

Blossom Lower School
and Upper House



From parents:

“The children and parents of Blossom House are so fortunate that there is your school.”

“Stephen has blossomed and I know he's in the right school.”

“Theodore has certainly 'bloomed' whilst being at Blossom House. An enormous difference from a year ago! Thank you for the amazing support.”



INTRODUCTION

Blossom House is a specialist school for children aged 3 – 16 years of age with speech, language and communication difficulties. Although many of the children have some associated difficulties such as fine motor problems or poor organisational skills, they are all within the normal range of intelligence.

The school is situated in a quiet residential road near Wimbledon Common, in newly refurbished buildings with purpose-built classrooms, playgrounds and a multipurpose sports hall.

Blossom House was established in 1989 when the first language-centred nursery groups were opened. The groups were run on the philosophy that children need both 'language to learn' and 'to learn language' through exposure to a range of experiences that enable them to master other skills. In 1993 Blossom House extended its original brief and started to provide full-time education for those children who continued to require a highly structured, supportive, language-based curriculum. Communication is fundamental to learning and in the majority of children the skills that are required to become good communicators develop spontaneously and effortlessly. There are, however, a group of children for whom the acquisition of these vital skills is a real problem and this number appears to be growing. We can rarely pin-point the cause of a speech and language disorder and although research is being undertaken, we suspect that we may never know the exact reason for these children's failure to develop speech and language.

Blossom House provides an integrated programme of learning in a caring and highly supportive environment. Self-esteem and confidence are crucial to success and many of our children arrive at Blossom House with a very poor self-image and little belief in any ability they do have. A positive behavioural approach encompasses every part of school life so that all acceptable and appropriate behaviours are rewarded, and unacceptable and/or inappropriate behaviours are ignored as far as possible.

At Blossom House the children follow the National Curriculum although some areas will need modification to take account of specific learning difficulties. All the children in the full-time school learn keyboard skills as soon as they are developmentally ready, with the aim that they will be able to use a laptop computer for some of their work later on. Speech and language therapy is an integral part of the daily curriculum, and each child has access to a speech and language therapist either individually or in a small group sessions. Physiotherapy, occupational therapy and arts therapies are also key areas of the curriculum and every child will have the opportunity to have both individual and/or group sessions if the need is there.

Blossom House has a unique atmosphere created by dedicated, highly competent and wonderfully caring staff. Specific strengths are acknowledged and weaknesses supported, so that each child "blossoms" and has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential, whether that is remaining with us or returning to mainstream education.



THE AIMS OF THE SCHOOL ARE THREEFOLD:

1. To provide a communication centred environment where children with a range of speech, language and communication difficulties are supported in all areas of their learning.

The curriculum is planned so that children have the maximum opportunity both to understand and to use language in an appropriate way. Language is facilitated as the children become actively involved in all tasks. In this way meaning becomes attached to language as well as language becoming attached to meaning.

2. To provide a highly skilled team of specialist therapists, teachers and support staff who can work with the children in a range of learning environments.

All the children receive some specific one-to-one input, some small group input (between two and four children) and some larger group input.

3. To provide support and advice for parents.

Most parents need support, help and advice at some time and for parents of children who have difficulties in the area of communication, this support is even more necessary.

At Blossom House parents and carers are always encouraged to come into school and discuss their child. Staff are usually available at the beginning and end of the day to discuss problems or difficulties, there are feedback evenings every term, and regular parents evenings which provide insight into a range of communication difficulties and associated problems.

“ The school is successful in developing pupils’ self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. ”

(Ofsted)



THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Every child in the foundation stage is provided with a broad and balanced curriculum, including the Foundation Stage Curriculum, which is adapted and modified to meet each child's needs. All staff provide sufficient time and individual attention to all the children, to ensure that they have understood what is being taught and to avoid them learning from their own misunderstandings.

NURSERY

The nursery group consists of children with a range of speech, language and communication difficulties so that there may be children with articulation and phonological difficulties working alongside children with developmental language disorders and those with pragmatic problems. Experience has shown that as long as the nature of each child's difficulties is clearly identified the same tasks can be used for a variety of purposes. Each child will therefore have a different set of criteria to meet for any particular activity. Children who attend the nursery spend at least two sessions a week at Blossom House and can attend every day (i.e. five sessions) if this is felt to be appropriate.

For children who attend part-time, close links are made with their other nurseries and playgroups so that everyone is aware of how each child is progressing.

The nursery can take up to ten children at any one time and there is a staff:child ratio of at least 1:3 and often 1:2.

RECEPTION

Reception takes children who are rising 5 and is a good transition between the explicit teaching environment of the nursery and the structured environment of the lower school. The reception class may sometimes have a combination of reception and year 1 children and therefore the curriculum can cover both the Early Learning Goals (Foundation Stage Curriculum) and National Curriculum targets. In the mornings the children are taught literacy, maths and speaking and listening and have daily structured play sessions in the afternoons as well as science, humanities and art.

The children who transfer from our nursery into reception do so the term they turn five.



KEY STAGE ONE TO FOUR

THE LOWER SCHOOL

Blossom Lower School takes children to the end of year 6. For a few children, a move to mainstream education may be appropriate during their time in the Lower School. For those children a careful transition plan is put in place. Children can start at any stage during the year so that it is quite acceptable for a child to start mid-term if this is felt to be the most appropriate course of action.

THE UPPER SCHOOL

Our secondary provision, Upper House, caters for children aged between 11 and 16 and is based on four important principles:

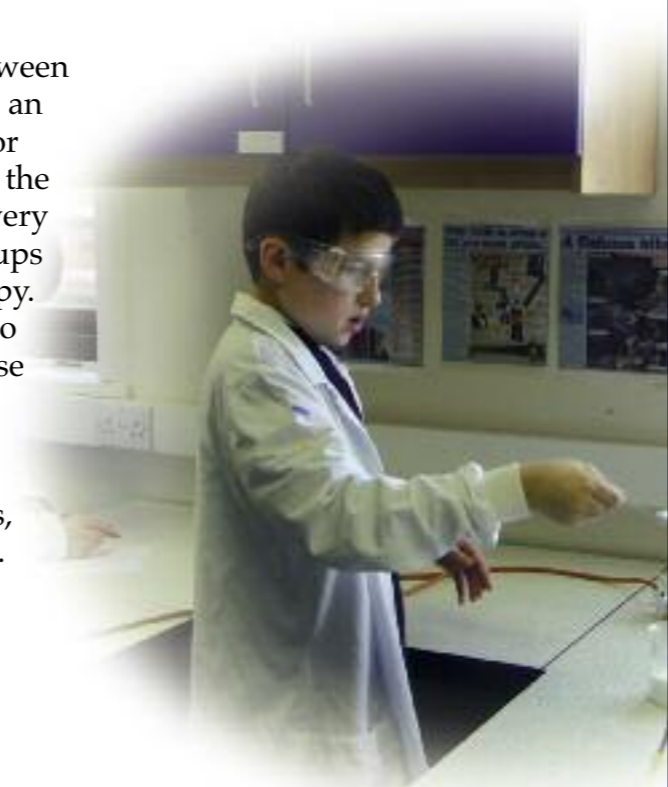
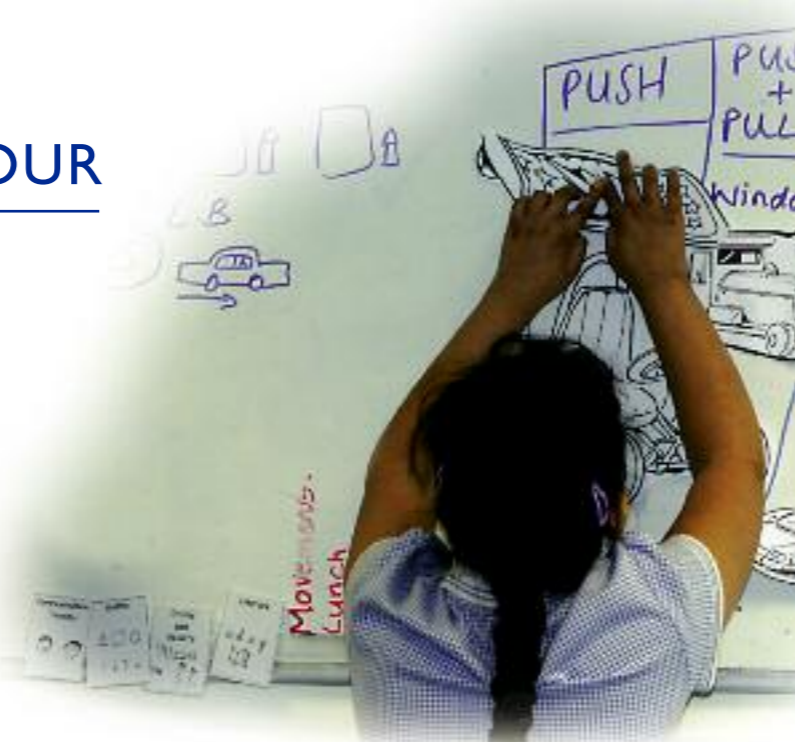
- **Expectations:** establishing high expectations for all pupils and setting challenging targets for them to achieve;
- **Progression:** strengthening the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and ensuring progression in teaching and learning across Key Stage 3 and 4;
- **Engagement:** promoting approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation;
- **Self awareness:** helping pupils to acknowledge their strengths and difficulties and further develop those attributes that will make them successful in the future.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The children at Blossom House work in groups of between six and ten children. They have a group leader, either an experienced teacher or therapist, who is responsible for their day to day welfare and who provides them with the continuity they require at the beginning and end of every day. The children are divided into smaller ability groups for literacy, numeracy and speech and language therapy. Staff:pupil ratios are approximately 1:3. All pupils also belong to one of seven 'Houses' and the Head of House acts as the main liaison between school and home. The timetable is planned according to each group's specific needs and consequently throughout the day the children will see a range of teachers and therapists, all of whom have their own particular skills to impart.

“ A broad and balanced curriculum that is suitable for all pupils in the school... ”

(Ofsted)



ACADEMIC CURRICULUM AND THERAPIES

Pupils at Blossom Lower School and Upper House follow the National Curriculum, which has been specially adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils. All classes are multi-sensory, there is much over-teaching and each child's learning style is taken into consideration.

All the children who are accepted at Blossom House will have a speech, language and/or communication impairment. The very nature of their difficulties will inevitably impact on their ability to access the curriculum which means that its delivery will need to be differentiated in terms of pace, style and content. Our Literacy and Numeracy curricula enable the children to progress at their own pace to ensure that they can continue to lay down solid foundations. The children also receive highly specialised support throughout all other areas of the curriculum. Whilst providing a high level of individual and small group specialist support for the children, our aim is to help them develop the skills that are necessary to promote independent learning.

Each child has an Individual Education Plan which addresses his or her individual educational needs and requirements. The school has a multidisciplinary approach to the children's educational, emotional and physical needs. Many of our staff have an additional qualification in specific learning difficulties. Working alongside the teachers and their assistants are speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and a physiotherapist.

In the Upper House a range of examination and qualification options are provided. GCSEs, Entry Level Qualifications and keyskills (Communication, Application of Number and ICT) cater for the range of abilities in KS4. Alongside this, the ASDAN programme provides the opportunity for pupils to develop their life skills through a certified and well-recognised qualification in the Bronze and Silver Awards. Vocational qualifications and practical courses are on offer in a range of subjects including food technology, ICT, D&T and the arts. ICT and/or touch-typing lessons take place throughout the school and computer skills are encouraged as an integral part of the curriculum. Secondary pupils have use of personal laptops at school.

Art, music and drama therapists and an integrative child psychotherapist work with pupils for whom this is thought likely to be beneficial, helping them to develop a sense of identity, self esteem and creativity. The children are encouraged by therapy to interact and communicate with other people, and it helps them focus on the emotional aspect of their difficulties using a psycho-therapeutic approach.



ART, MUSIC AND SPORT

The arts play an important part in the curriculum of Blossom House. The children are encouraged to experiment with many different media. There are trips to art galleries, and two drama productions each year in which all pupils have the opportunity to be involved.

All children have group music lessons and many have individual instrumental tuition with a professional musician who runs a lively department with regular informal concerts. Pupils have recorded their own CDs.

The school promotes a wide range of physical opportunities and encourages the pupils to understand the benefits of physical activity. Most pupils have PE every day. We have a large, multipurpose sports hall, and have been awarded the 'Activemark' by Sport England. Among the sports on offer are football, hockey, basketball, cricket, athletics, cross-country running and gymnastics and everyone gets a chance to participate in team games. We organise matches against local schools, and the children are taken on regular outings to pursue activities such as rock climbing, bowling, kayaking, archery. There are sports days and inter-house tournaments, and multi-activity holiday courses.

The school runs a comprehensive programme of after-school clubs including art, dance, drama, computers and a choice of sports. The older children go on camping trips, on a residential trip in year 6, and in year 8 the children go to Paris. The school participates in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Sports Leader Award.

PASTORAL CARE AND DISCIPLINE

The pastoral care of the children is the responsibility of all staff. Blossom House promotes a set of simple and clear school rules for everyone to follow. In the Nursery, Lower School and Upper House, the ethos is about positive reinforcement but there are clear consequences for unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour and these are carefully talked through with every pupil. The emotional issues that many of these children have are taken very seriously and dealt with as sensitively as possible. Our highly experienced staff have a true understanding and empathy for those affected by language and communication impairments and specific learning difficulties. They make use of a range of strategies tailored to each pupil's needs.

“Seamless relationship between teachers and staff who provide therapies”

(Ofsted)



STAFF

All the staff are chosen for their enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment. All teachers and therapists in the school are fully qualified and there is a full programme of in-service training.

Our staff also liaise closely with professionals outside the school as many of our children are seeing, or have seen a number of other specialists. The school has an in-house Educational Psychologist who can assess pupils and advise where necessary, and access to a General Practitioner specialising in paediatrics who gives advice on medical problems.

FUTURE PLACEMENT

As the children move through the nursery or school, their progress and development are constantly monitored and reviewed.

As mentioned previously, there are a few children who are ready to cope with the mainstream after a relatively short period of time i.e. two to three terms, whereas other children will need considerably longer in a specialised environment and may stay in the nursery for up to two years or the school for several years. For some children a mainstream education may ultimately not be suitable or appropriate. If this is the case Blossom House makes sure that parents receive support and advice to enable them to select the future provision that is most appropriate to their child's needs, whether it is to transfer to the upper school or move to another school.

All parents are encouraged to discuss their child's future educational plans so that everyone is involved and the child's transition is as smooth as possible.

For those children in our secondary school, the Connexions service as well as other professionals are involved in the post 16 transition plan.



ASSESSMENT

If you are interested in sending your child to Blossom House an initial appointment will be made when you and your child can come and meet us. If at this initial meeting we feel that we may be able to meet your child's needs, he/she will spend three consecutive days here with his/her peer group. This will give us the opportunity to collate information about your child as well as to observe him/her in an informal way.

After this assessment we will be able to establish whether or not your child is likely to be suitable for Blossom House and you will know whether or not you would be happy with the type of input that we provide. In addition reports from other professionals concerned will be carefully considered so that a complete profile of the child's communication and learning abilities is established.

A written report is provided and there is always an opportunity to discuss the report in more detail should it be necessary. If it was felt that your child's needs could not be appropriately met at Blossom House the assessment fee will not be charged. The assessment fee will be included with the first term's fees.

We hope that this prospectus has given you a 'feel' for Blossom House.

If you need to know more about the school please telephone us so that we can give you the information you require and then organise a time to come and meet us.

Joey Burgess - Principal.



“ Meticulous, ongoing assessment... ”
(Ofsted)

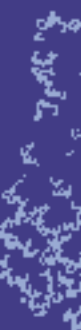
“ The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding ”
(Nursery Ofsted)

From children:

“ To Everyone at Blossom, I am going to miss you all so much. I love this school so much. I have achieved such a lot and feel full of confidence. ”
(Simon, 11)

“ When I came to this school I was smiling cheek to cheek. I was so happy not to be different. I felt comforted. ”
(Josh, 11)

“ At my old school I didn't know lots but now I do. ”
(Michael, 9)





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