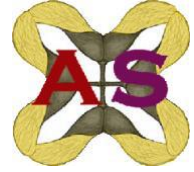




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Ashton Secondary School

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Head Teacher

Nicola Lavery

Background:

Friends of Ashton was established to recruit volunteers and raise funds for Ashton Secondary School, an additional needs school situated in Craighend, Glasgow.

We provide a specialised learning experience for our 132 students, all of whom require a high level of support and intervention on a daily basis. They all have complex physical and learning difficulties. 75 are neurodiverse. 42 use wheelchairs

We are passionate about helping our pupils acquire important life skills, and to develop their self-confidence where possible, allowing them to progress towards independent or supported living. We believe strongly that disability does not mean inability.

With this in mind, and your help, we created and opened a community café on site. Through this project, our young people have gained life skills and work experience enabling them to develop a sense of empowerment and achievement in an environment where they are safe and comfortable. All our students are encouraged and supported in taking initiative and making independent decisions. They do this through preparing food, serving it and asking for payment. They are also involved, as much as possible, in the management and running of the café, for example, deciding the menu, the prices to charge and keeping the café tidy and hygienic.

Highlights include:

- Average 80 visitors a week to the café.
- Development of our horticultural area. We now grow a variety of flowers and food crops, including potatoes, sweet potatoes, leeks, onions, garlic, tomatoes, rosemary, lavender, thyme, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blueberries, blackberries and pears. Surplus food is given to some 40 families using foodbanks.
- School roll increased from 93 in 2019 to 134, many of whom require 2:1 support daily.
- All pupils leaving us after year 13 making safe transitions to adult services and where possible independent supported living.
- 6 pupils getting work placements after leaving us.

From January 2024 we will be welcoming 38 additional needs students from Newhills School on to our campus. – giving us a school roll of 172.

Future developments comprise:

- Increasing café hours.
- Expanding the café's range of food and drink products.
- Improving and enhancing our café facilities, for example, we would like to include a credit card machine that would better reflect "real life" situations.
- Creating a mobile café so that our pupils can take food to local businesses and events (sponsored by Vinci).
- Creating wheelchair accessible pathways to The Seven Lochs Wetland Park, creating a 20-foot-long wildlife pond with wheelchair ramp access.
- Conservation project through creating an area to attract and support the rare and endangered Marsh Fritillary butterfly.
- Extending our "food to table" programme to include apple, plum, cherry and additional pear trees as well as seasonal and mixed root and ground crops such as carrots, radish, parsnips, beetroot, broccoli, kale and lettuce. In raised planters we hope to grow peppers, shallots, spring onions and chilis. Lattices will be installed to grow a variety of legumes including runner beans and peas.
- Opening a small, on-site, retail shop to sell products made by our students using the yield from our horticultural area, including jams, herb and flower arrangements, soup kit bags and pot pourri. It will also sell items produced in our enterprise unit including T-shirts, mugs, key rings and other products printed using the sublimation process.
- Developing our disability cycling project.
- Creating an immersive room for students who are neurodiverse, and exhibit distressed and distressing behaviour.
- Purchasing a new wheelchair accessible minibus.

Expanding community use of our school's facilities to further develop community inclusion.