

Excellence in Special Schools and Alternative Provisions Cortani Academy

Our Alternative Provision Academy provides education for students in key stages 2, 3 and 4 who struggle in mainstream school. We have a maximum of 40 students on roll all with SEMH needs. Over half of our students are FSM and PP. Our relationship-based curriculum ensures the needs of all students are catered for. All staff have been trained in a trauma informed approach, including emotion coaching and restorative practice, which is embedded within our working practice and our policies reflect this.

As well as SEMH needs, the majority of our students have additional complex needs which are often undiagnosed when they arrive with us. Most of our students require an EHCP which is a priority if this has not been awarded before they come on roll. At the moment, we have a large number of students with autism which we take into account when planning our support. Our provision takes into account sensory needs alongside this and practical support is provided as necessary.

All of our students have had a negative experience of education in the past and often trauma within their personal lives too. We gain a comprehensive history of each student to ensure we are able to offer the most effective package of support. All students begin the day with breakfast club followed by tutor time. This ensures a connection is made with peers along with a trusted adult and there is an opportunity to share any concerns before the timetable begins.

Our timetable covers core subjects as well as options in the afternoon. We use a therapeutic approach including sports coaching, music (noise academy), careers counselling, yoga and therapy for art with trained instructors in addition to the traditional subjects.

Our Cortani Mindset is intrinsic in all that we do with the children at the heart of it. Safe, ready, respectful and inspire excellence is embedded within our ethos and values. Both the staff and students buy into this culture, which has proven successful time and time again. Families are an important part of our school community and we believe that without their support, we could not operate. Our positive feedback allows us to continue our work, making a difference every day.

Evidence of going above and beyond

Each student is treated as an individual with a package of support to match. This begins before the school day starts with communication to and from home to ensure we are ready to deal with any issues.

Every morning before the students arrive there is a staff briefing to discuss expectations for the day as well as individual students.

All students are provided with breakfast funded by the school and tutor period to make a connection with peers and a trusted adult before beginning the timetable. On top of the core subjects, options allow individuality to allow everyone the chance to shine. Some lessons only have 1 student in them to provide them with the opportunity to follow their interests.

Examples of our option GCSE's are photography, film studies, IT and food. During food lessons all ingredients are provided to ensure there are no financial barriers for families. In addition, our therapeutic approach including sports coaching, music (noise academy), careers counselling, yoga and therapy for art with trained instructors.

Each week, the children leave site and go into the community. This may be for a walk, shopping or to a local café. Every term there is a coach trip for the whole school, which is fully funded, again to allow all students to participate. Parents are welcome to join too.

Parent sessions are held including education and support networking. External professionals are invited along to strengthen the offer.

Every half term, each student has a review meeting with families and all professionals involved with their case.

This allows us to make any adjustments to their plan and constantly ensure we are meeting their needs.

Our Academy has had no exclusions during the pandemic despite the increased anxiety leading to dysregulation in school. We believe in the trauma informed approach that we have adopted and restorative practice to educate young people and give them the skills they need to take forward in life.

The best way to explain our everyday practice is to present a case study. This is by no means isolated as each student has their own profile and learning journey. (See attached case study for more details)

AB has made significant progress both emotionally and academically since joining Coritani. She was a school refuser and now attends the Academy regularly and engages in lessons. She has a plan for her future and is willing to work hard to make this happen with our continued support. AB joined Coritani in May 2021 after a period of EHE. She missed large periods of school towards the end of primary and due to her anxiety mum felt, her needs were better met at home. Her anxiety had a negative impact on her behaviour, which caused issues at home, school and in the community. AB was given a diagnosis of autism recently.

Due to ABs anxieties she would not come out of the car and staff worked with her in the car park for 5 weeks to build relationships before she entered the building. Regular thrive interventions have taken place allowing her to make connections with an adult in a purposeful way as well as emotion coaching techniques to enable her to join lessons with her peers.

Modelling and explicit teaching of respect has given AB a better understanding in an area where she is still developing. Restorative practice has ensured her voice is heard whilst also promoting listening skills and finding solutions for her to move forward respectfully.

There have been no physical intervention used with AB at Coritani, which is something she experienced at her previous two schools. Issues within the community have been addressed in school through PHSE to ensure she has increased awareness and stronger protective factors.

Weekly trips have given AB a sense of belonging within the community and the social skills to take forward in life. Her recent assessments have shown that she has the ability to succeed in her GCSEs and move on to further education.

Innovation

Our trauma informed approach is a real success when working with young people. All of our students have been referred from mainstream settings as a result of either exclusions, lack of engagement in lessons or refusal to attend.

Each of our students makes accelerated progress due to the relationship based curriculum and nurture that they receive in our school.

The Executive Principal is the virtual head for our local authority who also leads on NPQ programmes and is a school improvement partner.

His support for other schools ensures that we share our excellent practice with others. The Assistant Principal speaks for whole education following his master's degree, again to share good practice and also to learn innovative ways of working. Being a fully inclusive school is a new experience for our students often and we are the change they need in their lives. Parents report that their children are much more relaxed at home as a result which has a major positive impact holistically.

Our Academy has achieved numerous awards for our work including Caring 2 learn gold standard, Rights Respecting Schools and we are currently working towards a gold mental health award through Leeds Beckett University.

Our current spirals of enquiry project through whole education extends our student voice further allowing us to improve our practice and ultimately change lives. Staff relationships are equally valued and the culture within school is supportive, open and honest. As a team of reflective practitioners whilst we are confident that we deliver an excellent service, we strive to find new ways to support our students and their families.

Here is a quote from the local authority.

“Coritani is one of our most established and highly thought of provisions in North Lincolnshire. It offers an exceptionally high quality education to many of our pupils who find difficulty in learning within a mainstream environment. They strive to ensure excellent outcomes for all their pupils which are not just limited to exam results. Without a doubt all the staff have an open and caring attitude to their work and the experience they provide for every individual pupil who may attend there. Coritani have an amazing record of engaging and re-engaging pupils into learning and have their personal development and wellbeing at the heart of everything they do in the setting. The leadership and management is second to none and it is evident to see that with Dave Flowitt at its helm, Coritani oozes best outcomes for all children and utilises so much of its work with looked after children in driving forward support, outcomes and excellent results for all our children.”

Evidence of Sustainment over two years

Throughout the pandemic, Coritani has remained open, as all of our students are considered vulnerable. This stability and consistency has ensured our students have not felt isolated as many other young people have. Our data shows that our attendance is strong in comparison to other schools throughout the pandemic.

We achieved the caring 2 learn gold standard and Rights respecting Schools award within the last year. We were the first school in the authority and it was a pleasure to be presented with the caring 2 learn award by one of our students at the recent conference.

Our non-judgemental approach deals with the family as a whole and aims to create change both in and outside of school. This has been evident throughout the pandemic when we have continued to operate supporting our young people and their families.

Our local authority had a recent SEND inspection and our students were so proud to have the opportunity to be interviewed by the Ofsted inspector. I had the privilege of being present and the difference that our Academy makes and has made over the last two years shone through in their conversations.

Our GCSE results speak for themselves as the students would not sit them had they stayed in mainstream education and leave us with qualifications to take them onto the next step in their lives. Of course, this is our major focus however we see that the path to achieving this has to be individual with pastoral support heavily recognised.

Now that we are approaching the end of the pandemic I know that we have enabled our students to come out as confident young people. They have received the support they need both through school and external agencies as a result of our referrals. This has minimised the impact of what has been an extremely difficult time.