

Excellence in Special Schools

Avalon School and Meadow View Farm School

What the Judges Said

We were impressed by the raising of funds, unintentionally at first, through clubs and projects. Very impressive approach, well done.

Context

Avalon School is a small Special School in Street, Somerset. We have 51 students across KS3,4 and 5 with a wide range of abilities and needs. We employ 9 teachers and 58 support staff.

Ofsted (January 2018) tells us we are a warm and welcoming school where pupils enjoy their school experience. They also tell us we are a Good school.

Avalon Special School is focused on ensuring our young people are prepared for adulthood. We do this through the development of academic, personal and social, communication and independence skills. Working to ensure, where appropriate, students move towards achieving achieve paid employment, independent living, good health, friendships, relationships and inclusion in their community.

Our partnership with parent/carers, together with a flexible, personalised approach, are key to enabling our pupils to achieve as highly as they do. We have been working with parents /carers helping them to describe what a good life looks like for their child/young person and identifying steps towards this.

This work has included the advancement of careers strategies and further development of very exciting programmes for students, offering a diverse range of opportunities, including increasing work experience opportunities and increased engagement with businesses, as well as the development of enterprise activity for students.

Our pupils tell us that they are happy at school, and they enjoy their learning.

Our parents regularly tell us this too.

'My daughter' is settling in to the sixth form and has much ambition.

'My daughter' loved going to the pop up shop and always came home telling me how much she enjoyed it.

'My daughter' is very enthusiastic and keen to come to school.

'My daughter' loves school and the activities she is doing.

I have been aware of her confidence growing, and her attempts to start and complete tasks independently improving.

'My daughter' clearly enjoys the interaction with everyone around her at school. She is happy coming to school, which is important to us. Since arriving at Avalon, 'my daughter' has improved her interaction and interest with others.

'My son' is coming on leaps and bounds in his work at school – he has learnt more at this school.

'My son is' very enthusiastic about all his learning and keen to join in.

'My son' is more resilient now

His speech has definitely improved

'My son' has made a huge improvement in understanding English without rephrasing and learning from his peers. He is starting to interact with his peers and likes Avalon school.

He enjoys the practical aspects of school and the community based learning.

'My son' was very enthusiastic about the STEM workshop – he was able to recount the activity.

'My son' looks forward to going to school and appears to be engaging well in a wide range of activities. He has done some lovely art work and there is good communication between school and home.

'My son' enjoys school. I think it works well that he has a room to go to where he feels safe.

We are proud of our school and proud of all of our pupils' achievements.

Entry

To enable our students to realise their potential, it is important we are outward facing, providing each student with personalised opportunities to be active members of their community. By using, and improving, local services and facilities.

Work experience placements are varied and range from working in a bakery, elderly persons home, farm, café and supermarket. Where many skills have been learned, together with specific skills relevant to the range of businesses and work place routines.

We have developed the Lunch Bunch pop up Café, in three village halls in local rural communities with no shop or café facilities, providing residents with an affordable meal and a social activity within their local community. The café serves meals baked by pupils.

Volunteering, included working to improve a local nature reserve, the overhaul of a local community garden, litter picking in the local community.

These opportunities have had considerable impact on developing young people's confidence, independence and aspirations for adulthood. Their communication and customer service skills, applied in these real life/work place contexts, are, continuing to develop through these valuable opportunities.

Enterprise is a key part of the curriculum, where students are involved from design to development of high quality products. Our enterprise curriculum and products have been held up as leading the way across Somerset Special Schools.

"The design, quality and range of products being created by Avalon School is absolutely stunning and hugely popular with a wide range of customers. The work the pupils are producing has been absolutely instrumental in changing perceptions about what our young people are capable of and is proof of what is possible when the support and belief is in place." Dr Julie Young

A lunchtime art enterprise club has had unexpected results! The paintings produced were so outstanding that staff began commissioning paintings from them. It soon became clear that the students could not keep up with demand! The result is now an extensive product range from original artwork, Limited Edition canvasses, post card size prints, tote bags to mugs.

The students' art has been exhibited in various settings across the county. In one week there was an order of over £1,000 from an exhibition ranging from the sale of an original at £300 to framed prints at £10.

The feedback has included:

"The paintings give so much pleasure and every time I look at them I see something else, but always something incredibly beautiful. They bring a peace and tranquillity too.....truly incredible"

"Thank you again and what a pleasure it is to have the opportunity to now own one of these prints. The back story is truly amazing and shows just what you can do with support, ambition, pride, and talent!"

Profits from sales of the prints are contributing towards the school's hydrotherapy pool, which we believe is a very positive example of those with SEND, raising money to fund provision and not just being in receipt of Charity.

The most recent sales venue had been in pop up shop in Taunton which was an amazing achievement of partnership working. It included: Young Somerset, Taunton Dean Borough Council and Somerset County Council, Humberts letting agents, Castle Building & Construction Ltd, sen.se schools and parent/carers. The shop called Sen.se-SATIONAL! As a school we sold £2,210.80 of products made by students. This was 45% of the overall sales totals.

The range of high-quality products made by our students from across the school demonstrated a greater range than our other special schools and included: soaps, bath bombs, potpourri, dog biscuits, bird feeders all which received positive consumer feedback

We are now supporting fellow Special Schools in the development of their product ranges.

As a school we have been very active in our marketing of our products and explore range of sales opportunities. Most recently we have seized the opportunity to display eight originals of our Art Work in an exhibition and art auction. The organisation running the exhibition have used an image of our student's art work on the official invitation.

We are now further investing in equipment to enable our students to be more hands on in production and enable greater profit, beginning with a mug printing press. The purchase will enable students to get more involved with the whole business from ordering, design, production, marketing and sales. This is a fantastic way for skills they need to be learning to be learnt in a real-world environment which prepares our students better for their adult life.

- Our turnover for this financial year is £8,265.58.
- Last financial year our turnover was £709.68 = 1,164 % increase from last financial year
- Profit this year = £3949.63
- Last year's profit = £279.03 = 1,415% increase from last financial year