjoying the things he used to love doing that we had to stop. He goes horse riding which he loves, he goes swimming regularly which we did when he was little and he goes out and about to all sorts of other places.

"He's matured and he's now a very happy young man."

"No one here underestimates him. Because he is non verbal, I don't think I realised how much he understands. I've learnt from the staff not to underestimate him.

"The staff encourage him to do things for himself and he's making progress in what he's learning. He's now accessing education and making progress.

"Everyone here speaks to him in a very age appropriate manner. I still find it difficult to do that - he's still my baby! - but I am learning things from the staff at The Shires. They talk to him as a teenager.

"I'm a much happier person because I know things are right for Ben. I do miss him and I wish I could have him at home but home is not the best place for him. He's so much better off at The Shires.

"They've saved us: we desperately needed help and we needed someone who could appreciate Ben for the lovely person he is when he's right. They've saved us: The Shires has made a massive difference to us.

"I really do dread to think where we would be without The Shires: this is the right place for him." **Mum Kathryn**

"We only got through the weekend with support at home from The Shires' staff." Mum



"He's now a very happy young man." Mum

