



Spotlight on St Giles School

St Giles School in Derby was the winner of the 2019 SEN School of the Year Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

St Giles School's motto is to 'inspire and achieve through creativity' with their mission being to 'provide pupils with effective strategies to communicate, promote independence and prepare pupils for life in the local and wider community'. Staff at St Giles definitely do that!

This Derby school is dedicated to supporting children with the most complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Creating a Total Communication environment, the school ensures all children have a 'voice' and this whole school approach, combined with targeted and specialist support, grabbed the Shine a Light judges attention.

Early identification and targeting of all pupils is key at St Giles. Following baseline assessment on entering the school, with information collected from previous settings alongside parents and carers, individualised communication system support plans are put in place that consider the child's Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) targets. Understanding that the EHCP process can often be difficult, the school ensures that parents and children themselves are involved at all times with school staff giving pupils the motivation and means to communicate their wants and wishes.

Outside of providing excellent education, staff are always thinking creatively in how they can support pupils to express how they feel using feeling boards, lesson activities and choice boards. To meet their broader communication needs, St Giles arrange sensory swimming lessons, horse riding sessions and art therapy, amongst others.

Providing fantastic provision to their pupils is second nature to St Giles and that includes working closely with parents and carers. The school holds termly meetings to discuss targets and the school's communication practitioner works alongside the speech, language and communication therapist ensuring that families are supported at every stage.

The family liaison team also provides family workshop sessions where parents have the opportunity to learn Makaton, understand how to access visual and technical support and how they can best support their child's communication both within school and at home.

In addition to helping parents and carers, the senior leadership team place a heavy importance on strategic action planning and staff training when it comes to SLCN. Their impressive Communication Development Plan allows new staff to quickly upskill using a bespoke training approach with all staff trained to provide a wide range of SLC interventions including Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) interventions and speech and language therapy.

If that wasn't enough, regular twilight staff meetings are dedicated to SLCN covering topics such as Makaton, signs and symbols, PECs and behaviour training, and to ensure they are on track, they use The Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Framework to identify any additional training needs.

It is testament to all staff at St Giles that they are seen as the 'cream of the crop' when it comes to SLCN provision. The school has become an Inclusive Teaching School Alliance with staff providing a range of communication training to both mainstream and special school settings in the area, upskilling their practitioners to support children with SEND/SLCN.

Practitioners from other schools visit St Giles as part of their own CPD, spending time in classes and observing lessons to support their understanding of implementing communication strategies into everyday teaching and learning.

The Shine a Light judges noted the school's dedication in helping others outside of school settings. St Giles staff have been involved in projects with Derby City to support other settings and the schools Communication Practitioner has even supported a local pub that has now become the first Makaton Friendly pub in the Midlands!

The school's work has recently been recognised by children's communication charity, I CAN, from who they achieved accreditation at specialist level. St Giles has also been awarded the Inclusive Quality Flag Mark, demonstrating their inclusive approach to SEN.

St Giles School is an extremely successful SEN school. Despite the complex needs of their pupils, pupils make substantial and sustained progress in core subject areas. In 2017/18, the overwhelming majority of pupils made at least expected target in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Their commitment to helping other children, outside of their school walls is highly commendable. Through training and supporting other practitioners in the region, they have helped thousands of children and young people thrive.

For further information about the 2019 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL