



National  
Autistic  
Society

# Autism Accreditation

Specialist Award

## **AUTISM ACCREDITATION SPECIALIST AWARD: Assessment Report**

<b>Name of Service</b>	Roman Fields School
<b>Reference Number</b>	27629
<b>Dates</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> January
<b>Lead Assessor</b>	Nikki Kennedy
<b>Moderator</b>	N/A
<b>Status prior to assessment</b>	Advanced
<b>Committee award</b>	Advanced

### **About this Assessment**

This report states key findings on how well autistic individuals are supported according to our framework of good autism practice. Evidence has been primarily obtained from observation, supplemented by evidence from interviews, a sample of support plans and information provided by the provision. If opportunities to observe has been problematic or limited greater weighting has been given to other sources of evidence. Where appropriate, feedback has been obtained from autistic people supported by the service and/or family members and this feedback has been considered in findings

## Social Communication, Interactions and Relationships

### Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Each young person has a context sheet which includes their ways of working as well as any behaviours, triggers and solutions. This information includes information on their communication and ways in which this can be supported during a lesson including how visuals should be presented for support. Where relevant to the young person context sheets include challenges with relationships and the reasoning for this, details include how to support in a learning context within the context sheet. Outcome targets and personal development goals include targets for the development of understanding interactions, developing friendships and other relationships.

These outcomes include the young person's voice and what it is that is important to them to achieve in their time at Roman Fields School. Adaptations were seen in context sheets for different subjects to reflect the different ways in which young people interact with subjects and individual teachers. There were however some inconsistencies in the ways in which the information was presented across the context sheets.

Roman Fields do not have a dedicated speech and language therapist on site; however, they are proactive in obtaining support where necessary for young people at the school. Roman Fields has links with a speech and language therapist who has supported them in implementing interventions across the school and who has delivered training to staff. In speaking to her she said that staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about the young people, taking the time to get to know them and their social communication needs and proactive about finding ways to support them.

Staff identify what relationships young people are forming and where they are experiencing challenges. Staff will share how to effectively support the young people in their relationships and what staff should monitor in the interactions between young people during the day.

Young people when interviewed shared how this was the first provision where they truly felt listened to and understood by all staff within the school. One young person said how she now "felt like she wasn't a burden." They said they valued the choices that they were given and that they felt confident in speaking to all members of staff about any concerns or ideas they might have.

Young people will have socialisation on their timetables which is an opportunity to participate in group activities with some of their peers. Young people all talked about it positively with a wide range of activities happening within these sessions as well as opportunities for work experience. Roman Fields have focused on their sex and relationships education, this is now tailored to the specific needs of the young people. SRE is a sensitive subject for many of the young people, however it is delivered with this in mind. Where young people present with significantly risky behaviour bespoke packages of support are provided with input from a range of external professionals where required.

During an interview young people highlighted the changes that were coming to the academy despite them not happening until the end of the academic year. Roman Fields have a policy of sharing all information with all the stake holders at the earliest opportunity so that everyone is aware of any changes that are coming.

#### **Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities**

All staff are considered in their use of language, time is taken to allow young people to process the information they are being given. Where non-literal language was seen to be used staff provided young people with the opportunities to explain what it means and where it would be used within the context of everyday life.

In most lesson observations staff made key vocabulary available to the young people from the start of the lesson, this was seen to be referred to throughout the lesson and emphasised by staff that the young people can and should use it in their own work. Young people were then seen to use these in their own work or descriptions of what they were doing.

The young people were seen to show confidence in making themselves understood, participating in lessons by sharing their thoughts and opinions. In some lessons the young people were seen to discuss complex topics giving each other the space to put forward their points of view and share ideas without ridicule or conflict. The young people were observed to be supportive of each other in their communication, giving each other time to put their ideas across.

During one observation a teacher was seen to provide a young person with a written note to ascertain how they were feeling. A response was written and the teacher followed this up with an explanation of what was happening to help him to continue to focus within the lesson.

During an observation of a staff debrief session the use of writing frames was discussed in relation to one young person and his reluctance to use it within one of their subjects. Staff shared the strategies that are using in enabling the young person to use them successfully in lessons.

### Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Integration into Roman Fields School is gradual and bespoke for each young person. There is a six-week plan which will be followed for all young people, however this is highly adaptable and based on conversations with both the young person and their parents. Parents stated in interviews how much they valued the consideration that was taken to the integration into the school and how the young person's needs were central to ensure a successful integration.

Roman Fields provides young people with a broad and balanced curriculum. In addition to the academic education Roman Fields provides the young people with a social education and the teaching of Self-Knowledge Curriculum as preparation for adulthood. PSHE and within self-knowledge sessions specifically address skills that young people require in their lives after Roman Fields. The school counsellor further develops these skills in session that she holds with the young people she supports. Young people are encouraged to explore what it means to be autistic as part of their personal identity. HPQ and EPQ are both project-based qualifications young people can take which can relate on their special interest.

Young people at Roman Fields will all have work experience sessions, placements try to be related to a young person's interest or career choices. Young people are aware of the skills that they are developing in their work experience placements and spoke of the benefit that these placements have in giving them the skills they will use in their futures. In addition to this there are a wide range of career and transition activities that take place over the academic year. Pupils shared how they valued the opportunity to visit and spend time on college sites both formally and informally.

A highly comprehensive leavers programme has been developed for year 11 pupils. It is a four-week programme which includes employer related learning with links from external agencies, off site team building activities, and on-site learning. They all contribute to the pupils feeling ready to transition to their new path in the new academic year.

Outcomes for young people at Roman Fields are exceptional. All young people leaving Roman Fields have a clear destination which has been carefully considered and takes account of the needs of each of the young people. Roman Fields work in collaboration with the young people and their families to ensure successful transitions into a more appropriate provision. Examples of how young people are seen to continue to progress in their chosen areas after they have left Roman Fields were shared.

Roman Fields runs a small enterprise programme which is run by the school counsellor. It aims to support the young people in their problem solving, skills, innovation, confidence and leadership. Prior to COVID the young people were selling items at market schools, this hasn't yet been reintroduced.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

Young people were seen to consistently be stretched and challenged within their lessons. Where they were showing skills and consistency in getting the right answers in a series of problems staff were quick to move them on to higher level skills and problems, whilst being mindful of scaffolding support.

The opportunities that young people are provided to problem solve within lessons is incomparable. Young people show exceptional skills in being able to problem solve, not only in their academic ability but also in real life problems, achieved through regular support and practice in safe and secure environment.

Young people at Roman Fields show high levels of independence and self-reliance, staff were seen to allow youngsters to do things independently before providing any support, supporting through open questioning allowing young people to come to their own conclusions rather providing answers. During many observations young people were observed to be provided with real life examples of problems linked to the topic or question that they were asking.



### **Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions**

Context sheets identify young people who have sensory processing difficulties; strategies to support within the classroom environment are identified.

Staff showed excellent awareness of each young person's sensory needs and the impact of them. They were able to clearly identify the sensory needs of each autistic person but also the activities that they enjoyed. Staff were able to identify a wide range of strategies that they used to support a young person's sensory needs but also how they worked with colleagues and the young person to problem solve strategies where required.

**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

The young people had access to sensory activities which they find enjoyable, many of which can be generalised in the community to support beyond Roman Fields.

Young people were seen to use a range of tools to manage their sensory needs within the school. Staff showed high levels of support and understanding in enabling the young people to use their defined strategies. During a science session one young person declared a challenge when dissecting a heart. He was given a choice to participate in the session with options provided for tools to support them in being able to join in the given activity. Staff showed huge empathy for the young person and empowered them to participate effectively.

Young people were not seen to experience sensory distress during the assessment. Where anxiety was displayed young people and staff worked together to recognise the causes for this and opportunities were offered to enable the young person to self-regulate.

All of the teaching environments within Roman Fields are low arousal, any stimulus is relevant to the subject are being taught.

The outdoor environment provides young people with a range of opportunities for sensory regulation should physical activities be the preferred method of regulation.





**Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions**

The young people who attend Roman Fields all have complex mental health conditions and emotional wellbeing is of paramount importance to the young people and their families. Staff work hard to get to know each of the young people at the school to develop close and trusting relationships so that the young people know they can approach them for support. They go above and beyond in their support for the young people. This includes holiday activities which keep the young people engaged in education through the holiday period.

Where appropriate young people will be entered into examinations early, when they are ready. This enables them to have early success helping them to boost confidence and self-esteem which can carry them through to the rest of their exams.

Roman Fields has a non-exclusion, hands off policy. Sanctions are specific to the behaviour displayed with a focus on restorative work and support for the young person to understand consequences of their behaviour, developing strategies to enable the young person to use a different approach in the future. Emotional well-being of young people is paramount and a well-being curriculum has been developed to support this. This is achieved through mentoring, preparing for adulthood and everyday well-being support.

Counselling is a key approach used within the school. The school counsellor focuses on empowering the young people to take responsibility for their personal growth and well-being. The counsellor guides the young person through a process of self-discovery, self-actualisation and problem solving the student's strengths, interests and needs are emphasised and they are encouraged to set their own goals.

Roman Fields are proactive in developing relationships with external professionals for the benefit of the young people within the school to encourage a multi-professional approach. Roman Fields have the benefit of a mental health practitioner working with them. She provides support and workshops for parents especially around times of transition when anxiety is really high. Parents are provided with the tools that they need to manage their own anxieties and empower them to support the young person with their anxieties around transition. The mental health practitioner will also support the school in completing referrals for Tier 3 CAHMS support. She works in collaboration with the school, parents and the young person themselves.

In an interview with parents, they shared how Roman Fields have developed the confidence over time of their young people, they were seeing the impact of this in the home. One parent shared how their child was now able to sleep lying down and in their own bed because their anxieties have been reduced so much, the parent felt this was a happy outcome of the work carried out by the staff at Roman Fields School.

Case studies provided by Roman Fields provide compelling evidence of the positive outcomes achieved by autistic young people as a result of the support they have achieved.



**Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:**

Young people present as calm and stated that they felt safe within school for the first time in their education. Proactive strategies are in place to support the young people in regulating their emotions and managing their levels of anxiety. Where young people were seen to show early signs of anxiety staff were seen to take the time to establish the reasons for this and support them with explanations, strategies and approaches of support.

Young people are consistently provided with choices, about their daily support, education and future. Within this they are treated with dignity, respect and status which means for the first time they felt like they weren't a burden in education. This has led to pupils who have developed strong sense of self, developed confidence and self-esteem. Roman Fields often achieve this within very short periods of time as often young people do not join the school until year 10 or year 11.

Young people at Roman Fields are able to choose their own subjects, after core subjects and their timetables. It was observed during the assessment that lessons enabled the young people to feel stretched and challenged, participating in activities which are meaningful that keep them engaged. There were often examples where the learning was linked back to real life so that the young people to see the purpose of what they were studying.

Young people regularly feel a sense of achievement and completion, with regular praise observed during the lessons when young people do well. Additionally, staff were observed to move young people on in their activity, not just completing their activities because it is what is expected but moved on to a more complex challenge.

Roman Fields have high levels of retention of their staff, the average service length is approximately 15 years. This means that the staff team within the school is consistent. A recent survey of staff was extremely positive and staff reported that the young people are safe within the school and that they are confident in managing behaviour of the young people.



## Feedback from Autistic People

Young people interviewed were highly complementary of the school and staff. 88% of the young people that responded to the survey felt that the support they were given was good. The remaining 12% felt that the support they were given was good only sometimes. 82% of the young people felt that the staff understood them and their needs, with 18% again feeling that this only happened sometimes. 71% of young people share that the staff listen to how they want to be helped and 29% stating that this only happens sometimes. Comments provided to the survey can be seen below:

*"I have only been at the school since September and I love it and I have settled in well and am really enjoying it and have made friends. Everyone is really supportive to me and I feel very luck to have been given a place there. I feel very secure."*

*"I love it here."*

*"This is the best school I have ever been to. The staff have really taken time to get to know me as an individual and I feel that my voice is heard and they genuinely do everything that they can to support me. The school have got outside people in to work with me and support me I feel like I am making progress now."*

## Feedback from Families, Carers and/or Advocates

Families interviewed were highly complementary about the school and the support which has been provided for both themselves and their young person. 100% of families surveyed stated that the support that their relative is given was either always good or mostly good. This result was also seen for the understanding that staff have for the young person's needs. 91% of families reported that the way in which they were kept informed and asked their views about support was good, however 9% of families reported that it was okay but could be better. 95% of families report that the advice they get from the service on how to help their relative is good, whilst 4% stated that it was ok but could be better.

*"Without exception, every member of staff shows good understanding of ASD and respects my child as an individual with his own set of challenges. I believe my child can achieve his potential at this school."*

*"My son went from spending all day in his bed, with no self-care or motivation with no confidence and low mood, unable to attend mainstream school to a happy well-rounded teenager. He just needed the care and expertise that he was given from the Roman Fields staff. We will be eternally grateful. All autistic young people should be able to access this level of care. More recently my son has again suffered with low mental health and struggled to attend school or participate fully in lessons. The team were wonderful once again, supporting him throughout both in the way he accessed the setting and way his mental health was approached. I can't praise this setting highly enough."*

*"I strongly believe that there should be more teachers, schools and support workers just like Roman Fields. For my daughter to go into school and feel understood, accepted and supported is amazing!"*

*"My daughter feels if there is a change she would like prior warning."*

*"Staff are extremely kind and the environment at Roman Fields is calm and feels safe to my child who often feels unsafe in many settings. Their individual needs are met and they receive the support they need. My child is happy at school and they say they can access learning at Roman Fields which they weren't able to do in previous settings. My child receives the emotional and social support they need."*

*"The school has been a life saver for my son. He has thrived, grown in confidence and is doing well academically. The staff are beyond amazing. They will do anything in their power to input adjustments so that the young person feels safe, listened to, understood and supported. A recent comment from my son 'I feel the least autistic when I'm at school', what he means is he doesn't feel judged, anxious or lonely!"*

*"The school is a great setting for Autistic children, with very individualised approach to each child. The area of improvement for school would be to find better ways to support children who heavily mask and their needs are less visible."*

*"Thank you for your ongoing support. Everyone from the school shows care and consideration for our child's needs. Normally - everyone would be over the top but not in this case. It is important to say that this encompasses both the support staff as well as the teaching staff. All staff go over and beyond what we would expect and this is greatly appreciated. It is expressed in all the small things which actually mean a great deal. Thank you. Your work not only helps our child but relieves the stress of caring for an extremely vulnerable young person as we know it is truly shared and we know that when they are with you they are safe and cared for in multiple ways. This is huge for us as parents and a great relief. The value of your work is beyond measure as you have helped bring our young person from being on the brink of losing the will to live. They have grown in confidence and their sense of security has been rebuilt. This alone would be amazing but they have also re-found their love of learning. They had lost this and their desire to do well. But thanks to Roman Fields this natural desire has been revitalised. Hopefully they will be able to grasp the opportunity and will achieve their potential. But even if they don't because the pressure of fulfilling expectations can be overwhelming - we know there will be a back-up plan and things will not unravel just because the academic results are not achieved in line with expectations."*

*"The support and care that my daughter and my family receive from the school is something that you can't really describe!"*

*"Roman Fields is a fantastic school but sometimes communication channels don't appear to be clear."*

*"Compared to mainstream school, the support my child receives at this school is fantastic because they understand her difficulties and do their best to help her, rather than treating her as though she is a problem. Her mentor responds quickly to my communications and has formed an excellent relationship with her."*

*"The report that RF have given to me since my sons integration into the school has been fantastic. I cannot thank and praise all enough. My son has really developed etc and come out of his shell since joining and for all this I cannot thank the school enough. Thank you to all."*

*"Staff have a thorough understanding of ASD in general and the way it impacts my child. This knowledge is current and comprehensive allowing them to plan support as well provide reactive strategies and support where necessary. Staff are confident in their understanding of ASD and they listen to my child's views and are willing to try new ways to achieve the best outcomes for my child."*

*"Roman Fields is an excellent school. The staff are wonderful and I am grateful every day that my daughter is able to go to school there."*

*"Because of the size and structure, the school is able to provide the right level of support that has enabled my child to re-engaged after several years out of education - not just academically but also from a social and mental health perspective."*

*"The school have been outstanding in how they have supported my child and in particular with how they communicate with me as a parent as well as with my child. I feel listened to and that changes happen as a result of our discussion. They have a very positive and accommodating attitude."*

*"We have always been so impressed with, and extremely grateful for, the level of support and care given by the provision. They remain flexible, positive, and hugely supportive of both the young people they look after and their families."*

*"The care and thought that staff at school have put into getting to know my daughter, and into making sure that she feels settled and happy, has been phenomenal. Her integration into Roman Fields was carefully thought through and went at the gradual pace that she needed, and I had regular communication with the school throughout. My daughter had struggled with school from an early age, and had been out of school almost entirely for the 3 years prior to starting at Roman Fields. She is now attending full-time, is achieving academically and really enjoys school. She has also made connections with and trusts staff, and talks about them with genuine affection. Roman Fields is an incredible school, and I am very grateful for all that they have done."*

*"My daughter feels happy and supported at Roman Fields. The team listen to her opinions and she trusts them. She is much less anxious and as she says finally learning again. She has been encouraged to self-advocate when she's having a hard day and is now learning how to regulate and manage her sensory difficulties. The team are fantastic and we are very appreciative of all they do to support her."*

## Summary of the Assessment

Topic	What the provision does particularly well	Development
<p><b>Social Communication, Interactions and Relationships</b></p>	<p>The SRE curriculum is highly comprehensive and bespoke to the needs of the young people they support, this has had a significant impact on the development of the young people and their understanding of SRE.</p> <p>Roman Fields proactively support the communication needs of young people to ensure that they have the best life chances.</p> <p>Young people at Roman Fields feel that they are listened to by the staff and that they are for the first time not a burden in education.</p> <p>Staff were observed to be considerate in their use of language that allows for processing time for young people and develops their use and understanding of language.</p>	<p>Roman Fields could consider how they share their SRE this with a wider audience to have an impact on how SRE is delivered in schools.</p>
<p><b>Functional Skills and Self- Reliance</b></p>	<p>Transition into Roman Fields School is highlighted as an area of strength by families interviewed. It is clearly thought out and takes into consideration the voice and needs of the young person and their family. It is highly personalised to ensure a successful transition into the provision.</p> <p>Work experience and careers education at Roman Fields is a real strength, it takes into consideration the aspirations of the young people and provides them with real opportunities of what a working life is like.</p> <p>Roman Fields runs a highly comprehensive transition and leavers programme which provides all the young people with the skills necessary to be successful in their journeys after Roman Fields.</p> <p>Roman Fields School provides young people with exceptional problem-solving opportunities, regularly</p>	<p>Now that we are post COVID Roman Fields could consider reintroducing the opportunities that young people had in selling their enterprise products at local market stalls.</p>

	stretching and challenging them within lessons ensuring that they are consistently developing and learning new skills.	
<b>Sensory Experiences</b>	<p>Staff at Roman Fields have a full knowledge and understanding of each young person's sensory needs. This enables them to consistently and effectively offer support and understanding where it is required to ensure that each young person experiences limited anxiety and distress.</p> <p>Roman Fields school is a low arousal environment with plenty of indoor and outdoor spaces that are effectively used for the regulation of young people.</p>	
<b>Emotional Wellbeing</b>	<p>Relationships between the young people and staff is extraordinary, it has meant that there are highly trusting relationships that have been developed.</p> <p>There are extensive approaches to supporting the well-being of young people and managing behaviour. This has led to a very calm environment and personal development of young people to ensure their safety in w world outside of the Roman Fields.</p> <p>Roman Fields are exceedingly proactive in their recognition of needing further support for young people. This ensures that external agencies are brought in at the earliest possible opportunity, maximising the time they have available to support a young person.</p> <p>Roman Fields staff go above and beyond in their support of young people, ensuring that even after their transition out of school they continue to be successful and where this is not the case working with a young person and their families to find an appropriate solution.</p>	
	88% of the young people that responded to the survey felt that the support they were given was good.	



<p><b>Feedback from Autistic People</b></p>	<p>82% of the young people felt that the staff understood them and their needs</p>	
<p><b>Families, Carers and/or Advocates</b></p>	<p>Parents interviewed all shared how they valued the gradual and bespoke transition that was afforded them at the start of their journey with the school.</p> <p>100% of families surveyed stated that the support that their relative is given was either always good or mostly good. This result was also seen for the understanding that staff have for the young person's needs.</p>	
<p><b>Other</b></p>	<p>Roman Fields are proactive in providing support for young people, using creativity and out of the box thinking to support their needs.</p> <p>The positive outcome achieved for young people attending Roman Fields is exceptional. Roman Fields put young people on a path of achievement, with destination and success data up to 5 years after they have left the school.</p>	<p>Context sheets were seen to be inconsistent in their presentation across the school. Although the format was largely the same there were some variances in the way the information was included.</p>



## Committee feedback

### To be completed by the Quality Manager

It is with great delight that I am able to confirm that the Autism Accreditation Award Committee have awarded the above registration an Advanced specialist Award. The Committee found evidence from the Accreditation report that:

- Staff have a working knowledge of evidence-informed approaches associated with good autism practice.
- They can adapt these specialist approaches so that support is personal-centred and tailored to individual abilities, interests, preferences and challenges. Staff are highly creative and think outside of the box to support student's needs and build upon their strengths.
- Adaptions are made to the environment to support individual well-being and self-reliance.
- Each autistic young person develops skills and confidence in communicating with others and engaging in a range of rewarding social activities.
- Each autistic young person develops skills and confidence in carrying out tasks independently and in being empowered to make their own leading to them having greater control and autonomy in their lives.
- Each autistic young person enjoys an increasing range of sensory experiences whilst developing regulation strategies to help them avoid sensory overload.
- Support enables autistic young people to take part in activities which are purposeful and engaging and which promotes their emotional well-being and social inclusion.
- Proactive and preventative strategies are employed to help each autistic young person avoid anxiety or distress and to help them understand and regulate their emotions.
- Relationships between the young people and staff are excellent.
- The positive outcomes achieved by young people attending Roman Fields is exceptional.
- All parents and a clear majority of young people rate the support received always or mostly good.

Congratulations for demonstrating standards of excellence in supporting autistic people.

## Next Steps

### To be completed by the Quality Manager

#### What happens next

Once you have agreed terms and conditions you can expect to receive your certificate and logo. You can continue with your current Autism Accreditation plan or amend it by increasing or reducing the number of consultation visits. Please contact your consultant to discuss your options.

We recommend that you undergo another assessment in three years' time to show that you have maintained standards of excellent and to highlight new initiatives and developments. You can though request an earlier reassessment.

As an Advanced Service you can now apply for Beacon Status. This is awarded to provisions which in addition to providing consistent high quality support to autistic people, share their knowledge and understanding of good practice with families, external professionals and the local community.

#### Applying for Beacon Status

Application forms can be obtained from your consultant and should be returned to the Autism Accreditation Quality Manager at [Stephen.dedridge@nas.org.uk](mailto:Stephen.dedridge@nas.org.uk).

The Panel can award Beacon status if the application form provides clear evidence that the provision carries out exceptional work that has had a significant impact on how:

- families understand relatives who are autistic.
- other professionals understand and respond to autistic people, including helping them to appreciate the personal experiences of autistic people.
- the local community or members of the public understand and respond to autistic people and which promotes the social inclusion of autistic people.

The application form should also explain how the provision works in partnership with autistic people and can provide details of awards or other examples of external recognition.

Beacon status will be withheld if the provision requires improvement in meeting statutory requirements



