



Helen Allison
School

Welcome to my
school. Welcome
to **MyProgress**[®]



The National
Autistic Society



Enjoying my
school is part of
MyProgress[®]



Susan Conway, Principal



**Dr Jacqui Ashton Smith,
Executive Director of Education**

Welcome to Helen Allison School

When you walk through our doors you'll find a school where your child will be among people who understand autism. Everyone here takes a positive approach to our students: we know how to find out how well they can do, and have the expertise to help them learn and become confident young people.

Our main school is based in Meopham, Kent. We were one of the first of The National Autistic Society's schools to open, and today we draw on over 40 years of experience. We are also one of only a few schools in the country to have our own therapeutic team: our speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and psychology department work closely together with our teaching and care staff every day. This means that your child will develop not only academically, but will also build strong social and communication skills.

Our environment is warm, welcoming and autism-friendly, and we hope that you will come and visit us to get to know us better.

We look forward to meeting you.

Handwritten signature of Susan Conway in black ink.

**Susan Conway
Principal**

Handwritten signature of Dr Jacqui Ashton Smith in black ink.

**Dr Jacqui Ashton Smith
Executive Director of Education**

We're autism specialists



Your child is unique, and so are we

At Helen Allison we specialise in autism. We stand out because every person who cares for and educates your child in our school is fully trained in autism.

We understand how autism affects your child, and we have over 50 years' experience and knowledge to draw on to help them to learn, thrive and take their full place in the world as adults.

Whatever the learning capabilities of your child are, we will help them make progress and achieve qualifications, from entry level literacy and numeracy to A levels and other Level 3 qualifications.

Truly individual

Every student at Helen Allison has a truly personalised curriculum and timetable. Your child learns at their own pace and according to their own needs and interests. We always find a way to deliver the learning your child needs.

Independent 14-19 students

Some of our older students learn in a separate education hub, preparing for adult life among students of their own age. Once they turn 16, students gain valuable experience of life outside school, as well as following their interests and skills through college courses and work placements.

Key facts about Helen Allison:

- Ofsted: rated Outstanding in education and care
- Autism Accreditation accredited service
- primary, secondary and post-16 education
- ages 5 to 19
- girls and boys
- 77 day places
- 16 term-time weekly residential places
- flexi-boarding during evenings, weekends and school holidays
- on-site educational psychologist, assistant psychologists, principal speech and language therapist, communication co-ordinators and highly specialist occupational therapist
- minimum staff to student ratio of 1:3
- teaching and caring for children with autism since 1968.

**"I like this school.
All the teachers are
good and kind...
they understand me."**

Student in Year 7



Understanding
my autism
is part of
MyProgress[®]

How we help your child

Our approach to assessment, recording and reporting

MyProgress® is The National Autistic Society's overall strategy for working with your child. With **MyProgress®**, your child will have the best start in life because every aspect of their care and education is tailor-made for them. **MyProgress®** guarantees that your child will use approaches that The National Autistic Society has tried and tested over many years: we know that they make a difference.

At Helen Allison School, we believe in education for life

We're here to help your child to grow, learn and get ready for a fulfilling adult life. Every child is different - we will get to know your child and their likes and dislikes, and develop a plan to help them learn happily and effectively.

We always emphasise the positive, seeing potential rather than barriers, and your child's confidence and competence will grow as a result. We know school isn't always easy, so we try to make our service as flexible as possible to meet your child's needs, providing anything from transport and individualised timetables to a tailor-made residential placement that helps your child settle in at their own pace.

Taking our learning out into the world

Because school is all about preparing for adult life, we believe that your child's education must take them outside school as much as possible.

We take our learning outside the classroom to help your child acquire independent living skills. We'll explore castles in history, and woodlands in science. Our students learn in local schools and colleges, do work placements, join the local library, use leisure centres, eat, shop and get out and about in town. At every opportunity we engage with the community beyond our school gates. We'll support your child every step of the way, and never rush them.

We look to the future

An important outcome of **MyProgress®** is ensuring that your child is ready to move on to the next stage in their life. We work closely with you, your child and our transition co-ordinator to create a **My Transitions Passport**. This document describes your child's skills, interests, aspirations and other key information to provide a clear plan for his or her future and lifelong learning.

“We make the most of the facilities in our community – whether schools or colleges for classes, or a farm, or a wood. It's important because pupils will leave and need to be able to interact with the world outside school.”

Emma Sanderson, Deputy Principal

MyProgress®

My teacher works with speech therapists, psychologists and, of course, my parents to assess all areas of my development. This helps everyone understand my strengths and needs.



Every term

My ability profile demonstrates the unique way autism impacts on me and my learning style.

MyProgress® meeting identifies what my school and my family can do to build on my strengths and interests and support me in the things I find difficult.

MyProgress® plans set out my academic, social and independence targets and says how the curriculum and timetable are going to be tailored to meet my needs.

MyProgress® curriculum puts significant emphasis on social communication skills, community-based learning and enterprise. The curriculum is delivered using the NAS SPELL philosophy that includes a blend of autism-specific interventions.

MyProgress® file provides evidence of my achievements across academic (eg literacy), social (eg turn-taking), emotional (eg managing my emotions), and independence (eg caring for myself) aspects of learning.

MyProgress® report measures how I am doing against my targets by rating progress red, amber or green. My achievements in green are celebrated and my teacher develops an action plan to help me improve in those areas rated red.

We're a team

A highly qualified multi-disciplinary team

Every member of staff at Helen Allison is fully trained in working with children with autism. Your child will learn with the support of highly-trained teachers and therapists who are all based at our school.

Our teaching staff, as well as our support and care staff and therapists, work together every day. We are a team. Your child knows every one of us well, and we all know your child well too. It's one of the reasons we're able to make such a big difference in your child's life.

We meet regularly to share our expertise and observations, and to make sure that your child is happy and learning well. We work in close partnership with parents – communicating often, welcoming you to the school, and offering our support.

Together we develop your child's social, communication and behavioural skills, and give them the support they need to build their confidence and independence.

How our therapists help your child

Our therapists assess your child and develop an individual programme to build their communication, social and behavioural skills.

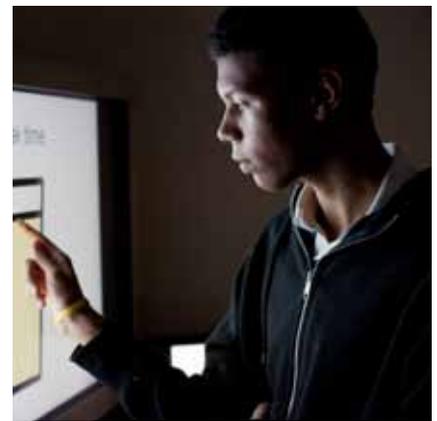
Above all, we look at your child holistically: our therapy team works as one unit, bringing together vast amounts of knowledge and experience. We are rigorous, systematic, and constantly assess and monitor how your child is doing. We always look for the best way to support your child.

The Centre for Autism

In addition to our own staff's expertise, we draw on the specialist knowledge of The National Autistic Society's Centre for Autism. The Centre gathers and shares research evidence about autism and is an extremely valuable resource as we develop our programmes and extend our work.

Our in-school support and advice team:

- principal speech and language therapist
- communication assistants
- senior educational psychologist
- assistant psychologists
- highly specialist occupational therapist.



“The staff are all wonderful and my son is the wonderful confident person he is because of your school.”

Parent of a Year 10 student



Striving to
make every day
positive is part
of **MyProgress**[®]



Growing in
confidence and
independence
is part of

MyProgress[®]

Ambitious, individual learning



“Helen Allison is a much calmer school and work is at your level. At my old school it was to everyone else’s ability. Here, teachers do it to every different student’s level.”

Jess, age 14, Chiddingstone class

Our curriculum

At Helen Allison we offer primary, secondary and post-16 education following the principles of **MyProgress®**. Your child will learn traditional academic subjects alongside the life skills they’ll need to become confident young adults. At every stage, your child will have their own timetable, which we plan with them according to their ability, needs and interests.

We teach all the academic subjects of the National Curriculum. Our long experience of teaching children with autism lets us deliver each subject in a practical and structured way which plays to your child’s strengths. Our students have a range of abilities and our high staffing levels mean that we can provide small group teaching as well as individual support.

“We support the students and design the curriculum with our eyes on the rest of life: we want our students to be as autonomous as possible.”

Cathy Riggs, Assistant Head of Helen Allison Education Hub

Helen Allison Education Hub

In our hub for ages 14-19, our young people prepare actively for adult life among students of a similar age, focusing on problem solving, decision making and independent living skills.

A really important feature of the curriculum is the amount of time our young people spend learning outside the centre every day. This allows them to gain valuable experience of life outside school, mixing with other young people, gaining confidence and seeing that everything they have learned is good preparation for adult life.

Many students take accredited qualifications ranging from entry level through to level 3 and A-levels. They study at our hub site where specialist teachers allow a choice of subject and qualification options.

Our strong links with local colleges and employers mean our young people can choose from an enormous range of subjects and experiences.

Our learning and living environment

Helen Allison in Meopham

Our primary and secondary provision is in the large village of Meopham on the top of the North Downs. Its size and design make it a friendly and reassuring place to be and your child will feel part of a strong and supportive community.

Our education hub for 14-19 year olds is conveniently located just a couple miles away from the school. Situated in the quiet village of Longfield it has easy access to local amenities and is a short bus ride to Gravesend and Blue Water Shopping Centre.

The newly renovated building has been customised for teenagers and young adults, encouraging students to practise their daily living skills in a realistic environment.

“Care isn’t about education, although there are strong links, and our care team supports the work done at school. So if your child is learning about cooking at school, we’ll be reinforcing it at home. Our care is all about creating a good home life.”

Tim Cook, Head of Care

Residential care

We offer residential care for 38 weeks a year, from Monday to Friday, and have 28 places for children aged 10 to 19 years.

We give our residential students a warm, friendly and supportive home. Our care staff members are all fully trained and they and the children get to know each other well. If your child decides to stay with us, they will move seamlessly from home to school each day with our continual support.

Our larger house is ideal for our younger children who need more structure in their day. In our smaller house, our older students live in a more homely atmosphere that gives them greater freedom to arrange their own time. All children have their own rooms and share the living rooms, kitchen and dining room. Both houses have large, secure gardens that the children can use for play or relaxation.



“I like the big playground because it has lots of climbing frames. I can climb taller than two teachers.”

Lijah, age 10, Dover class

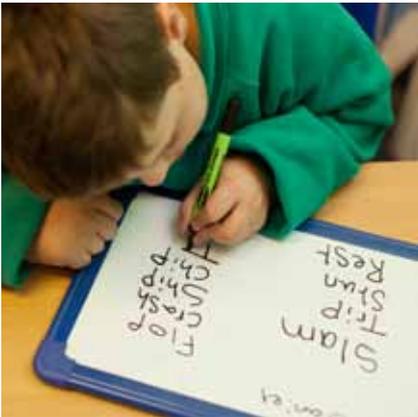
A young man with short brown hair, wearing a blue hoodie, is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is holding a book titled 'The Breakshow' in his hands. The book cover is black with colorful, stylized text and a cartoonish character. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a school hallway or classroom, with a blue wall visible.

Learning, socialising
and communicating
at school is part of
MyProgress[®]

Building trusting,
long-term
relationships is part
of **MyProgress**[®]



Our rigorous approach



“A drumming man from Africa came. We played the drums and made the drums talk by banging them.”

Lijah, age 10, Dover class

Ofsted says we are “outstanding”

At Helen Allison we're proud of the way that our support helps every child in the school to learn and progress. Our most recent Ofsted report, in July 2012, says:

“The school provides an outstanding quality of education for its students.”

“The students make outstanding progress in their learning.”

“The provision the school makes for students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding.”

“Students say they enjoy coming to school. This is confirmed by the high attendance figures and exemplary punctuality to lessons.”

“The quality of the curriculum is outstanding as is the quality of teaching and assessment.”

Ofsted, 2012

Systematic and thorough

When we work with your child at Helen Allison, we use approaches that have been tried and tested. We know they're effective and will help your child because they're based on sound research and evidence.

We tailor every child's learning to their needs, and with **MyProgress®**, we will assess your child regularly, plan the approaches and strategies that will work best for them, deliver them, and monitor your child's progress. We're systematic and thorough, and every day we'll be doing the best for your child.

We're always learning

There's always more to learn, and over decades we've explored new ways of working, in partnership with universities and other specialist organisations. For example, we're involved in the HANDS project to develop smartphone software that will help children and young people with autism to develop social and self-management skills. We're also a partner in the Imagining Autism project to explore how performance can help children with autism to connect with the world.

Supporting families and young people



Flexi-boarding

Our flexi-boarding is the perfect chance for your child to unwind and have fun with people who are enthusiastic, experienced and who understand autism.

We'll assess your child so that we can give them all the support they need while they are with us, and our specialist staff will make sure your child enjoys their holiday from start to finish. You and your child can visit us before their break and we welcome you to visit us at any time while your child is staying with us.

Our flexi-boarding is based in our large residential house in Gravesend, so you can relax in the knowledge that your child will be safe and comfortable.

Here are some of the activities we do during our flexi-boarding breaks:

- kayaking
- rock climbing
- football
- cycling on bikes and trikes
- swimming
- cinema
- trips to Chessington World of Adventures, and the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

There's also lots of time to relax, play games, and to explore the local area.

Our provision is flexible: your child may come for daytime activities only, for a few hours, for occasional overnight stays, or for a couple of weeks or more. Our short breaks are available to all children attending Helen Allison.

Family support

When your child joins Helen Allison, your whole family joins too – we're here to help you. We get to know you well, keep you informed about your child's progress, and include you in their learning so that you can help them at home. We offer support and advice at our family seminars, and work directly with individual families on the challenges they face.

“Multidisciplinary working among staff and with outside professionals is a particular strength of the provision.”

Ofsted, 2012

“Seeing how our son has changed in such a small space of time tells us that Helen Allison School is the best school for him.”

Parent of a Year 9 student



Always being
included is part
of **MyProgress**[®]

Applying to Helen Allison



Find out more about us

We offer education to young people aged 5 to 19 with autism who have been referred by their local authority.

If you think our school might be the right place for your child to learn, we suggest you contact us to find out more about what we provide, or arrange to visit us to see what we do.

Making an application

If you decide you would like to apply, you need to discuss your child's needs with your local authority, and make a joint application. Once you have made your application, we will assess your child.

There are several steps to the application process. We can explain them to you and there is a chart showing the process on our website – www.helenallison.school.co.uk.

“A great thing about Helen Allison is the way the disciplines work together. We, as teachers, meet together regularly with the management team, the speech and language therapists and the psychology team, so it's a multi-disciplinary approach. It's something we do particularly well.”

Jackie Willson, Teacher of Upnor Class and Maths Co-ordinator

“We are so proud of our son's achievements. We consider ourselves both fortunate and lucky to have such specialist support.”

Parent of a Year 11 student



The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people affected by autism.

We were founded in 1962 by a group of parents who were passionate about ensuring a better future for their children. Today, our UK-wide network of specialist schools and education services gives hundreds of children and young people the opportunity to grow and learn in a reassuring environment, with teachers and support staff who understand their needs.

For over 50 years, we've built our success on the principle that every child that passes through our doors is unique. Each student has their own support programme based around their needs and ambitions. Together with them and their families, we're building the better future that our founders hoped for.

The National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London EC1V 1NG
Switchboard: 020 7833 2299
Email: nas@nas.org.uk
www.autism.org.uk

You can get help from the following telephone services:

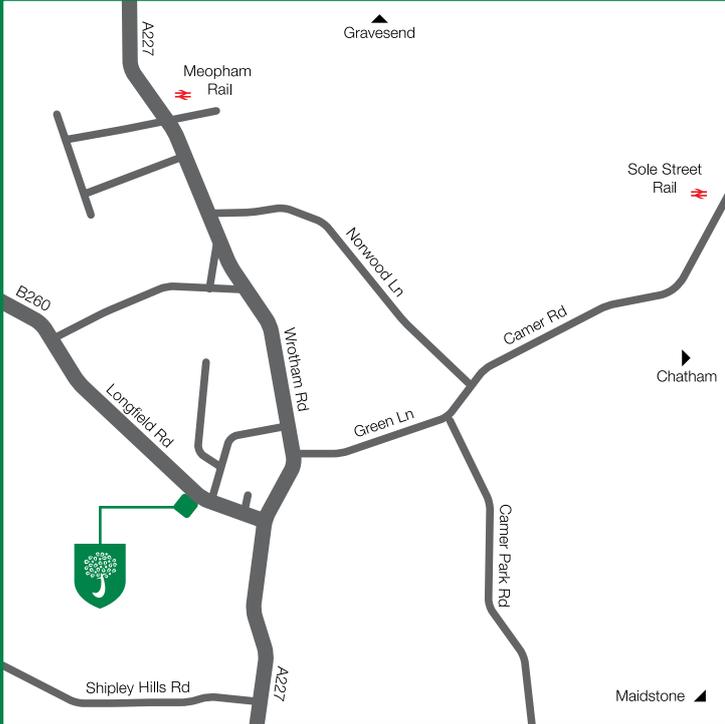
Autism Helpline: 0808 800 4104

Education Rights Service:
0808 800 4102
(leave a message)

Parent to Parent Service:
0808 800 4106
(leave a message)



Helen Allison School



If you have any questions or want to find out more about our school, please feel free to contact us.

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For more information about all our schools please get in touch:

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W: www.autism.org.uk/schools

