



Accreditation Report:

The Seashell Trust

Accreditation Visit 28th June 2023

Genuine Partnerships Accreditation Team:

Skander Hussain – Accreditation Team Lead (practitioner)

Kayleigh Harrison – Accreditation Team Lead (parent carer)

Lizzy McManus – Accreditation Team (parent carer)

Evidence Considered:

- Feedback from the Implementation Team
- Portfolio of evidence
- Accreditation visit incorporating:
 - Access to the Seashell portfolio.
 - Conversations with parent carers.
 - Tour around school, college, and residential site.
 - Meeting with the Charter Champion, Lizzie Ryan.
 - Conversation with Simon Robson, Admissions and Progressions Manager.
 - Discussion with Clare Sefton, College Principal.
 - Conversation with Sherann Hillman, Head of Family Services.
 - Access to the Seashell website and YouTube channel.

We are delighted to confirm that The Seashell Trust has been accredited with Charter Gold for outstanding practice in co-production. The Charter Team had a fantastic day at Seashell Trust and was impressed by the calm, friendly and nurturing ethos that radiates as you navigate your way across the site. Seashell is an excellent example of truly inclusive and person-centred provision, where every young person is recognised as an individual with agency and autonomy. The new school building is purpose-built with great consideration given to the young peoples' physical, medical and sensory needs to ensure it is a safe, conducive and functional learning environment. Seashell offers both day and residential provision for some complex and vulnerable young people. Their children being away from home can be extremely difficult for families but individualised provision and trusting relationships help the young people, and their families, grow in confidence. It is apparent that practitioners are offered rigorous continued professional development to ensure they are able to meet the highly complex needs of the young people they support. One parent carer shared his initial concerns about whether staff would understand his child's medical condition, but said that he found staff to be, "...*highly knowledgeable*." From the outset, it is evident that the environment is designed to be inclusive, and a total communication approach is embedded throughout the school. The strapline 'Transforming lives' is embodied in the way that you not only support the young people accessing the provision, but also in the significant impact you have upon the lives of parent carers. We had the pleasure of speaking to a parent carer of a student who had been a part of the Seashell family for 14 years, who shared; "*This school has saved my daughter's life, and my life, it's not just about her education its about the care.*" Parent carers identified that the relationships staff fostered with both the young people and their families were exemplary, describing Seashell as a, "...*Beacon of good practice.*"

WELCOME AND CARE

From the moment we arrived, we were welcomed by Simon who was excited to share all the wonderful work relating to the Cornerstones that Seashell staff have embedded into their practice. We were greeted by friendly members of staff across the site who exuded the Seashell ethos of being welcoming, greeting us with smiles, hellos, and good mornings. Entering the school, the physical environment was warm, inviting and inclusive. Young peoples work was displayed so their efforts could be celebrated. Displays included photographs, Widget symbols and communication devices so that they can be accessed multimodally, celebrating the diversity of communication within the school.

Students at Seashell experience complex learning difficulties and some also encounter complicated medical needs. Practitioners demonstrate deep empathy for what this might feel like for families, and Seashell have a designated Family Services team available to offer support at every stage of the transition process. Parent carers of residential students identified how difficult deciding upon an appropriate setting had been for them, until they visited Seashell. Parent carers recalled that the care, compassion, and support from the onset affirmed for them that Seashell was the right environment for their young people. They described how this radiated from their initial visits even before they had even secured a place, with staff going above and beyond their duties to ensure successful transitions. One parent carer shared; *"...this place is unique."* Recognising the challenges for parent carers of residential students, Seashell has a 'Family Flat' available onsite where parent carers are able to come and stay in order to support the transition for residential students, and at other times they are visiting. One parent carer described how the family flat had, *"...become a safe haven"* for him. Parent carers shared with us moving stories, explaining how their children and young people had been able to thrive and grow since transferring to Seashell. Another parent carer described how Seashell had supported him and his daughter during his wife's illness and through their subsequent bereavement. Speaking with practitioners and parent carers, it is noticeable that help is given with care, sensitivity, and love. Parent carers describe Seashell as a place; *"...full of love and laughter"* and *"... that exudes love."*

VALUE AND INCLUDE

Seashell offers a broad range of activities for students incorporating a fantastic therapeutic curriculum offer. This includes access to swimming, a hydrotherapy pool, rebound, cycling track with adaptive bikes, Gamelan instruments room, sensory room and animal corner. During our conversation one parent carer shared; *"It has everything she needs onsite."* There is a real focus on including children and young people in their learning journeys and an emphasis on considering future aspirations and goals in preparation for adulthood. Young people's achievements are celebrated, and photographs shared with families. Parent carers are invited to attend celebration events, support fundraising and be actively part of the school community.

Every young person at Seashell has an individual passport and bags that identify what is important to, and for, them. These provide a concise and holistic overview of students' individual preferences strengths and support needs. All the students at Seashell and their families are encouraged to think about their future and this then informs the learning that takes place for them. Consideration is given to how, when they leave school, they will be included in their community and society. This has led to a real drive to develop work-related skills and offer individuals opportunities to experience situations which may replicate those they may experience in the future. We were able to witness this as there are functioning traffic lights onsite and students were encouraged to use these before crossing the road, developing their road safety awareness.

There are also four distinct curriculum pathways for college students so that learning opportunities are appropriately adapted to their individual needs and strengths. Staff at Seashell go 'above and beyond' to do

what works for each individual family and child at a reassuring pace that enables children and young people to flourish. One parent carer told us that their young person would be leaving this year and transitioning to assisted living. He described how he could never have imagined that this would have been a possibility 14 years ago except for the dedication, commitment, and support from Seashell staff. They recognise that the students' families are important and include them in every aspect of their young peoples' learning experiences and journeys. Information about students' key immediate family members and their birthdays are requested so that birthday cards may be sent out. Families are also asked about their religious observances and additional special occasions they may celebrate so that the setting is also able to incorporate them into curriculum activities for students. One parent carer shared how, since attending Seashell, it was the first time, she had ever received a birthday gift chosen by her young person. Another parent carer explained how school had celebrated Hanukkah in recognition of her child's Jewish heritage. It is unsurprising that parent carers describe Seashell as a, "...lifeline" to their family when considering the value and nurture that occurs within relationships with both students and their families.

Seashell also has in place the following examples of good practice for 'Value and Include':

- ✓ An emphasis on making learning exciting, immersive, person centred and led by young peoples' interests.
- ✓ A focus on ensuring that the children and young people who attend have access to a wide range of activities and opportunities.
- ✓ Opportunities to learn outdoors.
- ✓ Opportunities to access a range of trips in order to cater for a wide variety of interests.
- ✓ Access to a range of healthcare professionals onsite.
- ✓ 'CADS': sports and activities; a school holiday sports camp for local children with SEND.
- ✓ Sensory story packs available for families to access.
- ✓ Use of sensory nooks with changing sound, smell and lights for targeted 1 to1 and small group support.

COMMUNICATE

There is a strong emphasis on communication at Seashell and one parent carer shared how Seashell had opened up a world of communication for his child. Navigating the school site, it was apparent that a total communication approach has been implemented so that the right combination of communication methods are used and available for every young person. We were able to see the use of the following in the learning environment during our tour of the school;

- Photographs
- Widgets (symbols)
- Makaton
- BIGmack (communication devices)
- Objects of reference

School staff also told us that they use alternative and augmented communication systems, talking devices, PECs and pre braille. They emphasised their commitment to ensuring that every student at Seashell has a way in which they are able to communicate. Parent carers spoke highly of the communication between home and school, sharing, "...Seashell communication was continuous; they would tell us what was going to happen and then it was done." Parent carers talked about the various ways in which the setting has maintained communication, which includes;

- A home-school book
- Weekly report via email
- Photographs
- Termly reports

- Photographs of achievements
- Phone calls
- Text messages

Parent carers said that communication at Seashell is great. They described how they feel they are always listened to, taken seriously and how replies are fast. They also highlighted how staff utilise non-verbal communication techniques and are mindful of how they embody communication. They described how practitioners are kind, caring, smile, providing appropriate physical contact and reassuring students with their presence as necessary. The Seashell Trust has also developed a strong social media presence, utilising Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to ensure that information is disseminated about key school events.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

During our tour of the school, we observed young people who were calm and settled, demonstrating strong trusting relationships with supporting adults. Adults appeared to be well-attuned to the needs of the young people with whom they were working. Parent carers identified how school staff worked collaboratively with home to ensure a partnership approach to identifying young people's strengths and support needs. Young people access individually personalised curriculum timetables, and their studies are learner-led. Students help to plan assemblies and they are supported to engage with alternative student-led therapies. Key workers foster close relationships with families, ensuring consistent communication about young peoples' targets and progress. Family members are also encouraged to participate in school events as Seashell values an inclusive whole family approach.

Parent carers described how Seashell staff have alleviated so many of their worries about everyday issues, for example by taking their young person to the doctors, collecting their prescriptions and taking them for haircuts. They described the Seashell practitioners as an extension of their family, sharing, *"...it's the little things that count."* Staff explained, *"...learner voice is at the heart of all that we do."* They identified how each stage of the new school site design and build had been co-produced by staff and pupils. Students are encouraged to voice their opinions and there is an established school council where representative pupils share their views on key issues. Learners also inform and support the development of school policies. Young people proactively arrange and coordinate their own events and celebrations, enthusiastically helping to plan and events and decorate venues.

There are currently 68 students in college with 28 young people accessing residential provision, and Seashell currently works with 36 different Local Authorities. Seashell's reach is national, and the organisation supports approximately over 6000 people each year. Nevertheless, there is no compromise on ensuring true partnership as the individual voice of all stake holders is valued. Seashell chooses to prioritise and nurture strong and lasting relationships and the testament to this is in the continuing contact and support for students and families who have come to the end of their time at Seashell.

Seashell also has in place the following examples of good practice in 'Partnership':

- ✓ A focus on supporting initiatives and groups within the wider community.
- ✓ Regular feedback opportunities for parent carers.
- ✓ A desire to continue to 'do better'.
- ✓ Regular fundraising opportunities in which family members can be involved.
- ✓ A school website which is accessible and well managed, and which includes:
 - News
 - Learner stories
 - Event's Calendar
 - Resources.

Congratulations Seashell on achieving Charter Gold for outstanding practice in co-production!

At Seashell it is evident that staff believe that their children and young people, *"...deserve the very best we can give them."* The Genuine Partnerships' Accreditation Team was blown away with the commitment demonstrated by Seashell practitioners to the young people and families that they support. Thank you very much indeed for making us feel so welcome, and allowing us to experience some of the wonderful work you undertake. It was a pleasure to visit your lovely setting, and to once again witness first-hand the Four Cornerstones in action. This is a fantastic achievement and credit must go to all the staff, trustees and governors, parent carers, and most importantly children and young people, for their dedication and commitment to building trust and working together in true co-production.

We would like to end by sharing a conversation with the head teacher at the time that a parent carer recalled having during their first visit 14 years ago:

Parent carer: *"Will she be loved?"* [referring to his daughter].

Headteacher: [Smiled reassuringly] *"Yes."*

Parents shared: *"And she has been loved."*

Next Steps

The following next steps were discussed:

- ✓ Continuing to develop the range of Preparing for Adulthood experiences for young people.
- ✓ Access to further support navigating next steps for students coming to the end of their time at Seashell.
- ✓ Considering whether an online communication platform could be utilised to further enhance communication with families.
- ✓ Continuing to involve students, school staff and families in the design and build of the new planned college building moving forward.



**Skander Hussain,
Accreditation Team Lead,
5th July 2023**