

Cairn Education

PROSPECTUS 2026

Guiding young people to a brighter future – www.cairneduation.co.uk

Welcome to Cairn Education

At **Cairn Education** we understand that every young person's journey through education is different.

Many students join us having experienced challenges within traditional educational settings. Our aim is to provide a safe, supportive environment where students can rebuild trust, rediscover their strengths, and begin to see new possibilities for their future.

Our approach is centred around:

- strong relationships
- personalised programmes
- meaningful learning experiences
- preparation for adulthood and employment

Students are active participants in shaping their learning journey. Through co-production with staff, they help design their programmes and choose the subjects they wish to study.

Guided by our ethos of **Guiding young people to a brighter future**, we support students to develop confidence, achieve qualifications, and move forward into further education and employment.

Our Core Values

Quality of Life	Compassion	Achievement
We are committed to improving each student's overall quality of life by supporting their growth across key domains: • Education • Work readiness • Mental and physical health • Relationships • Independence in daily life Our school provides an inclusive environment where students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed academically and professionally while maintaining wellbeing and positive relationships.	We approach our work with empathy, understanding, and a genuine commitment to the wellbeing of our students. Our staff create a safe environment where every young person feels valued, respected, and supported.	We believe in the potential of our students and work collaboratively to help them achieve their personal goals and aspirations. Through personalised programmes we empower students to develop the confidence, resilience, and skills needed to succeed.

Director-
Head Teacher

Rachael Thompson-

Rachael Thompson BSc, PGCE with QTS, PGCert Sensory Integration, MSc Occupational Therapy is Head of Therapy at Cairn Education.

Rachael has worked at independent specialist colleges for over 10 years in roles including Tutor, Occupational Therapist, Head of Education and Vice Principal. As part of the responsibilities of these roles Rachael has been OFSTED nominee and specialised in supporting colleges to make quick and meaningful progress from a starting point of ‘requires improvement’.

Rachael’s current specialist interest is in sensory processing difficulties.

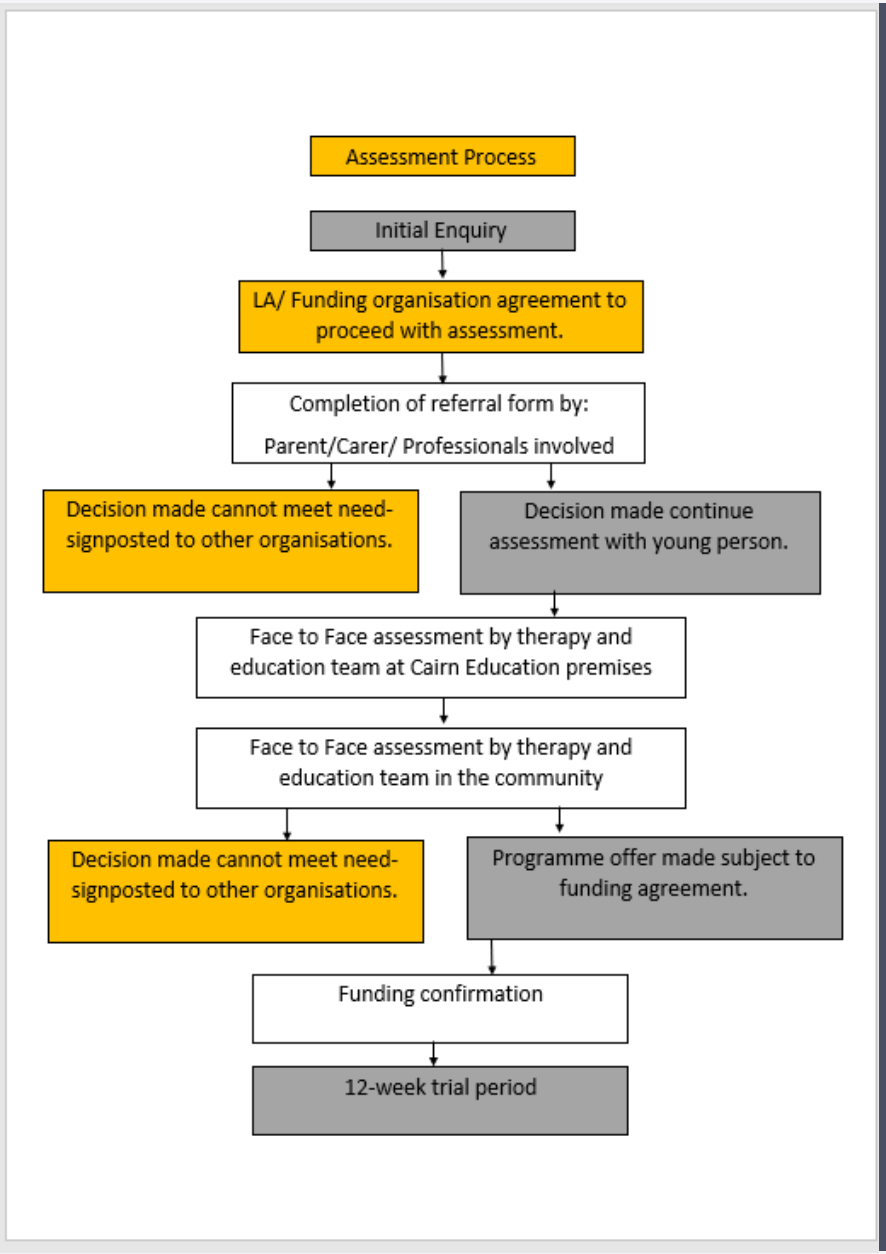


Application Criteria

Cairn Education specialises in programmes for young people that meet a combination of the following criteria.

- A diagnosis of autism
- Significant levels of social isolation
- Moderate to severe anxiety
- The need for autism specific strategies
- Sensory processing difficulties or differences which impact on their access to education and or wellbeing.
- Difficulties with social interaction and communication
- Individuals who have been out of education
- A statement of SEN
- Recognition from professionals working with the individual that they would benefit from an approach tailored to individuals with Autism
- The ability to progress academically given the appropriate support and strategies and working at Entry level 2 to GCSE level
- Have been out of education for more than one month or recognition from professionals that mainstream education providers cannot meet need

Referral and Assessment Process



Our Approach



Personalised Learning at Cairn

Every student at Cairn follows a **personalised programme of education** designed around their needs, interests, and aspirations.

Students are actively involved in **co-producing their education programmes** alongside staff.

This means they help:

- choose subjects
- shape learning activities
- set goals for their future

This collaborative approach builds motivation, confidence, and ownership of learning.

Small group teaching and strong relationships with staff ensure students feel supported while developing independence.

The Cairn Learning Model

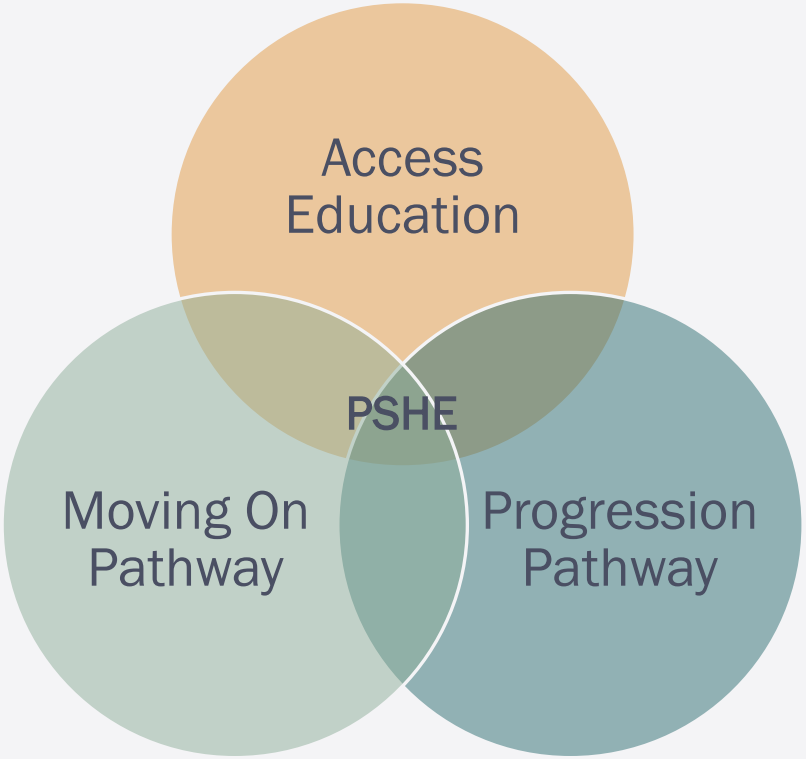
The Cairn Learning Model

Students progress through three interconnected pathways:

- **Access to Education**
- **Progression Pathway**
- **Moving On Pathway**

These pathways often overlap depending on each student's needs and readiness.

At the centre of the model is the **personalised learning journey**, supported by strong relationships, wellbeing support, and the development of key life and employment skills (Our PSHE Curriculum).



Access Pathway



Access Pathway

For many students the first step is rebuilding trust in education.

This pathway focuses on:

- developing a sense of safety
- building trust and rapport with staff
- supporting emotional regulation
- reconnecting with learning through special interests

Many students begin on **errorless learning programmes** which allow them to experience success from the start.

This approach helps students build confidence, resilience, and readiness for more challenging learning.



Progression Pathway

Progression Pathway

As students develop confidence they begin working towards recognised qualifications.

Students may study:

- GCSEs
- Functional Skills
- Arts Award

A key focus is ensuring progress in:

- Maths
- English
- ICT and/ or Science

This ensures students can progress to further education courses that match their abilities and aspirations.

Moving On Pathway



Moving on Pathway

Preparing students for life beyond Cairn.

Students receive support from:

- a dedicated careers tutor
- independent careers guidance through Inspira

From **Year 10 onwards**, where appropriate, students may take part in:

- work encounters
- work experience placements
- work placements

These experiences help students develop workplace skills and explore future careers.

Core Skills for the Future



Core Skills for the Future

Alongside academic qualifications, Cairn supports students to develop key transferable skills.

These include:

- Curiosity
- Communication
- Adaptability
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Compassion
- Confidence and Resilience

These skills prepare students to succeed in an **ever-changing employment landscape**.

PSHE- Personal Social and Health Education



PSHE- Personal Social and Health Education

Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education is embedded across the curriculum at **Cairn Education** and forms an important part of every student's personalised programme.

Each student follows a **bespoke PSHE programme** designed around their individual needs, interests and aspirations. Learning takes place both within structured sessions and through practical experiences that help students develop the skills needed for everyday life, wellbeing and participation in their communities.

PSHE learning is supported by the wider Cairn team, and where appropriate we **contract specialist professionals and work with a Wellbeing Coach** to provide targeted interventions that support students' emotional wellbeing, mental health and personal development.

Through this integrated approach, students receive support that helps them build confidence, develop resilience and gain the skills needed to succeed both in education and in life beyond Cairn.

PSHE learning works alongside the **Access, Progression and Moving On pathways**, helping students develop the wider life skills that support success in further education, employment and independent living.

PSHE- Personal Social and Health Education

Wellbeing and Health

Students are supported to develop strategies that help them maintain both **mental and physical wellbeing**.

This includes:

understanding their own strengths and challenges, including how autism may impact their lives

developing strategies to manage anxiety and emotional regulation

learning about sleep, diet and healthy routines

exploring activities that support physical health and wellbeing

accessing services and activities that support long-term wellbeing

Where appropriate, students may receive additional support through our **Wellbeing Coach or other specialist therapists** who form part of our multi-disciplinary team.

Personal Development, Wellbeing and PSHE

Independent Living Skills

Developing independence is an important part of preparing students for adulthood.

Through practical learning experiences students develop skills in areas such as:

planning and preparing healthy meals

shopping and managing sensory aspects of public environments

household organisation and maintaining a safe living environment

understanding money, budgeting and the value of income

planning and completing journeys using different forms of transport

These experiences may take place within the learning environment or through real-world activities within the local community.

Personal Development, Wellbeing and PSHE

Community Participation and Relationships

Students are supported to develop the skills needed to build meaningful connections with others and participate positively in their communities.

This includes:

developing communication and relationship skills

participating in interest groups and shared activities

understanding how to maintain friendships and social connections

learning how to stay safe online and in the community

participating in volunteering or community-based activities where appropriate

These experiences help students develop a **sense of belonging, connection and confidence in social environments**.

Personal Development, Wellbeing and PSHE

Preparing for Adult Life

Through PSHE learning students develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage everyday responsibilities and make informed choices as they move towards adulthood.

This includes understanding:

personal safety

managing responsibilities in daily life

accessing support services

making decisions about health, relationships and finances

Individual Learning Plans

Individual Learning Plans

At **Cairn Education**, every student has an **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** that forms the foundation of their personalised education programme.

Individual Learning Plans are developed through an initial assessment process and are informed by:

- the student's **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** where applicable
- the **young person's aspirations for their future**
- their **strengths, interests and motivations**
- their **identified needs and areas for development**
- input from the **student, family and professionals involved in their support**

The ILP brings together these elements to create a clear and meaningful programme that supports both **educational progress and wider personal development**.

Each plan outlines:

- **long-term outcomes**, often aligned with EHCP outcomes and aspirations for adulthood
- **medium-term outcomes** across the student's personalised pathways
- **short-term learning targets** that guide day-to-day teaching and learning

These targets are structured across key domains that support academic progress, personal development and preparation for adulthood.

Individual Learning Plans are **reviewed regularly** and are designed to remain **flexible and responsive** to each student's development. As students grow in confidence, develop new interests, or move closer to transition into further education or employment, their learning plans are adapted to ensure they remain relevant, aspirational and appropriately challenging.

Through this process, the Individual Learning Plan ensures that each student's programme remains **person-centred, purposeful and aligned with their future goals**

Monitoring and Tracking Progress and Outcomes

At **Cairn Education**, progress is carefully monitored through each student's **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)**, which aligns with their **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** where applicable, as well as the young person's **aspirations, strengths and support needs**.

ILPs include **long-term, medium-term and short-term outcomes** across each student's personalised pathways.

Short-term targets guide day-to-day learning and are reviewed regularly to ensure students are making timely progress.

Medium-term outcomes are reviewed **half-termly**, allowing programmes to be adapted where needed to maintain engagement and challenge.

Long-term outcomes reflect EHCP outcomes and preparation for adulthood, including progression into **further education, employment and independence**, and are reviewed **termly**.

Progress is reviewed collaboratively with the **education team, multidisciplinary professionals, families and the young person**, ensuring programmes remain **person-centred, responsive and aspirational**.

Individual programmes are **flexible and adaptable**, evolving as students develop new interests, confidence and goals.



Self-Assessment

Cairn Education understands the importance of thorough and challenging self-assessment.

Cairn Education uses a multi-dimensional framework to assess the ongoing effectiveness of its service and make continuous improvements.

Assessment methodologies include:

Observations, data collection and analysis, parent feedback , student feedback , work product audits, incident data analysis, attendance data analysis

Assessment informs our quality improvement plan which is formally reviewed every half-term culminating in our annual self-assessment report at the end of the academic year.

Contact Details

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