



Prospectus

Supporting Learning,
Growth and Wellbeing

Welcome to Niche Education

Set in the peaceful countryside of Suffolk, our school provides a safe, nurturing, and inspiring space for young people to re-engage with education. We combine therapeutic support with high-quality teaching to help every young person rediscover their curiosity, confidence, and belief in their own potential.

Our small DfE-registered and Ofsted-inspected independent schools are set up to help young people aged 11 to 16 who are residents in our homes to thrive and revive their enjoyment of learning. We aim to restore the self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth of all our students through an education model that meets individual needs, and not a one-size-fits-all approach.

We offer an individualised, integrated and therapeutic education programme tailored to meet the complex SEMH needs of young people who have had adverse childhood- and education experiences and who have often experienced significant periods of interruption to their education or disengaged from education completely.

This provision forms part of the company's holistic, wraparound care approach that places emotional wellbeing, relational safety, and individual growth at its core. While we value academic achievement and aim to challenge and inspire every pupil with a curriculum that's designed for their needs and ability; we equally prioritise nurturing creativity, critical thinking, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.



“The education department at Acorn Cottage is amazing. She had been through many different resources prior to placement at Acorn Cottage and it was difficult to find anything that worked for her, and difficult for her to focus on learning. I’ve never seen her so proud to show me anything after a review meeting.”

Independent Reviewing Officer

Our Ethos

At Niche schools, we believe education should **heal, empower, and inspire**. Many of our pupils arrive having lost confidence in themselves or in learning – our role is to help them rediscover both. We build **trust** through **genuine relationships**, creating **calm, nurturing spaces** where young people feel safe to learn, explore, and grow.

Our trauma-informed approach recognises that **progress looks different for everyone**; we meet pupils where they are, adapting teaching to their needs, **pace, and potential**.

Learning here goes beyond exams. It's about building **self-belief, resilience, and independence** – helping every young person feel seen, **valued, and capable of shaping their own future**.



Our Schools and Teachers

Our schools are set in beautiful, peaceful rural villages surrounded by forests, fields and green spaces. These settings provide ample opportunities for grounding and healing in a relaxed, therapeutic environment with structured, highly individualised support for each young person.



Our highly qualified, dedicated teachers are trained in therapeutic education strategies and work with young people in a healing, trauma-informed way that emphasises non-punitive, relational learning. When recruiting teachers, we search for candidates who are warm, welcoming and outgoing, and who recognise the value of an approach that is therapeutic, relational and non-punitive. We look for teachers who won't give up on a young person and who will be willing to take that extra step to make a real difference.

Each pupil has a dedicated Home Tutor – a teacher linked to their home – who provides additional pastoral care, one-to-one tutorials, and support with goal setting and progress.

In lessons, our learner-teacher ratio is never more than 4:1 and young people can receive 1:1 support almost all the time if needed, because all of our youth mentors act as Learning Support Assistants in the classroom.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is flexible, varied and diverse and has been designed to offer all our pupils the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. It offers broad, balanced and coherent exposure to all of the key coverage areas in a way that is suitable for the age, ability, and special educational needs of each young person, enabling them to make progress.

Because we're a very small provision with very low learner-teacher ratios and the scope for 1:1 support, we are able to highly individualise the curriculum to each young person – creating a timetable that reflects each young person's needs, ability, aptitude and interests. This includes a rich and varied academic offer, tailored to suit a wide range of abilities and interests, alongside project-based and vocational learning that embeds real-world relevance.

All young people will study Maths and English. After baselining and initial assessment, a personal learning plan will reflect whether a young person takes the academic (GCSE) route or the Functional Skills route to qualification. In either instance, each young person will achieve a Level 2 qualification in Maths and English by the end of year 11, allowing them to progress to college and employment.

All young people attend lessons for PSHE, Citizenship and PE – the breadth and delivery of these being tailored to the age and ability of each young person. The other key coverage areas – scientific, technological, human and social, and aesthetic/creative education – if not academic, are covered across a range of enrichment, vocational and project-based learning areas. Some young people may elect, or be suited to, studying more academic subjects while others opt for vocational, project-based and enrichment areas. We are able to offer both options, with various routes to qualification that suit each young person.



Baseline and Initial Assessments

We recognise that young people who join us may join at any point during Key Stage 3 or 4, and at any point during the academic year. For this reason, we meet all young people where they are and not where the system expects them to be.

When young people join us, before anything else, we spend time getting to know them and building relationships. This allows us to paint a picture of what interests them and what will motivate them to engage in education, and allows us to start forming each young person's individualised curriculum and personal learning plan.

Young people, upon joining us, are assessed in reading and writing, spelling, and numeracy and any gaps in their learning are identified. This is used to devise a personal learning plan and inform the curriculum and timetable best suited to them. Young people are consulted during this process so that their timetable can reflect their strengths and interests. Personal learning plans also produce monthly targets in each learning area, and these are reviewed constantly.

Keeping On Track

Young peoples' targets, **progress** and **achievements** are tracked actively and teachers meet weekly to share information to support individual needs as they arise. Throughout the school year, academic, **emotional** and **behavioural progress** are all 'tracked' and we use this information to create monthly education progress reports for carers and professionals.

Our Offering

Curriculum Areas

Subject/ Learning Area Qualification (if applicable)	Description
Maths GCSE / Functional Skills	Functional Skills offered from Entry Levels (KS3) up to Level 2 (KS4) as an alternative route to qualification.
English GCSE/ Functional Skills	Functional Skills offered from Entry Levels (KS3) up to Level 2 (KS4) as an alternative route to qualification.
Literacy – Vocabulary, SPaG and Book Club	Literacy is supported using the Bedrock OLP that incorporates tracked, sequential spelling, grammar and vocabulary modules; as well as timetabled independent reading time in a weekly 'Book Club'. These lessons are designed to help lead to greater outcomes in English Language, better comprehension skills and critical thinking development.
PSHE ASDAN	PSHE follows the National Curriculum with significant extensions and incorporates the ASDAN short course (at higher KS3 and KS4) alongside our broad, bespoke PSHE curriculum to support learning and provide valuable independent extension work.
PE ASDAN	Our PE offering incorporates different opportunities for indoor and outdoor, on- and off-site movement and wellbeing activities including but not limited to sport, swimming, outdoor and adventure play, physical wellbeing (yoga, stretching), and off-site active activities. At higher KS3 and KS4, pupils also complete the Sports and Fitness ASDAN course.
Citizenship	Our rich Citizenship offer is accessed in one form or another by all young people as we believe this area teaches valuable skills and prepares young people for life in modern British society. Young people with the ability, aptitude and interest can study a GCSE in Citizenship Studies in KS4.
Health & Social Care BTEC Level 1/2	A practical, career-focused qualification that builds knowledge and skills for working in health, social care, and early years settings. We are able to offer this with the BTEC route to qualification or as enrichment based on ability, aptitude and interest.

Subject/ Learning Area Qualification (if applicable)	Description
Food Technology ASDAN/ AQA UAS	A creative and practical course that explores the science, nutrition, and skills behind designing and preparing healthy, innovative dishes across a range of themes. Food Technology is offered alongside the 'FoodWise' ASDAN course or, dependent on ability, aptitude and interest, can be studied as a GCSE.
Science Studies	Part of our rolling enrichment programme where each term rotates with broad science topics such as Biology, Health and Medicine, Social Science, Environmental Science, Agriculture and Gardening. Young people may elect to complete the Science ASDAN course alongside this.
Humanities ASDAN/ AQA UAS	Part of our rolling enrichment programme where each term rotates with topics such as Geography, History and Religion. Young people may elect to complete the History and Geography ASDAN courses alongside these.
Arts and Culture AQA UAS	Part of our rolling enrichment programme where each term rotates with topics such as Arts & Crafts, Drama, Visual Art, Design & Branding, Textiles & Fashion, and The Art of Food.
Nurture AQA UAS	A programme that can be delivered to our Year 11 pupils that explores relationships, safe sex, pregnancy and parenting to empower young people to make healthy, informed choices for themselves.
ASDAN courses and AQA Unit Award Scheme ASDAN/ AQA UAS	Young people may have timetabled enrichment and elective sessions where they can complete the ASDAN vocational short course of their choice and/ or a wide range of short AQA unit awards in areas and topics that interest them.
Project-Based Learning Modules AQA UAS	We are able to create and incorporate a wide range of experiential and project-based learning modules, incorporating classroom-based and off-site or outdoor learning, tailored to the ability, aptitude and interests of any young people. These incorporate these and skills from multiple coverage areas and can be completed at a comfortable pace. A few modules we've recently used are Art in Nature, Photography, Investigating Local History, Horse Riding and Equine Studies...

Welfare of Young People

We acknowledge that young people who join Niche often join us having experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences. Our therapeutic model focuses on relational safety, emotional literacy, and resilience, recognising that learning only happens when young people feel secure and supported.

Daily routines such as Mindful Mornings help pupils start each day calmly and with purpose, while shared mealtimes and enrichment sessions build community, belonging, and trust between pupils and staff.

We also employ the services of two independent therapists, each with a different model and approach, and our young people have dedicated weekly space in the timetable to attend therapy.

All our teachers are trained in therapeutic, trauma-informed teaching and some hold Mental Health First Aid certification and have counselling experience.



Behaviour and Support

Our approach to behaviour support is positive, therapeutic and non-punitive. We believe in understanding all behaviour as communication of unmet needs and identifying, then addressing the root cause/s of behaviour. Through therapeutic guidance, consistent boundaries, and compassionate support, we help pupils learn to regulate emotions, manage challenges, and develop healthy relationships.

We model acceptable behaviour in and outside the classroom and our approach to managing behaviour recognises and celebrates behaviour improvements and achievements. Our recognition and reward system encourages positive engagement – young are rewarded meaningfully for effort and participation. Regular celebration of success, including termly Headteacher Awards, reinforces pride and self-worth.

All teachers are trained in the Norfolk Steps (Step On and Step Up) model of behaviour support, de-escalation and physical intervention alongside our own bespoke, in-house therapeutic practice training. All young people have an Emotional and Behavioural Support Plan that informs the approach and strategies used by teachers in supporting them.

Careers and Employability

We take our pupils' aspirations to heart. Helping them discover what inspires them and feeling hopeful about their futures is central to what we do. We offer ongoing, impartial careers guidance in a variety of supportive and engaging ways, empowering each young person to make informed choices and take confident steps toward further education and adulthood.

Career planning and personal development are woven throughout our curriculum. Pupils are encouraged, where practical, to explore their interests through creative enterprise projects, active citizenship, and leadership opportunities. They also research future pathways, learn about different professions, and can sometimes take part in meaningful work-related experiences that help them build confidence and purpose for life beyond school.

“When young people feel confident about their next steps, they approach every opportunity with curiosity and courage – that’s what we strive to nurture every day.”

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