



**The independent specialist
day college for autistic
young people
aged 16–25**

Prospectus



**Ambitious
about Autism**

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Welcome from the Director of Education

Ambitious College is an independent specialist day college dedicated to supporting autistic young people aged 16–25. I am delighted that you are considering us as the next step in your son or daughter’s educational journey.

We believe that every young person attending Ambitious College deserves a fulfilling, happy and rewarding life.

Our educational approach focuses on the individual at all times. We offer a highly personalised curriculum and positively support our learners to acquire new skills and take part in everyday life.

We are located within two mainstream further education college campuses: the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL), and West Thames College, West London.

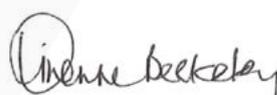
At each campus, our team of dedicated and passionate professionals includes: teachers, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, employment specialists, behaviour analysts and specialist support staff.

They do not take a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Instead, they work together to come up with learning and support approaches tailored to the individual.

Through a range of partnerships with local businesses, community groups and our mainstream college partners, we also offer opportunities to learn in the community.

This combined approach – personalised education, positive support and real work experience – delivers results. It allows our young people to achieve their goals, fulfil their potential and go on to lead active lives in their community.

I really do hope you choose Ambitious College and look forward to working with you and your son or daughter in the very near future.



Viv Berkeley
Director of Education



Thank you

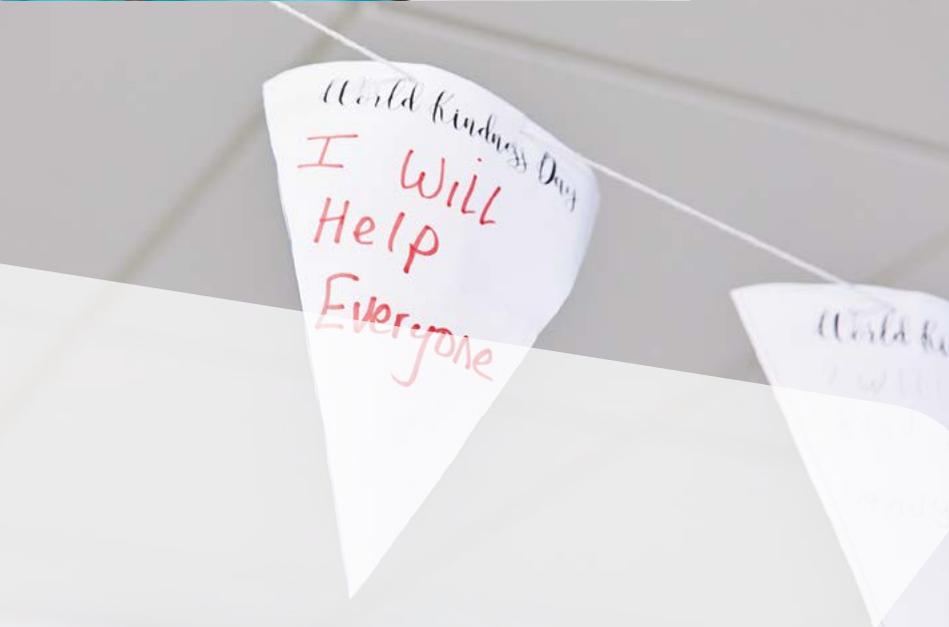
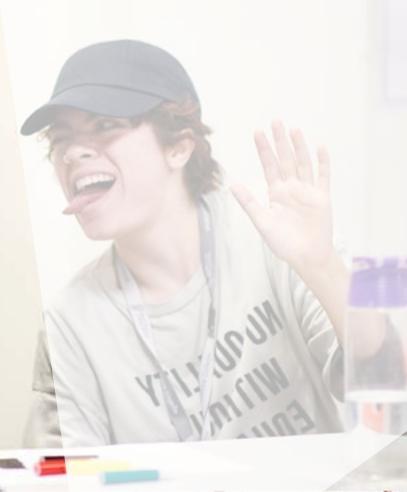
Ambitious College is at the heart of Ambitious about Autism. While we work hard to make the most of government funding and fees, they only go so far. We also rely heavily on other sources of income to go above and beyond with the services, facilities and opportunities that we provide. We’re grateful to the very generous donations of Pears Foundation, The Garfield Weston Foundation and other donors who made Ambitious College possible.

Pears
Foundation



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION





Ambitious about Autism vision and values

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for autistic children and young people. We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for change.

Through Ambitious College, TreeHouse School and The Rise School, we offer specialist education and support. We stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

Our values define how we work to ensure that autistic children and young people are at the heart of all that we do.

Our values

Autistic children and young people are at the centre of all that we do.

We invest in our people and aim high to make sure our work has the biggest impact possible for autistic children and young people and their families.

We are ambitious

We know that creating equal opportunity does not mean one size fits all. We aim to make ourselves accessible to autistic children and young people across the spectrum.

We value difference

Our values

We are experts

We respect and develop the expertise of our talented staff and make sure that we are evidence based, rigorous and accountable in everything we do.

We are open

We strive to be open – open to new ideas, open to how we work and open in how we make decisions.

We are team players

Collaborative working and building strong partnerships are essential if we are to stand with autistic children and young people.





Our curriculum



To be honest, I don't think there's anywhere else for my son where he would be so well looked after with such determination and energy for improvement, along with a huge emphasis on fun and a keen eye to the lives of parents/carers and how they can also be improved. 🗨️

Parent of Ambitious College learner

Our curriculum

We support autistic young people to live the lives they want. To do so, we devise and deliver personalised learning opportunities that help them achieve outcomes set out in their individual Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).

Because our learners' skill levels vary, we take an individual, person-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

We include, throughout our entire curriculum, functional skills such as English, maths, communication, information and communications technology (ICT).

Our curriculum also reflects the four pathways of the Preparing for Adulthood Agenda preparingforadulthood.org.uk.



Employment



Independent living



Better health



Friends, relationships and community

Every course we offer includes aspects of all of the above on a weekly basis.

Where appropriate, we fully support learners to gain qualifications that will further their interests and help them achieve their goals.

Functional skills

- English
- ICT
- Maths

Independent

- Self-determination
- Rights
- Material wellbeing
- Communication

Health and wellbeing

- Enrichment: art, music, drama
- Emotional wellbeing
- Physical wellbeing
- Personal development

Community

- Road safety/travel training
- Community access
- Personal safety
- Money management
- Environmental awareness

Pastoral support

- 1:1 tutorials
- Group tutorials
- Social skills
- Social context

Employment

- Work placement
- Career guidance
- Social enterprise

Vocational programmes

Where appropriate, Ambitious College learners access a range of vocational programmes, integrating into the mainstream West Thames or CONEL Colleges.

Functional skills

The functional skills maths, English and ICT are embedded throughout the curriculum, giving learners the opportunity to use them in realistic and practical settings.



Our courses



Discovery and sensory exploration

This course is designed to help young people make sense of, and interact with, the world around them. The trans-disciplinary team approach is very evident with additional therapy such as occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging and responding to communicative intentions. For example, a young person might be at the early stages of communication development, showing emerging awareness of others. Over time, we support young people to communicate intentionally in a number of ways.

Mite finds confidence through work experience

Mite is a third year learner at Ambitious College. Most days, he needs two people to support him. He has a work experience placement at St James' Church café, which began in April 2018.

Going out on work experience was a big step for Mite, as he would be out of his usual routine, meeting and working with unfamiliar people, tolerating different sensory stimuli, and responding flexibly to new instructions.

In his work experience, Mite has gone from strength to strength. In the early days, he would work away from other employees at a table on his own, spending 10 minutes chopping vegetables before returning to college.

In the following months, he spent more time at the café and began performing more varied tasks. He began greeting his peers and colleagues, engaging more with his surroundings and generally enjoying his new position.

Mite now spends all of his session in the café. He follows a routine, completing tasks such as setting up the tables and chairs, chopping vegetables for soup and tidying up afterwards. He is aware of the importance of basic food hygiene – washing his hands and wearing an apron.

Mite's level of independence and his self-esteem have improved greatly, and it shows in his new-found confidence. Mite's employer, Hannah Whitehead, Head of Community Ministries, has said: "He is clearly content. He is precise – and it was so lovely to see him so pleased to be a part of the café."





Preparing for employment

This course is designed to explore a range of vocational employment opportunities through internal and external work experience and social enterprises, such as our Chocolate Making Enterprise or our Hero's Café.

Learners have the chance to develop employability skills through practical tasks and real work placements. They learn the skills needed for adult life and employment by developing positive relationships, staying safe and being as independent as possible.



Developing independence skills

This course is designed to support young people to have as independent a life as possible after college. It promotes a range of self-help skills that will improve the quality of life for learners by offering practical support to help them develop independence skills such as travel training, budgeting, developing friendships and accessing local community venues.

Learning to live independently

Sandra started college in the summer term of 2018. Since then, she has been focusing on improving her independent living skills in line with her Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

At first, Sandra didn't want to go into the kitchen and would opt out of these sessions. We worked with her, along with speech and language therapists, and occupational therapy professionals. We discovered she enjoyed washing up, which gradually became something she could do on her own. This gave her a sense of independence and purpose.

We built on this to encourage Sandra to carry out other kitchen tasks. Soon, she was cooking and cleaning up after herself much more independently.

We then got Sandra to go out into the community and find and buy cooking ingredients on a visual shopping list. Here, too, she has shown increasing independence and also uses this time to work on her road safety skills.

This term she has enjoyed cooking bruschetta, pancakes and microwave mug cakes.

An added benefit of Sandra's growing love of cooking is that she spends more time in class with her peers – another EHCP goal. This helps her to understand, in a safe and supportive environment, that learning with peers is fun.

Simon Birch, Head of Curriculum at Ambitious College





Vocational studies

These courses are delivered mainly through our co-located partner colleges – the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, and West Thames College, West London.

Mainstream vocational heads of department, with support from Ambitious College staff, assess our learners for entry onto these courses.

Our learners can follow a mainstream vocational programme that matches their interests and/or career ambitions. They will also receive support from specialist staff.

The most popular vocational study programmes are music, art and drama, and information and communications technology.

Ben's journey from vocation to university

Ben, a second year learner, is studying for a vocational qualification at West Thames College, with support from Ambitious College staff. He will be moving to his third year of study in September.



“I’m studying Contemporary Music (Performance and Technology) – Level 3. This year, I’ve learnt to develop more techniques in music, broadening my taste and improving my English and social skills. Since starting college, I’ve also undertaken a Level 2 English qualification.

Ambitious College staff have supported me in a number of areas, helping to improve my independence, social skills and education.

I enjoy my time here because I’m doing what I love, experimenting with music and preparing myself for a better future. At times, I’ve felt stressed and thought of quitting. But I’m glad I didn’t and that’s thanks to the people who have believed in me.

At college, the more I’ve progressed, the happier I’ve felt. The college has helped me to develop more strategies in general, testing my social skills and gaining more knowledge before I move on.

I have one more year here but I’m already talking about my next move with Ambitious College staff. We’ve been discussing the possibility of University.”

Ben, second year learner

Supported Internships

We also offer Supported Internships for young people who want to work in competitive employment.

The programme takes place in a business setting. Learners are totally immersed in the workplace, learning through continuous feedback and gaining real employability and competitive work skills.

A typical day includes:

- classroom instruction in employability and independent living skills
- participation at one or more internship rotations
- social interaction within their internship department
- regular feedback from the instructor, job coaches and business colleagues.

Individualised internships and job development continue throughout the year. These are based on an individual's strengths, skills and interests.

Interns are supported through on-the-job coaching and improvement strategies, the ultimate goal being to help them obtain paid employment and live independently.





Ambitious Approach



We all work very closely together as a team to make sure every learner has truly personalised and holistic support. 🗣️

Staff member, Ambitious College

Ambitious Approach

How we deliver our curriculum

Ambitious about Autism's mission is to stand with autistic children and young people, champion their rights and create opportunities.

We work directly in our schools and colleges, and nationally, to transform policy and practice in autism education. Each of our services has a governing body made up of a range of people, including parents and carers, with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to support and challenge our services.

We also have a board-level Education Committee that oversees performance across all of our services.

We believe all autistic children and young people have a right to the best education that meets their needs and enables them to learn, thrive and achieve. When they leave our settings, we want them to find employment, go on to further education or training, and live fully as part of the communities of their choice.

Our Ambitious Approach across all our educational settings is person centred, values based, trans-disciplinary and underpinned by a whole-organisational Positive Behaviour Support framework.

Children and young people in our education settings have Education, Health and Care Plans, which outline their aspirations, outcomes, needs and support. We regularly and comprehensively monitor, evaluate and report on progress. We offer a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, highly personalised to the particular needs, talents and interests of all our learners.



They have access to a range of qualifications and non-accredited learning, according to their interests, desired outcomes and abilities.

We also place importance on nurturing and supporting the wellbeing of all our learners and fostering as much independence as possible. We work with parents and carers in a partnership that works for the child or young person and their future plans and hopes.

We value the voice of our learners in decision-making about their future. As communication can be difficult for many of them, we invest in the skills and resources that give them a voice in a variety of ways.

The safety and security of our learners is paramount. We have in place robust child and adult safeguarding policies and processes.



We are constantly developing, searching for and open to new ethical and evidence-based approaches that help our young people. We share our experiences and knowledge with others to enhance expertise in the field of autism education.

Our services are subject to Ofsted inspections, which are published online, on our website and by Ofsted.



Ambitious College and West Thames College have given our daughter opportunities to learn about herself and others. She has also taken on challenges that have increased her confidence and expanded her skills, in the college itself and out in the community.

Parent



Our co-located model

We are aspirational and ambitious for our learners and believe that many of them, with the right support, can have a place in a mainstream educational setting.

That's why our campuses are co-located within mainstream further education colleges. This allows us to offer a much wider curriculum and provide learners with a broad range of mainstream vocational learning, and social and work experience opportunities.

In North London, our co-located partner is The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, and in West London we have partnered with West Thames College. The success of our co-located approach depends on strong partnerships with our host providers. We thank them for their support.



We are delighted to work in partnership with Ambitious about Autism and welcome their learners into our classes and college environment. By working together, we can offer autistic children and young people a highly inclusive programme that allows them to achieve and progress. This is an important partnership for West Thames, bringing real benefits to learners, staff and, more broadly, our two organisations.

Tracy Aust, Principal
at West Thames College



Our partnership with Ambitious College is not just about sharing a campus. It's about sharing good practice in supporting autistic learners and learning from each other. By working in the same buildings, we can work closely together, breaking down barriers and providing tailored solutions for learners.

Kurt Hintz, Principal at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London



Our trans-disciplinary team

At Ambitious College, we deliver our Ambitious Approach through a trans-disciplinary team. With trans-disciplinary team working, the learner is the central focus at all times.

This means that, at each campus, our staff is made up of a range of professionals, each trained in a different discipline. They work together to come up with individually tailored approaches to learning and support.

Our trans-disciplinary team roles include:

- **Qualified teachers** responsible for delivering the curriculum
- **Speech and language therapists (SaLTs)** who support learners to develop their communication and social skills
- **Occupational therapists (OTs)** who help learners to manage sensory issues and develop functional life skills
- **Behaviour analysts (BAs)** who work with learners to overcome behaviours of concern that could create barriers to learning
- **Employment specialists** who support learners to develop vocational skills and get work experience
- **Specialist support staff** who work alongside learners every day, supporting them to develop skills.

All staff receive regular training and support to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to work effectively with all learners. Staff are regularly supervised and supported.

We also invest in continuous professional development, including an in-house, autism-specific training programme, teacher training, training and talks from external experts, and the opportunity for postgraduate study.

Positive Behaviour Support

Our staff support our learners to acquire new skills and take part in everyday life. They do this through a college-wide Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach.

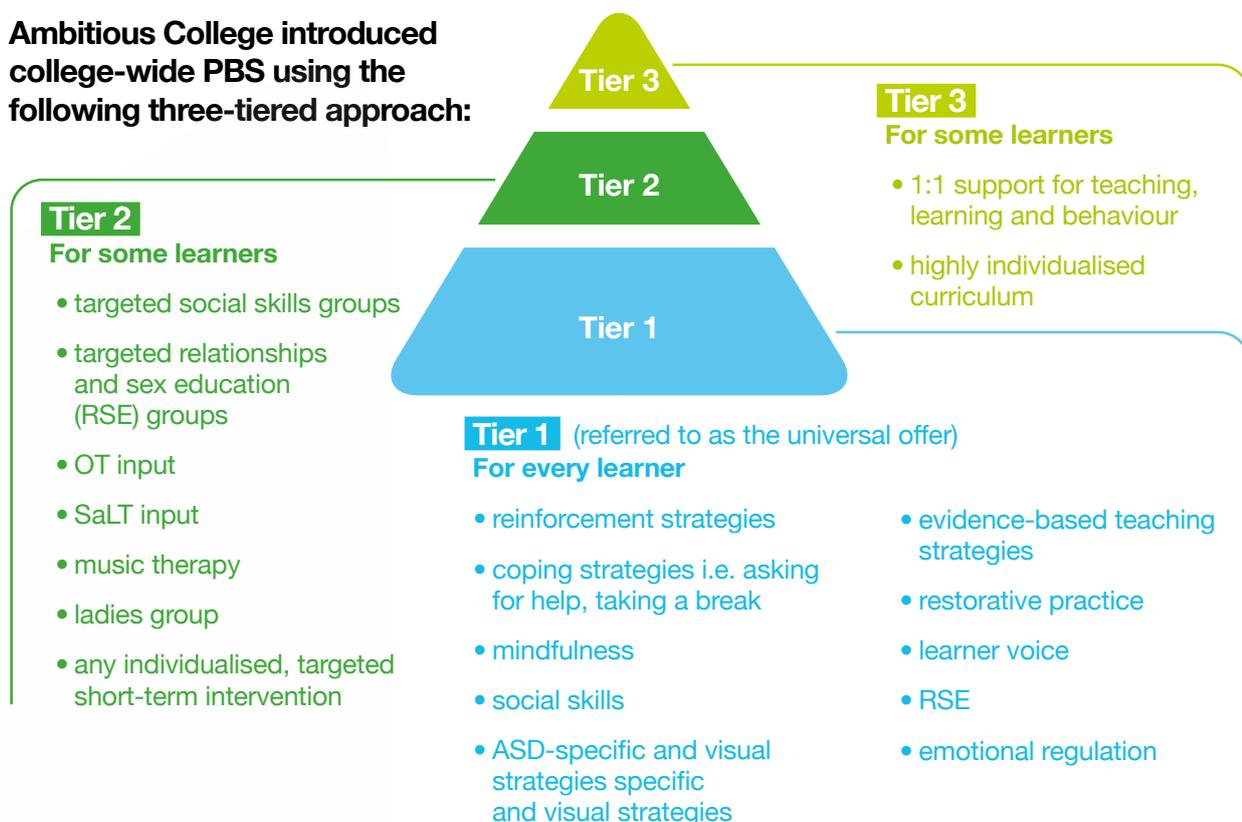
College-wide PBS is a framework for delivering both the whole college social culture and additional tiers of behaviour support needed to improve educational and social outcomes for all learners.

In practice, this means providing support that is:

- personalised for each individual
- based on an understanding of how each young person learns and what their behaviours of concern mean to them
- planned, implemented and monitored consistently
- evidence based
- proactive and uses the least restrictive approaches.

This approach helps our learners overcome behaviours of concern and provides more opportunities for them to learn effectively and achieve long-term goals.

Ambitious College introduced college-wide PBS using the following three-tiered approach:



We use the three-tiered support framework shown in the diagram to make sure all young people learn new skills that will enhance their quality of life. Our aim for all of our learners is that they lead their lives as independently as possible, with as few restrictions as possible.

Keeping our learners safe

Safeguarding and PREVENT

All staff at Ambitious College have a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of our learners.

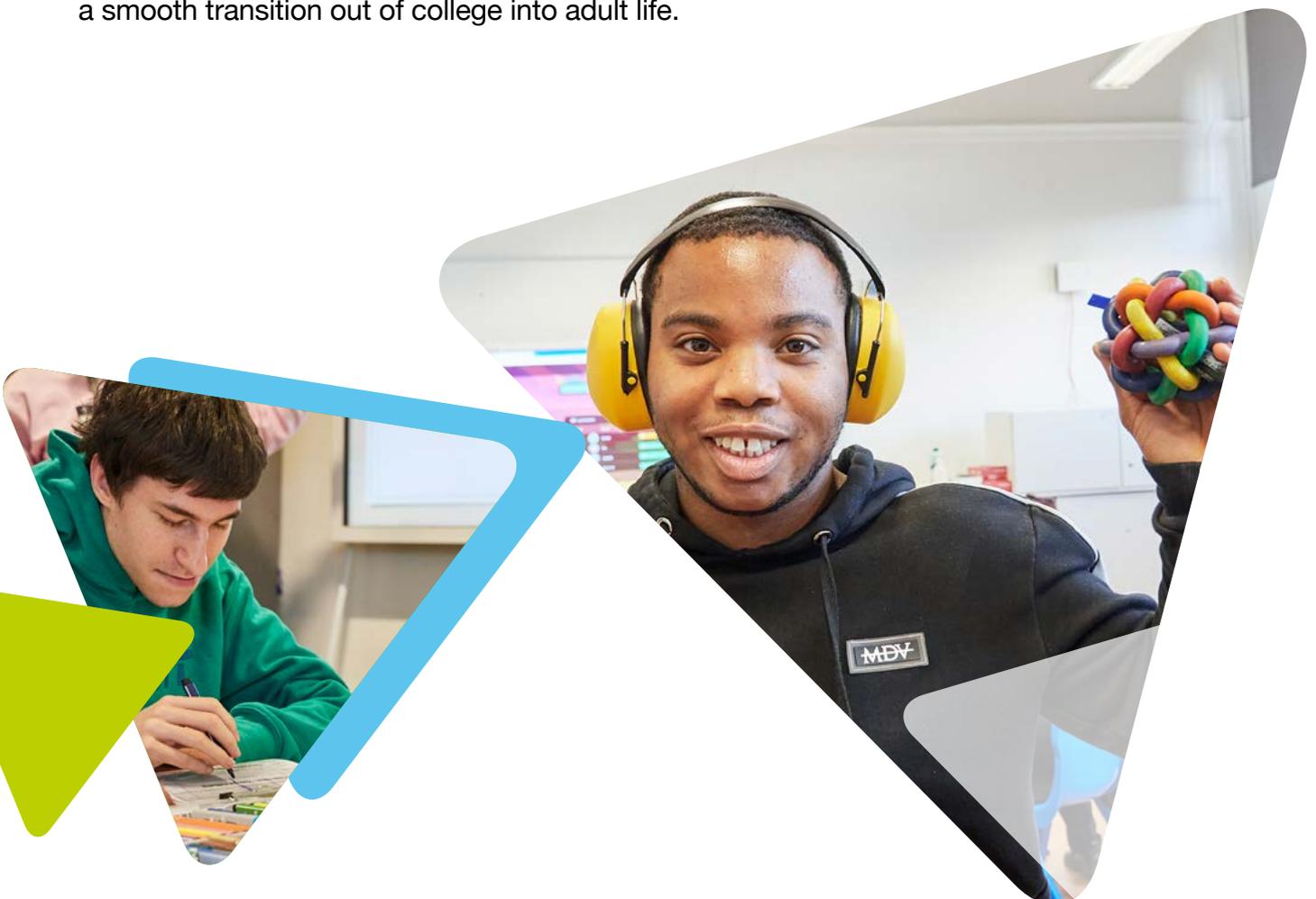
We take seriously our responsibility to safeguard young people and adults at risk. We have designated safeguarding leads and robust practices in place to ensure learner safety.

Our safeguarding policies and our Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy can be found on the college website at ambitiouscollege.org.uk/our-curriculum/policies.

The college's designated lead for safeguarding is the executive principal. This authority is delegated to the assistant principal for personal development, welfare and behaviour.

Learner and family engagement officer

We know that helping our learners achieve their goals is all about working together in partnership. That's why we provide a learner and family engagement officer to work with parents, learners and other professionals. Their role is particularly focused on supporting a smooth transition out of college into adult life.



Parent and carer support

The involvement of parents and carers is essential to helping learners make good progress. The more closely that college and home work together, the more effective the learning.

We provide parents and carers with full and regular updates on their young person's progress, and arrange many informal and formal opportunities for parents and carers to visit the college. These include:

Meet the principal

This is an opportunity to meet once per term to discuss college developments in general and share learning gains and concerns.

Transition reviews

These meetings are held very early in the last year of college life to plan for the next stage of a young person's life. In reality, for this to be successful, there should be an ongoing conversation between family and college from the very early days of college.

Annual reviews

This is a meeting to review and agree progress and set targets for the following year. We also use this meeting to update the learner's Education, Health and Care Plan, if necessary.

College events

All parents and carers are invited to attend a range of events throughout the year to celebrate our learners' achievements.

Parent newsletters

Newsletters are sent out once per term to inform families about the learning for the term and offer advice on how to support learning at home.



Behind my son's significant ongoing progress is a very committed team. The staff at the college are extremely passionate about my son's achievements and hugely compassionate about his needs. The team know when they need to change pace or adjust strategies, and when they can challenge him to embrace new experiences. They have allowed me to be an active participant in my son's journey by valuing my input. My son's joy in his learning reflects their dedication.

Lesly Corzo, Parent



Learner Voice

It is critical that our learners have a voice and a choice in how they learn. We have Learner Councils on both campuses. We also have a number of ways of listening creatively to our learners and hearing what they want to tell us about college life.

Joseph saddles up for success

Joseph is a Learner Representative on the Learner Council at our Pears Campus, CONEL. When we asked him to write a piece for this prospectus, he decided to talk about the highlight of his week – his horse riding lesson.



“I was excited to go to the Julian Small Riding School for the first time. I was nervous because, to begin with, I didn’t know how to ride.

The difficulty for me was that I couldn’t ride because of my mobility. I didn’t have enough strength to ride a horse and stay upright.

I felt frustrated, so I started an occupational therapy (OT) program to improve my balance and gain strength. I also practised on the horse every Monday. With the help of my teachers, I now feel more confident and secure when riding a horse.

The OT program, riding school staff and Ambitious College staff have all helped me. They’ve taught me how to manage my feelings and reminded me to stay calm on the horse.

Now, I can trot and ride for a longer distance. I’m also happy and confident. I know if I continue learning, I’ll be able to gallop one day. I’m very proud of myself – and of appearing in this prospectus.”

Joseph, Learner representative



Admissions

Referrals can be made by a local authority, a parent or carer, or by young people themselves. If you are a parent or carer or young person making a referral, we strongly recommend that you inform your local authority and request they consult with us.

Admission process

The admissions process is as follows:

-  1. Call the admissions team on 020 8815 5428 expressing an interest in a place at Ambitious College and arrange to attend one of our open day visit and tour events.
-  2. On your visit, you will receive two application forms. One form is for parents and the young person, and the other is for professionals in the young person's current educational setting. They are available electronically on request.
-  3. Return both completed forms to the admissions team. Parents are responsible for ensuring professionals complete and return their forms.
-  4. Once both sets of forms and any supporting reports have been submitted to the college, the college admissions panel will make a decision about whether an assessment will be undertaken.
-  5. If an assessment is to go ahead, parents will be informed. Assessments normally take place in the young person's current educational setting or at their home.
-  6. The college admissions panel meets once a week throughout the academic year. Parents or carers will be informed of the assessment decision in a timely manner.
-  7. When an offer of a placement is made, we will inform the local authority. If an offer is not made, the principal's decision is final.
-  8. If funding is agreed by the Local Authority, a transition plan will be provided for the learner in due course. The plan will be based on a phased transition, in line with the college admissions policy, at the start of an academic year.

We have a different admissions process for our Supported Internship programme. To start the process, first request an application form from the admissions team at admissions@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.



Transition into college

Transition is a personalised process and requires careful planning and support. When a place has been agreed, we will send out a welcome pack and work with the learner and their family to ensure a successful move from their current school or college to Ambitious College.

Before young people come to the college for the first time, we recommend they take a virtual tour of the campus they are due to visit. These can be found on our website at ambitiouscollege.org.uk/contact-us. This is a good way to alleviate anxiety. We are also happy to supply a social story for those who might find this a useful way to explain a visit to a new place.

Transition from college

Just as important as a successful transition into college is a successful transition from college. We ask young people and their parents to start thinking about life after college as soon as they start college. This might seem a bit strange, but the earlier we can plan for transition, the more successful it will be.

Funding

Our learners are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the local authority, usually from education budgets, with some input from social care and/or health, as best meets the learner's needs. Personal budgets can also be used to contribute to a placement at Ambitious College.

The final decision about funding a place is made by a learner's local authority. It should consider the family's expressed preference and our assessment. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a parent or learner can name a preferred college in an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Information at a glance



Opening hours

9.30am–3.30pm
Monday–Friday.



Day-to-day contact

There will be a learning and skills coordinator assigned to your son/daughter's class. This person will be your named contact for the college.



SEN transport

Once a young person's place is confirmed, it is the parent's responsibility to liaise with their local authority SEN transport service and inform the college of arrangements.



Medication

The college has strict medication guidelines that it must legally follow. The Health Care Policy is shared with new learners at the start of the academic year.



Lunch/food

Learners will need to bring a packed lunch into college with them. All meals at the college are nut free. We have young people with severe life-threatening allergies, which means, when it comes to food, staff are extra vigilant.



Contact us

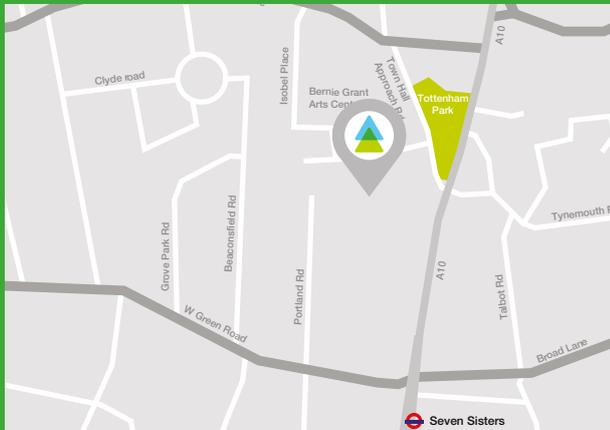
North London campus

Pears Campus at CONEL
Clyde Road, London N15 4FY

☎ 020 3870 8775

✉ admissions@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

🌐 ambitiouscollege.org.uk



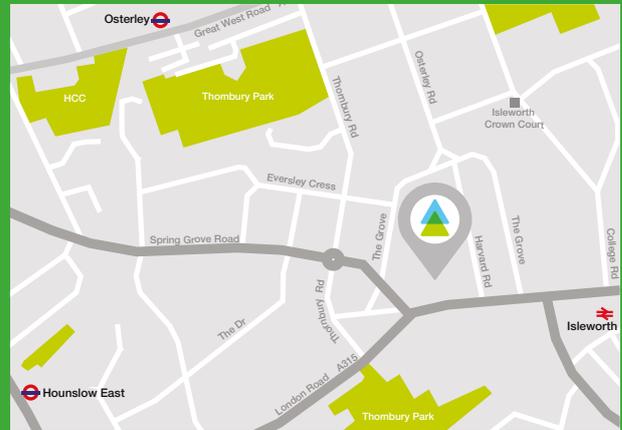
West London campus

Pears Campus at West Thames College
London Road, Isleworth TW7 4HS

☎ 020 3873 2201

✉ admissions@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

🌐 ambitiouscollege.org.uk



How to find us

Public transport

The Pears Campus at CONEL is easily accessible by regular bus, London Underground and train services. We are just a short walk from the the Seven Sisters Tube and London Overground stations. Bus routes 76, 149, 230, 243, 259, 279, 318, 341, 349, and 476 run nearby.

Travelling by car

Parking is available next door at the Bernie Grant Art Centre. The Centre's pay and display car park is located at the end of Clyde Road. Please input postcode N15 4FP into your GPS for directions to the car park.

How to find us

Public transport

The Pears Campus at West Thames is easily accessible by regular bus, train and London Underground services. Isleworth train station is a five-minute walk. The nearest Tube stations are Osterley or Hounslow East (Piccadilly Line), then 10-15 minutes' walk. The following buses run from Hounslow bus station: 110, 117, 235, 237, H8 and H37. All buses stop outside the college.

Travelling by car

There is a car park for staff, disabled students and evening students (entrance on Harvard Road). However, places are limited on a first-come, first-served basis. There are parking meters on the roads directly around the campus. The nearest free parking is on Osterley Road. For further information, please contact admissions.

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